THE IMAGERY OF JOHN DONNE

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(ABSTRACT OF THESIS)

Imagery is the imaginative use of words, the correlation of ideas and things in the mind of a poet that invokes in a perceptive reader a state of mind analogous to that of the poet. The statement of the correlation is in itself meaningless; poetic communication takes place through a triple process:

1. The symbols or words denoting the ideas and things are combined to form a new symbol;

2. The referents or things denoted are equated;

3. The references or ideas about the referents and symbols are made to coincide.

It is this coincidence of references that allows the poet to invoke his state of mind in a reader.

To this process Donne added a fanciful element, bringing into his poetry the conceit. A conceit is a witty or ingenious or fanciful comparison or idea, usually so written that its peculiar nature obscures the metaphorical process described above; fancy takes precedence over imagination.

The metaphorical process is more easily seen in the comparison, in which its workings are not obscured by the fantastic element. Comparisons and conceits can be either developed or simple.

The developed image extends a basic metaphor by one or more of the following methods:

1. The introduction of further metaphorical statement to justify the use of the basic metaphor, assuming its aptness;

2. The use of further metaphorical statement to extend the basic metaphor, assuming its aptness;

3. The use of further statement, either metaphorical or literal, to explain the basic metaphor.

This development of an image is carried on when:

1. The statement of a metaphor leads to the creation of further imagery modifying and strengthening the basic metaphor;

2. A group of images become somehow related, focusing in one metaphorical idea.

The habit of developing images seems the result of an analytical mind, taking pleasure in:

1. Forcing all the possible analogies between the referent of the basic metaphor and the subject of the poem;

2. Introducing apparently logical ramifications of the basic metaphor.

The simple comparison shows an aspect of Donne's imagery obscured by the development in the longer images; that is its reasonable nature. Donne not only modified his imagination by his fancy; he also modified the product by reason.

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by

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But thou art also (Lord I intend it to thy glory, and let no prophane misinterpreter abuse it to thy diminution) thou art a figurative, a metaphoricall God too: A God in whose words there is such a height of figures, such voyages, such peregrinations to fetch remote and precious metaphors, such extensions, such spreadings, such Curtaines of Allegories, such third Heavens of Hyperboles, so harmonious eloquutions, so retired and so reserved expressions, so commanding perswasions, so perswading commandments, such sinewes even in thy milke, and such things in thy words, as all prophane Authors, seeme of the seed of the Serpent, that creepes, thou art the Dove, that flies. O, what words but thine, can express the inexpressible texture, and composition of thy word; ... The stile of thy works, the phrase of thine actions, is metapheriall. The institution of thy whole worship in the old Law, was a continuall Allegory; types and figures overspread all; and figures flowed into figures, and powred themselves out into farther figures.

Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions XIX. Expostulation

PREFACE

Imagery can best be defined, for the purposes of this study, as language having greater and more intense meaning in the context of poetry than it would have in a normal prose context. Poetry I consider to be the means of expression which has as its purpose chiefly the communication of experience, as contrasted with prose, the chief purpose of which is usually merely the description of experience. Imagery is the imaginative use of words, involving the process by which a poet correlates ideas and things to create a new whole, associating thoughts and attitudes in an attempt at communication bordering on empathy, the process here referred to as "the metaphorical process".

The imagination or image-making faculty is modified by another faculty, the selective faculty, which causes a poet to choose one comparison rather than another, one word rather than another. John Donne and his contemporaries called it "conceit"; and it is this faculty that turns an image into what we now call a conceit, a far-fetched comparison or fantastic turn of phrase.

In the case of John Donne a third faculty has its part in the creation of images, reason. All his comparisons seem to have been subjected to the scrutiny of a coldly analytical mind; he seems always ready to prove the aptness of his images. It was this logical turn of mind that led to the development of images and conceits. It was also this turn of mind that has suggested many of the generalizations made about Donne. Dryden noted it in his

famous criticism.

> He affects the Metaphysicks, not only in his satires, but in his Amorous Verses, where Nature only should reign; and perplexes the Minds of the Fair Sex with nice Speculations of Philosophy, when he shou'd ingage their Hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of Love.

Dr. Johnson, in his Life of Cowley, probably the best short study of metaphysical imagery, observed of the school of Donne that:

> It must ... be confessed of these writers, that if they are upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle, yet where scholastic speculation can be properly admitted, their copiousness and acuteness may justly be admired.

Hazlitt, also writing of the school of Donne, said:

> Their style was not so properly learned as metaphysical; that is to say, whenever, by any violence done to their ideas, they could make out an abstract likeness or possible ground of comparison, they forced the image, whether learned or vulgar, into the service of the Muses ....

The curious nature of the poetry of Donne and the other metaphysicals has often been the subject of discussion. The reason for the peculiarity of metaphysical poetry is the use of reason to modify imagination, the examination of the image by an acute analytical mind. This is also the reason for the odd lack of apparent emotion in the metaphysical image, the exactness and artificiality that combine to make the metaphysical style seem almost a deliberate pose. Donne's images are almost invariably defencible by logic, and more often than not they are defended by logic, or at least by casuistry. Donne always seems aware of the aptness of his comparisons; he modifies them, extends them, makes them axioms upon which to build lengthy arguments. It is not an overstatement to claim that the logical, argumentative mind working on the products of the imagination gives metaphysical poetry its

special nature. In other words, we recognize the metaphysical poet by his images.

This study was begun with some idea that the image was the key to the peculiarity of metaphysical poetry. At first, not being very certain either of the nature of the image or the way in which it was used by the metaphysicals, I decided to limit the study to John Donne, assuming that what was true of Donne would be more or less true of the other metaphysicals. The study began with an attempt to treat Donne as Caroline Spurgeon treated Shakespeare, listing the images on index cards and attempting to divide them into certain obvious categories, images taken from household life, from alchemy, and so on. This part ended with more than two thousand index cards but no categories that could enable a student to reach conclusions such as Miss Spurgeon did in Shakespeare's Imagery. There was an overwhelming number of images taken from religious studies; the other categories were numerous and allowed few generalizations other than that Donne was an extremely well-read and observant man.

However, in the course of transcribing images from the poems to the index cards, I began to realize that the uses of Donne's images were much more interesting than the mere external grouping of the images themselves, and that the obscurities of Donne's poems resulted not so much from his learning as from his subtle manipulation of images that were in themselves not extraordinary. The obvious step then was to attempt a division of these uses - if not a complete one, one at least that would allow the poems to be divided for convenience in discussion. The first division had to be made between the conceit,

the "intellectual concept feathered with fancy", and the comparison, the metaphor or simile. These needed further division according to their uses in poems.

The obvious method of division was to consider the extent to which Donne's argumentative mind had developed or extended the image and the relative importance of each image in its context. In cases where one image emerged as the chief image of a poem, as in

> ... by these hymnes, all shall approve
> Us Canoniz'd for Love: ...
>
> (The Canonization, 35-6)

closer examination showed that most of the imagery of the poem was related, building up in a carefully logical method to the canonization metaphor and its implications, which were also related images. The whole complex then was considered as one image, a developed conceit and a developed comparison, with the canonization image as its basic metaphor.

In this way the images were isolated enough to allow consideration and discussion of examples of Donne's uses of imagery. Several tempting scurces or error has to be avoided. The first temptation was to impose on the thesis a false unity, to argue towards some generalization; this, I felt, would lead to distorting facts in order to prove a point. The second temptation was to fall into the habit of generalization. The third was to consider the categories arrived at in the preliminary survey of Donne's imagery as water-tight compartments and to force images into them. The fifth was to accept conventional discussions of imagery, which would, I feel, have vitiated the study; the sixth, paradoxically, was to accept none of the conventional ideas of imagery.

I finally decided that Donne's imagery could best be studied under thirteen headings derived from the preliminary survey of the poems, and that the examples could not be completely isolated from the contexts in which they occurred. The study then broke down naturally into ten Chapters, in each of which examples of Donne's imagery could be analyzed and discussed according to their categories, and so according to their importance and their use in each poem. In this way the study became a series of close readings of parts of Donne's poetry with the imagery, its chief peculiarity, as a focal point. Instead of setting out to prove a thesis the work developed a twofold purpose: to make clearer the nature of Donne's imagery and language by attempting to analyze it and demonstrate the workings of the conceit and the dialectical development of imagery; and to illuminate the poems themselves by unravelling the twisted strands of thought which obscure so many of Donne's poems. The second purpose is in a way a by-product of the first; the chief aim of the study is to learn the nature of Donne's imagery from an examination of his poetry.

This study could never have been completed had not so much been done for me. I must, with all other students of Donne, acknowledge my indebtedness to Sir Herbert Grierson, whose great edition has been the foundation of all Donne scholarship over the past half century, and to Miss Helen Gardner, whose edition of the divine poems augmented his annotations. An acknowledgement must also be made to J.B. Leishman, whose book, The Monarch of Wit, although not quoted, helped in the formation and expression of a great many of the ideas in this work. I am also deeply indebted to Mr. C. Day Lewis, whose

book, The Poetic Image, was instrumental in the definition of my field of study. Finally, my sincerest thanks are due to Dr. George Story, my supervisor, who, by constantly reading drafts of the work, making suggestions for improvements, giving advice, lending books, and occasionally prodding, was largely responsible for the completion of this study.

E.J.D.
12 March 1958

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF THE POETIC IMAGE

The greatest single problem facing any student beginning an investigation of the imagery of a poet is the definition of "image". The OED definition of the word as "A simile, metaphor, or figure of speech"[1] tells little about the nature of the subject. A simile, according to the same dictionary, is "A comparison of one thing with another, especially as an ornament in poetry or rhetoric."[2] A metaphor is "The figure of speech in which a name or descriptive term is transferred to some object different from, but analogous to, that to which it is properly applicable; an instance of this, a metaphorical expression."[3] The third term, "a figure of speech", is perhaps undefinable; it is a vague expression meaning approximately any word or phrase or device used to make language colourful and meaningful. The student is still without a precise definition of his field of work.

C. Day Lewis has attempted a definition in his book on the subject, but he was not eminently successful. He says that "the poetic image is a more or less sensuous picture in words, to some degree metaphorical, with an undernote of some human emotion in its context, but also charged with and releasing into the reader a special poetic emotion or passion.... ."[4] And here, he complains,

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1 OED sb 7

2 OED sb 1

3 OED sb 1

4 Lewis, The Poetic Image (1947) 22

the definition breaks down. It breaks down, I believe, because Mr. Day Lewis is too much on his guard. The word, "sensuous", for example, is evidently an attempt at making clear the visual (or perhaps physical would be a better word) nature of most images. But the use of the word weakens the definition. When Robert Burns wrote:

> O, my luve is like a red, red rose,
> That's newly sprung in June.
> O my luve is like the melodie
> That's sweetly played in tune.
>
> (A Red, Red Rose, 1-4)

he was presenting his readers with two similes, both of them sensuous images. But when Andrew Marvell wrote:

> My Love is of a birth as rare
> As 'tis for object strange and high:
> It was begotten by despair
> Upon Impossibility.
>
> (The Definition of Love, 1-4)

he gave his readers a very complex metaphor, an intellectual concept or conceit that was far from being sensuous. Of course, Mr. Day Lewis did limit his adjective and say that the image was "more or less sensuous". However, if we look closely at the two examples we can see that the word does not have any place in a general definition.

Burns's two similes are sensuous, in that the ideas conveyed by them belong to the senses. He means that the lady in question arouses in him much the same pleasant emotion as would be aroused by a rose or by a melody. The rose gives pleasure to the eye by its form and colour; the rose that is referential to Burns's love is more red than usual, and is newly sprung. It appeals to the eye

and the nose, and, of course, it also occasions, by beauty, fragility, and tenderness, the usual "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears". A melody played in tune gives pleasure to the ear; when played sweetly as well it appeals to what might be called elemental emotions. So we see that there are two sources of delight to the senses invoked, and between them they appeal to at least three senses and to the least intellectual of emotions. Andrew Marvell's conceit, on the other hand, appeals to no sense of the body at all. He personifies, after a fashion, three perfectly abstract qualities - love, despair, impossibility. To these he adds the metaphor of begetting and birth, again an abstraction. The senses are not invoked; the image is received only by the intellect, and any sensuous overtones in the perception of the metaphors are certainly irrelevant. But, the imagery of the two stanzas is alike in one respect. Both the sensuous image, in which the poetic quality is expressed by the referential rose and melody, and the intellectual image, in which the poetic idea is expressed by abstract referents, use words in an imaginative way, in a manner in which they are not normally used. The important word is imaginative, a word which, unfortunately, also escapes exact definition. It is, of course, the adjective derived from the word, "imagination". And if we can learn what imagination means we can approach the image. The best definition for our purposes is doubtless that of Coleridge:

> The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider

> as an echo of the former, coexisting with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.[5]

If we accept this definition in its simplest sense, then we come to the conclusion that the creation of an image, the imaginative use of a word, is a double process, involving first a process of creative perception, and secondly, a process of correlation. Coleridge's definition is complemented by T.S. Eliot:

> When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.[6]

So Burns, using creative perception, thinks of a newly-sprung rose, of the pleasure it gave him and the emotion it aroused - its odour pleased him, and its colour; its newness and fragility and transience aroused deep but uncomplicated emotions. In much the same way he thinks of a sweet melody he has heard, and perceives that his ear is pleased both by the melody itself and by the pleasant sound of the word. The experiences are related with the experience of being with the lady in question, and create a new whole, the image. In this case the experiences were chiefly sensuous ones. In Marvell's conceit the imagination is involved

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5 Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (ed. Shawcross, 1907) i, 202

6 Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets' in Selected Prose (1953) 117

in the creative perception of the concepts of love and despair, the perception of the emotions aroused by the abstraction - Impossibility, and the relation of the ideas with the state of mind of the poet. The experience is perceived intellectually, not sensuously, and the imagination correlates all into a new whole by the abstract notion of begetting and birth. Both images convey a state of mind; perception finds expression by means of correlation. That is to say, the perception of one state of mind, that occasioned by falling in love with a beautiful woman and being happy, or that occasioned by falling in love without hope of happiness, is felt but seems inexpressible. To the man whose perception is not creative, the state of mind remains mute or is brought out in clumsy phrases. To the man whose perception is creative, the perception of the state of mind can be correlated with the perception of another state of mind. So the perception of happy love is related to the perception of a rose in spring and a sweet melody. The perception of frustrated love is related to the perception of an abstract idea - that despair and impossibility joined to bring love into the world.

The problem of imagery is the problem of communication. If Burns says merely, "I am happily in love", he tells us something about himself, but he does not communicate what is in his mind. To those who are not in this delightful state the phrase means little more than, "I am a great idiot". To communicate the state of mind of being an individual, different from everybody else and therefore happy in a different way and in love in a different way, he must invoke another state of mind that is close to being analogous to his present one. That is the state of mind brought about by the

sensuous and emotional perception of a rose and a pleasant tune. Marvell, similarly, can only communicate something approximating his state of mind by relating it with the intellectual and emotional perception of the idea that love is the child of a union of despair and impossibility, using the meanings and connotations of the words to the fullest extent possible.

If we return to the more solid ground of the definition given by Mr. Day Lewis, we find that he has gone wrong by trying too carefully to limit his definition and make it more exact than it can be. Neither of the two images considered (and both of them were picked without forethought) really presented a picture in words. One was a sensuous image, certainly; but Burns, although evoking the sensuous perception of a rose, did not give a picture in words of a rose, any more than Marvell painted a picture of despair and impossibility posing as happy parents. That the poetic image is "to some degree metaphorical" cannot be denied. And the image has certainly "an undernote of some human emotion in its context" and it is certainly "charged with and releasing into the reader a special poetic emotion or passion". Still, the definition is incomplete, because the most important thing to realize about an image is <u>how</u> it conveys emotion and passion. It does it by relating experiences, usually one that the poet finds inexpressible or which is peculiar to him with one which is more common and which, although the feeling of the experience is perhaps just as personal, can be perceived by a good reader. By this correlation, if both poet and reader are successful, a kind of empathy can be achieved. The poet, finding his love beyond description, "compares" his lady to a newly-

sprung red rose, not because she is red, but because the feelings aroused in his senses and emotions by seeing such a rose are somewhat similar to those aroused by his love for the lady. The reader who has also seen new roses evokes, by means of a mental picture if his mind works that way, the feelings aroused in him by the sight, and relates them to the experience he has not had, that of being Burns and being in love in a specific way with a specific lady. In this way the poet communicates, imperfectly, but still better than he could in purely denotative language, something of what he feels at the moment of intensity, something of his state of mind. The emotion in the context, of which Mr. Day Lewis speaks, and the poetic emotion released into the reader should, ideally, be one and the same. Of course, they never are because of the weakness of human communication, but that they should be is the whole purpose of the poetic image.

This process of empathy, of communicating a state of mind rather than a statement of fact, is, I believe, always involved in an image; in a simile or metaphor it is quite obvious, but even the figures of speech convey rather more than statements. We usually say, for the sake of simplicity, that an image compares one thing with another or equates one thing with another. And to say so is not wrong, it is merely incomplete. The image says that X is Y, or X is equal to Y, or X is equal to or similar to Y. If we consider once again Burns's simple image of the rose, we can see that the ideas of comparison and equation are quite correct, but are not comprehensive.

First, consider that X is Burns's love. We must realize that there is a subdued pun. The word, "love", can mean the poet's love for the lady; it can also mean the lady herself. Obviously,

the context calls for the second meaning, but the interpretation of the image forces the reader to take the first sense as a secondary meaning coexisting with the meaning in the context.

Secondly, consider that Y is the red rose. What the poet has actually said is that X is similar to Y. In other words, his love (in both senses) is similar to a rose. We get so much from the idea of comparing or equating, but so simple a concept tells us nothing of the thought processes involved in the attempt at communication between poet and reader. It need not be said that the image does much more than compare X to Y. Behind the deceptively simple phrase is the more complex aspect of the image, the attempt at perfect communication of a state of mind through empathy. Burns makes a comparison or an equation or a correlation between the experience of being in love and of being with his love and the experience of coming upon a certain type of rose under certain circumstances. Instead of having a simple equation, X is equal to or similar to Y, we have something rather more complex, which can perhaps best be explained by the use of the well-known triangle of reference.

The triangle of reference, introduced by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards in The Meaning of Meaning, is a baseless triangle, more of a broken line than a three-cornered figure. At the two extremities we must imagine, respectively, a symbol and a referent; at the apex is the reference. The symbol is the verbal means by which the poet expresses himself; the referent is the actual thing named. The reference is the complex mass of referential ideas and concepts.[7]

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7 Ogden and Richards, The Meaning of Meaning (1952) 11

The symbol X has two referents, forming what is really a complex whole. The two are: Burns's idea of love, his experience with it, and his idea of the lady, what she seems like to him. Coming between the word, "love", with its numerous connotations and irrelevancies, and the actual referent, which is lost to us and which only Burns could know, are the references. These too must have died with the poet, but we can imagine something of what they were.

The symbol Y has one referent, and, because of the universality of the deep red rose of summer, the reader can come close to it. The reader can also approximate the references.

The image, correlating X and Y, cannot change the two referents. In the human mind X is not Y, and a lady is not a rose. What really happens is that the comparison or correlation is made between the references of each word. So, when the ideal poet produces an ideal image which is read by an ideal reader, the following process should ensue. The symbols or words enrich the image by their sound, accepted meaning, and connotations; the references of the nouns coincide, as when Burns correlates his experience with his love with his experience with the rose, and the reader, reversing the process, correlates his experience with the rose with Burns's experience, thereby approximating the state of mind the poet was trying to express; and the referents join to form the outside of the image, the statement that the poet's love is like a red rose.

This idea of an image is, as ideas of imagery usually are, not always applicable. Some images are almost completely

descriptive, and so can be interpreted fairly exactly by the notion of comparison or equating. This happens when an image occurs in an unemotional poem, or one in which the emotions are well under control. For example, there is little of the empathy described in this chapter in the main conceit of Donne's Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse.

> Whilst my Physitians by their love are growne
> Cosmographers, and I their Mapp, who lie
> Flat on this bed, that by them may be showne
> That this is my South-west discoverie
> Per fretum febris, by these streights to die,
>
> I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;
> For, though theire currants yeeld returne to none,
> What shall my West hurt me? As West and East
> In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the Resurrection.
>
> (Hymne to God my God, 6-15)

Donne has the same difficulty as Burns, he cannot give an exact account of his feeling. But, unlike Burns, his feelings are controlled, serious; a man does not describe exuberantly his feelings on his death bed. He must find a referent for his image, but he is not likely to find one that will bring to a reader an equivalent state of mind. The communication, the empathy, must be even more imperfect than it was in the Burns image.

The referent for the image is the actual statement, "I am a map and my physicians are map-makers." The connotations of the words themselves are closely interwoven with the references; "I" creates within every man feelings of self-love and self-pity, while "map" has practically no connotation except that of exactness without emotion.

The references of both words are, to most people, much the same as the connotations. The first word is meaningful both to

poet and reader; it conveys the whole complex of being, of past and future life, of hopes and fears. The references of the second word are, by the exact descriptive nature of it, again almost universal. In combination the referents of the two words are equated, and the references are combined, creating the image.

> ... my Physitians by their love are growne
> Cosmographers, and I their Mapp...

Analysis shows that the first part of the image is nothing more than an extension of the basic metaphor, the image in its simplest form, the equating of the poet with the map. If we return to the triangle of reference, we find that the equating of the ideas has produced something more than a mere comparison. There is a new symbol; the words have been combined so that we have the phrase, "I (am) their Mapp", and this symbol has certain connotations, those of its component words. Taken as a meaningful phrase, the statement becomes the referent of the new complex. In other words, the sense and prose meaning of the phrase take the place of the symbol, while the actual meaning, the thing named, that "I" which is also a map, is the referent. The referent of the image is the result of the equation of the referent of the thing spoken of with the referent of the thing from which the poet taken the analogous term. It is, in simpler terms, the rose in Burns's image, the birth in Marvell's, the map in Donne's. Or, more explicitly, it is the rose which is a beloved lady, the birth of an abstraction begotten by two abstractions, the map which is also John Donne.

What happens is that the symbols combine to form a new symbol and the equating (but not combination) of the referents

produces a new referent. These, of course, are bound to differ from person to person. Communication, then, when the poetic image is the vehicle, takes place through the middle process of the new triangle, the coincidence of references. In this way the perceptive reader can get a combination of complicated thoughts and concepts which, if he is reading correctly and imaginatively, can coincide with the thoughts and concepts of the poet, even though he cannot exactly equate the referents. Despite different ideas of self and different ideas of a map, the reader and the poet can achieve a measure of empathy. The idea communicated to every good reader is that: "I am lying here sick and dying, full of fears and needing human care. But nobody can appreciate my sad state; my doctors think of my disease, which may end my life, only as a matter of some professional interest. Still, in spite of my natural fears, I am in some paradoxical manner happy to be so near death, for my faith tells me that I am going to a rich, happy, unknown place (Heaven, the unexplored western hemisphere)." This fact, that references of words can be made to coincide, is the foundation of all metaphor, figurative language, allusion, and connotative language. It is, indeed, the whole basis of communication of poetic thought.

The process described, analyzed, and offered as an explanation for and definition of the poetic image is really not very much better than the OED's simple "comparison of one thing with another, especially as an ornament in poetry or rhetoric". It is, perhaps, as guilty of over-systematization as the Dictionary

is of over-simplification. Poets are not psychologists, nor are they specialists in semantics; the process of creating and interpreting the poetic image is almost always unconscious. The poet's ability to communicate can vary just as much as the reader's ability to receive. A poet whose emotions are trifling, or whose imagination is trifling, can create images conveying practically nothing, images that fail. Often one can find an image that serves no purpose other than description; although the same process is involved, the degree of poetic feeling it conveys is much lower than that of the images already discussed. For an example of this, consider Chaucer's:

> A FRANKELEYN was in his compaignye.
> Whit was his berd as is the dayesye;
> Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
> Wel loved he by the morwe a sop in wyn;
> To lyven in delit was evere his wone,
> For he was Epicurus owene sone,
> That heeld opinioun that pleyn delit
> Was verraily felicitee parfit.
> An householdere, and that a greet, was he;
> Seint Julian he was in his contree.
>
> (General Prologue, 331-40)

We have a simile and two metaphors, each of the latter taking the form of an allusion. And, although all three convey poetic imagination through the process discussed here, their chief purpose is evidently plain description.

It is perhaps best to continue using the simpler explanation that an image is usually a comparison of something with something else. But, while calling the image a comparison, or an equating, or a correlation, we must keep in mind the involved interplay of thoughts and emotions that make it an integral part of the poem, rather the chief means of poetic communication than a mere decoration. If we

do not, the metaphor becomes nothing more than a euphemism, the conceit nothing more than an exaggeration.

It must also be remembered that imagery cannot be neatly divided into metaphors, similes, and conceits, and then laid aside for future reference. Any turn of phrase, any epigram, any meaningful description or statement, any double meaning can be a part of a poet's imagery. Imagery is not only a matter of describing a lady in terms of a rose. Imagery is any language that in the context of a poem is charged with meaning greater than that which it normally would have. Consider Donne's image:

> Here's no more newes, then vertue,' I may as well
> Tell you Cales or St Michaels tale for newes, as tell
> That vice doth here habitually dwell.
> (To Sr Henry Wooton, 1-3)

The two comparisons that are made are not poetic comparisons on the surface; they are quantitative rather than qualitative. There is no obvious equating of news and virtue; there is an equating of the quantity of news (none) and the quantity of virtue (also none). Yet the whole is certainly not purely denotative language, and it certainly is an image. Although it does not give the reader the comparison of an X with a Y, it uses the metaphorical process, the process of using words, or the references of words, in such a way as to create in the reader a state of mind analogous to that of the poet. The idea that is communicated does not depend upon the exact meanings of the words, "vertue" and "newes", but upon the references which these words have, and the additional references arising from their juxtaposition. The idea is not that of the amount of virtue. It is that there is very little virtue, and that the lack of virtue is so well-known as to be no news.

Careful enough examination of almost any line in Donne's poetry will show that he uses very few words that are not images, literally, imaginative uses of words. Because of this it has been necessary to divide the collected images into several different categories so as to be able to study them, for the line

Goe, and catche a falling starre, (Song, 1)

uses the same process as does the lengthy developed conceit of The Progresse of the Soule. All imagery, no matter what the category might be, uses the metaphorical process.

CHAPTER 2

THE TYPES OF IMAGERY

We are not likely to reach any universally applicable definition of the poetic image, even though we can arrive at some notion of its workings. Fortunately, each of us has some idea, inchoate though it may be, of what the poetic image is, and we can usually recognize the image when we see it on a page. The image, even if it is not immediately identifiable as a metaphor or a simile, stands out in a poem as the word or phrase having greater meaning in a poetic context than it would ordinarily have. In this study the plan is not only to recognize the image but to attempt to isolate it from its context, and to find out by means of a classification and sub-classification of the words, phrases, and even whole poems that seem to be images, something about the means by which John Donne, that most subtle of poets, contrived to add more intense meaning to his language.

Now, in the case of Donne or any other member of the witty school of seventeenth century poets, the student must consider not only the conventional tropes, but also that complex something known as the conceit. Students of seventeenth century poetry have for a long time been using the term, "metaphysical conceit", with a great deal of freedom and even more looseness of definition. If we look to the OED for an ex cathedra statement, we find only that the conceit is a "fanciful, ingenious, or witty notion or expression".[1] The Dictionary adds that the term is "now applied disparagingly to a strained or far-fetched turn of thought, figure, et cetera."[1]

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1 OED, sb 8

If this definition is the best we can find, (and it seems likely that it is,) we are facing a difficult problem, because the conceit is not so much an image as an image with something added. This can best be explained by an example. The poem, To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders, ends with this notion:

> And so the heavens which beget all things here,
> And the earth our mother, which these things doth beare,
> Both these in thee, are in thy Calling knit,
> And make thee now a blest Hermaphrodite.
>
> (To Mr Tilman, 51-4)

Here we have a developed metaphor. But, by its fanciful and ingenious nature, it is also a conceit. Taken as a whole, the image conveys the idea that the heavenly function, which is metaphorically masculine because it creates, and the earthly function, which is metaphorically femine because it bears the fruits of heavenly creation, are combined in Mr. Tilman's ministry. Therefore, since he unites within himself that which is metaphorically masculine and that which is metaphorically feminine, he, is, metaphorically, a hermaphrodite, making manifest in femine earthliness the masculine divine power. The logical development of the thought is typical of Donne's conceits, as is the fantastic nature of the comparison. We are now on much shakier ground than we were with Burns's little simile. The figure is certainly a conceit by definition, because of its far-fetched triple comparison. But it is the strain of curious, scholastic wit, the element that is more fantasy than imagination, that makes the image a conceit. It is, at the same time, a complex developed metaphor.

This idea can probably be best explained by another quotation from Coleridge, the definition of fancy which he uses to complement his definition of the image-making faculty.

> Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.[2]

That is to say, the poet uses imagination to create new wholes by correlating experiences, but uses a lesser faculty, the fancy, to effect the correlation. It is fancy and not memory that makes Donne compare inseparable lovers with the legs of a pair of compasses. This quality makes the metaphor a conceit; it is the quality that Donne himself would probably have called "conceit" or "wit".

Assuming that it is now clear that the conceit is usually something else as well as a conceit, we should now list different types of this device. There seem to be four categories into which we can put practically any poetic trick that can be called a conceit.

The first of these four categories is that of the long and carefully worked-out comparison. This type of conceit can be found especially in the Songs and Sonets, where we find such poems as Loves Vsury, The Flea, The Baite, The Relique, and The Computation, all following a carefully preconceived pattern. In such cases the entire poem is a metaphor of a sort,

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2 Coleridge, Biographia Literaria (ed. Shaweross, 1907) i, 202

developed to some logical or quasi-logical conclusion. In Loves Vsury, for example, the poet strikes a bargain with the god of love. The first part of the first stanza presents the basic metaphor of borrowing:

> For every hour that thou wilt spare mee now,
> I will allow,
> Usurious God of Love, twenty to thee,
> When with my browne, my grey haires equall be ...
> (Loves Vsury, 1-4)

Then the poet specifies the benefits he wants for himself before he will repay. And in the third stanza he tells the usurious god how repayment will be made in due time:

> This bargaine's good; if when I'am old, I bee
> Inflam'd by thee,
> If thine owne honour, or my shame, or paine,
> Thou covet most, at that age thou shalt gaine.
> (Loves Vsury, 17-20)

The factor that makes this first type of conceit different from others is the fact that it is a comparison, usually witty and ingenious, developed according to a logical plan for the full length of the poem. Usually the development is done in a dialectical manner, so that the poem is held together by its development and finishes with a logical conclusion.

The second type is what could be called the spontaneous conceit. In the act of writing the poet seizes upon some metaphor, simile, or fanciful notion, and follows it towards a logical or quasi-logical conclusion, either until his poem comes to an end or another image suggests itself and starts a new train of thought. This type, which does not always have the tight logical structure of the first type,

might be considered as being related to Professor Empson's fifth type of ambiguity, which occurs when the poet discovers his idea in the actual act of composition.[3]

As an example of this type of conceit, consider the poem To the Countesse of Bedford. This poem opens with some witty wordplay about the metaphorical deadness of the poet, and his resurrection in the thought of the Countess. Death and resurrection naturally imply thoughts of Easter, and thoughts of Easter naturally lead a Catholic to remember his Easter duty, the precept of the Church which commands him to confess his sins at least once a year at Easter. The conceit, then, develops out of the wordplay at the opening. Death and resurrection mean Easter, Easter means spring and the resurrection of the world, the rebirth of nature, and the obligation of confession.

> This season as 'tis Easter, as 'tis spring,
> Must both to growth and to confession bring
> My thoughts dispos'd unto your influence; so,
> These verses bud, so these confessions grow.
> (To the Countesse of Bedford, 7-10)

And from there the poet goes on to confess his three sins against the Countess. After he has found the image to hang his poem upon, the conceit develops. Sometimes, as in this case, the second type of conceit has the same tight unity as the first, but the difference is that, while the first type is prearranged and is the whole backbone of a poem, the second crops up somewhere along the line, and may or may not dominate the completed poem.

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3 Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity (1953) 155

The third, and probably the most common type of conceit is the wittily developed image. Such images as these telescoped conceits earned for the metaphysical poets the well-known censure of Dr. Johnson. What they actually are is simply defined; they are more or less witty and ingenious comparisons developed for a few lines in much the same manner as the other two types of developed conceit. For an example of this type, consider the conceit picked by Dr. Johnson as an especially bad example of Donn's "enormous and disgusting hyperboles".[4] In the Obsequies to the Lord Harrington we find the short conceit that God is a lens being carried on both by imagery and language to the long conceit:

> Though God be our true glasse, through which we see
> All, since the beeing of all things is hee,
> Yet are the trunkes which doe to us derive
> Things, in proportion fit, by perspective,
> Deeds of good men; for by their living here,
> Vertues, indeed remote, seeme to be neare.
> (Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, 35-40)

The fourth type of conceit includes the witty and ingenious turn of phrase left undeveloped, the short, pithy, hyperbolical or fanciful metaphor or simile, the paradox. Donne's poetry, like the poetry of the entire witty school of seventeenth century poets, is full of imagery of this type. Consider such statements as:

> Who would not laugh at mee, if I should say,
> I saw a flaske of powder burne a day?
> (The broken heart, 7-8)

or the more famous

> Goe, and catche a falling starre,

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[4] Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (ed. Hill, 1905) i, 27

Get with child a mandrake roote,
Tell me, where all past yeares are,
Or who cleft the Divels foot,
Teach me to heare Mermaides singing,
Or to keep off envies stinging,
And finde
What winde
Serves to advance an honest minde.

(Song, 1-9)

These are examples of what will be called in this study conceits of the fourth type. The classification is admittedly very broad and the fourth type of conceit will need much further discussion.

Within these four categories we can, I believe, fit any image that can be called a conceit. Several attempts have been made over the years to explain how the conceit as used by the metaphysical poets came into being. Usually it is attributed to imitation of an earlier school of Italian poets. C. Day Lewis in his study of the poetic image argues that "when a social pattern is changing, when the beliefs or structure of a society are in process of disintegration, the poets should instinctively go farther and more boldly afield in a search for images which may reveal new patterns, some reintegration at work beneath the surface, or may merely compensate them for the incoherence of the outside world by a more insistent emphasis on order in the world of their imagination."[5] So, according to Mr. Day Lewis, in the earlier part of the seventeenth century there grew up an argument "based on the interplay between fancy and reason."[6]

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5 Lewis, The Poetic Image (1947) 50-1

6 Ibid. 52

This argument, then, could be the element that provokes the fancy, the element that is added to the comparison or phrase to change it into a conceit. It seems unlikely that we can make any more exact statement on the conceit and its nature than that made by John Peter, who, noting that much metaphysical imagery "cannot in fact be sensuously apprehended at all, whether visually or otherwise",[7] commented that it "seems to take effect as a tone of the spoken voice would do, as a means of conveying to us the purpose for which, and the spirit in which, the poet's assertions are made."[8]

We can see from all this that the conceit is not so much a type of image as an image with something added, or even an attitude towards an image. To see how conceits work in Donne's poetry we must think of them not only under the heading of forceful and sometimes extravagant images; we must also consider them under more clearly definable headings. Except when the conceit is merely an odd turn of phrase, it is a comparison, either implied or stated.

The OED definitions for metaphor and simile, which were invoked earlier in this work, do not make clear one very important point, that both of these devices are comparisons and that the difference between them is purely a matter of grammar. The metaphor says that X is equal to or similar to Y, while the simile says that X is like Y. In each case the

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7 Peter, 'Crashaw and the Weeper'. Scrutiny, xix, 4, 260

8 Ibid, 262

poet is, for some reason, expressing an idea or concept in terms of another idea or concept, the experience of which he considers to be analogous to his experience. This may seem very obvious, but the point must be made clear. Consider two images from Donne's poetry, one a metaphor and the other a simile, both using the word, "gold", as key word.

> But now shee's gold oft tried, and ever new.
> (Elegie IX, 8)

This is the metaphor, and the simile is:

> Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.
> (A Valediction; forbidding mourning, 24

In the metaphor Donne is trying to convey the idea that the lady in question, although she is well into middle age, has become not less precious but more precious than she was before. So, metaphorically, she can be described in terms of gold, which is often melted down and so renewed, and which gains rather than loses in value during the process because of the removal of impurities. In the simile Donne is trying to express the vague feeling that distance will not really separate him from his loved one. Since their two souls are united into a new entity by a mysterious metaphysic of love, they cannot be divided and the poet's travels will cause

> . . . not yet
> A breach, but an expansion,
> Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.
> (A Valediction; forbidding mourning, 22-4)

In both images an idea is being expressed by a correlation between the idea and the characteristics of gold.

Gold does not decrease in value, although it does grow older and is melted down and re-refined. And gold can be beaten out into thin sheets while remaining the same precious metal it was before. The images differ in the external matter, the structure of the sentence. The referent, gold, remains the same. In the metaphor Donne says that the lady is gold, meaning that we can attribute to her the characteristics of gold. In the simile, the mystically united souls of Donne and his lady are like gold, which also means that the reader can attribute to them the characteristics of gold. Basically, and without considering the differences of context and the fact that different characteristics of gold are implied in each of the two images, the metaphor and simile are the same; each works on the reader in the same way.

I have tried to make this point quite clear, because the main object of this study is to differentiate between the uses of images in John Donne's poetry. Comparisons can be used in several different ways, and the differences in usage, some of which are very subtle, will become unduly complicated if we insist on dividing comparisons into metaphors and similes. The study can be done much more easily if we over-simplify the idea of an image developed in the first Chapter, and, using the simple formula, "X is equal to or similar to Y", divide images into the following groups:-

1. The extended metaphor which provides the whole framework for a poem;

2. The extended metaphor or simile which crops up almost spontaneously in the context of a poem, and which grows to become a major part of the imagery;

3. The metaphor or simile which is developed toward further imagery, but which does not go on to such an extent that it becomes a major image dominating the poem;

4. The metaphor or simile which is developed purely as language, in which there is discussion of the image itself but not further developing imagery in the same vein;

5. The simple metaphor or simile;

6. The single word used metaphorically;

7. The developed image which takes the form of an analogy, and which is self-explanatory.

The first type of comparison is evidently the first type of conceit taken in its metaphorical function, as the work of imagination rather than fancy. Actually we cannot separate the two functions in practise or in analysis, but we must realize that there are two. The difference between the functions is that, when we call an example a conceit of the first type we are speaking of a quality, of that quality which John Peter so aptly compares to a tone of voice. When we call an example a comparison of the first type, we are speaking of its construction and intellectual method, of the equating of experiences by which the poet conveys his idea or state of mind.

Similarly, the second type of comparison is the same as the second type of conceit, except that by calling it a comparison we recognise that it has a metaphorical function.

The third type of comparison, the metaphor or simile developed towards further imagery, is very common in Donne's poetry. It is usually the same as the conceit of the third type. In such images the poet creates a metaphor which suggests to him another and perhaps yet another. For an example, consider the following image:

My heart is by dejection, clay,
And by selfe-murder red.
From this red earth, O Father, purge away
All vicious tinctures, that new fashioned
I may rise up from death, before I'am dead.
(The Litanie, I, 5-9)

The heart, the centre of feeling, the physical manifestation, as it were, of the soul, is described by means of two metaphors, each one distinct in a way, but both uniting within the context of a greater image, the conceit in which sin becomes suicide, earthly life makes the heart clay, and the purgation of evil from the red earth will undo the suicide and bring the soul new life.

The fourth type of comparison is the metaphor or simile which develops toward further language, which becomes a focal point for much of the talk of the poem without causing the growth of further imagery. The difference between the fourth and third types of comparison was expressed by Mr. Eliot, commenting that we often find in the metaphysical poets "instead of the mere explication of the content of a comparison, a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader".[9] The explication of content is what develops the comparison of the fourth type, and many conceits of the third type. The association of thought and growth of new images out of a basic metaphor develops the comparison of the third type and most of the conceits of the first, second, and third type. In the last stanza of A Hymne to God the Father, for example, we find the poet using the metaphorical pun that Christ, the Son of God, is the sun which makes life possible

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9 Eliot, 'The Metaphysical Poets' in Selected Prose (1953) 112

on earth. Out of that image develops the prayer that this sun will shine. The verb, "shine", is evidently not a new part of the poem's imagery developing out of the first, although it is in part metaphorical. It complements the metaphor, but does not carry the image on to any new concept or intensify its meaning. Actually, there is an extension of the referent of the image without any corresponding development of the image itself.

> But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
> Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore.
> (A Hymne to God the Father, 15-6)

If we compare this image with another use of the same notion we can see the difference between the image left undeveloped and the image, like this one, developed either toward further imagery or merely toward further language. Consider the image in:

> Salute the last and everlasting day,
> Joy at the uprising of this Sunne, and Sonne.
> (La Corona. Ascention, 1-2)

The difference can easily be seen. In the La Corona image the idea is made clear and the poet passes on, while in the first image there is more talk, the "sun" is made to "shine".

The fifth type of comparison is the simple metaphor or simile. This is probably the commonest device of all poets, the stated or implied comparison. Donne's metaphors and similes are not radically different from any other poet's, except in that many of them become also conceits of the fourth type. His uses of metaphor and simile are quite ordinary. In The Extasie, for instance, a bank rises

> . . . like a pillow on a bed.
> (The Extasie, 1)

And in another poem the poet's flesh, weak but transilluminated by the sanctifying fire of the Paraclete, becomes

> . . . this glasse lanthorne.
> (The Litanie, 26)

An even simpler form of comparison is the sixth type, the metaphorical use of single words. It is simple in the same way that the simple metaphor or simile is; it is not developed and extended into a complex pattern. As the first Chapter of this study shows, no image is simple in the accepted sense of the word. For an example, consider the following lines:

> T'were prophanation of our joyes
> To tell the layetie our love.
> (A Valediction; forbidding mourning, 7-8)

There is a seventh type of comparison which takes the form of a self-explanatory analogy, such as a preacher like Donne would have used in sermons. The peculiar thing about this sort of image is that the poet, instead of letting the reader interpret the comparison for himself, complements the image, sometimes with another comparison.

> As th'earth conceiving by the Sunne,
> Yeelds faire diversitie,
> Yet never knowes which course that light doth run,
> So let mee study, that mine actions bee
> Worthy their sight, though blinde in how they see.
> (The Litanie, 50-4)

We have here a double metaphor. The personified earth conceives life and nature by the personified sun, although it does not know the source of this vital power. In this way should the poet's actions should be worthy of Heaven, although they (personified) should be ignorant of how Heaven sees them. The image is a sort of

complex simile, in which two images are correlated, one becoming the referent for the other although both are written down. The image of the sun and earth bringing life to the world is the referent for the personification of the actions of Donne's life. The process is double: imagination effects the correlations needed for the creation of two images, and then correlates the referent of one with the content of the other. Sometimes in this type of image the complementary part is purely denotative, and serves as an explanation for the imaginative part. Usually it is more purely descriptive than the other types of image, and serves to relate two images into a new descriptive whole, presenting a complete idea by the use of images as if they were factual statements. So we get what seems at first to be mere description:

> As virtuous men passe mildly away,
> And whisper to their soules, to goe,
> Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
> The breath goes now, and some say, no:
>
> So let us melt, and make no noise,
> No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
> T'were prophanation of our joyes
> To tell the layetie our love.
>
> (A Valediction; forbidding mourning, 1-8)

Closer examination reveals that the whole is a very complex image, uniting several lesser images into a cohesive pattern.

This division of Donne's imagery into four types or classes of conceit and seven types of comparison might appear to be needlessly pedantic and strained; indeed I should not like to see these categories replace the accepted ones for normal studies of imagery. Perhaps the simple phrases, "metaphor" and "conceit", would have been sufficient for the purposes of a study

of Donne's imagery done in the manner of Caroline Spurgeon, and they are certainly sufficient for an analysis of a single poem. But, these categories have not been inverted and forced on Donne's poems; they have emerged from a careful scrutiny of the poems. Nor do they purport to be new names for images; they are only tags needed to describe different uses of images.

Before going on to a consideration of Donne's images we must consider yet another category, that of double meanings. Although the pun is not usually considered an image, there is always something metaphorical in any double meaning. The double meaning correlates two senses of a word, or two words that sound alike or are spelled in the same way but which have different meanings. It works in the same way as the comparison: the symbols combine (within one word) and the referents (the things really meant) are equated, or more or less equated, and the references, the thoughts about the referents described by the symbols, are made to coincide.

There are two types within this category. Irony, although it certainly involves double meanings, is more a matter of attitude than of imagery. So the only types of double meaning considered here are the pun and the quibble.

The simpler form of double meaning is the pun, the use of a word which suggests more than one meaning. Donne uses the pun whenever he considers it to be suitable, whether the context is serious or funny. Wryly commenting on the effects of his elopement, he writes: "John Donne, Anne Donne, Vn-done", and in prayer, something at which he never laughed, he writes:

But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sunne
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore.
(A Hymn to God the Father, 15-6)

or even:

Wilt thou forgive that sinne; through which I runne,
And do run still: though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.
(Ibid., 3-6)

The pun can also become the basic metaphor of a long conceit, as it does in Elegie XI. In this poem the poet says that he has lost a golden chain belonging to his mistress, and because of this twelve gold angels must be taken from him and melted down to provide gold for a new one. He bemoans the sad fate of these innocent angels sent by Heaven to provide for him and care for him. Because of his sin, and through no fault of their own, they must be cast into flames. Typically, the discussion is carried on in a quasi-logical manner, carefully noting all the scholastic definitions concerning angels.

There is also in Donne's poetry a less direct type of double meaning which we shall call a quibble, combining both OED definitions of the word to express the meaning needed. There is, in the quibble, a certain amount of argument to justify the double meaning - a certain amount, in fact, of "quibbling". It is a pun without the directness of a pun. Perhaps the best definition would be that it is an implied rather than a stated pun.

For example, in Elegie XI the poet, bewailing his just angels and their sad fate, speaks of coins not as noble as his twelve lost angels. There are:

. . . Spanish Stamps, still travelling,
That are become as Catholique as their King.
(Elegie XI, 29-30)

The Spanish coins have become catholic or universal because they have been used so freely as bribes by the far-flung agents of His Most Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain. Similarly, the characteristics of French coins are similar to (or rather ironically, directly opposed to, which amounts to the same thing) the title of the King:

> . . . howsoe'r French Kings most Christian be,
> Their Crownes are circumcis'd most Iewishly.
> (Ibid., 27-8)

The main body of this work will be a study of Donne's imagery under the categories developed in this Chapter, and it must be understood that the categories have not been invented independently but have been extracted from a close scrutiny of the imagery of the poems themselves. If we do not consider the headings to be rigid and if we remember that Donne like all poets combines these components to create his own imagery (for imagery comes from the imagination and not from theses or lists of rules) we can begin to approach the imagery of Donne's poems.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEITS OF THE FIRST TYPE

The first of the four distinct types of conceit in Donne's poetry is the long and carefully worked-out comparison taken by the poet to some logical or quasi-logical conclusion and carried on for the full length of a poem. The chief characteristic of the conceit as a developed and lengthy image is the fanciful expansion of the references of a basic metaphor by some apparently logical method. C. Day Lewis, speaking of the metaphysical poets and their imagery, says: "Instead of the dramatic or narrative argument there grew up a kind of argument based on the interplay between fancy and reason. The Metaphysicals pursued this argument remorselessly, driving the poem from one image to the next along the chain of fancy, and sometimes ad absurdum. The conceit, as they practiced it, was the fanciful treatment of predominantly intellectual material."[1]

The conceit then, especially the longer developed conceits with their constant evoking of ramifications and analogues, is the mark of intellectualized poetry, of emotion not only recollected in tranquillity, but pondered over and rationalized in tranquillity. Indeed, it is often the mark of non-existant emotion, insincere wit. The bones, as it were, of the long conceit can be found in the developed metaphor, for the conceit, the "intellectual concept feathered with fancy",[2] exists not only as an image, but as a certain way of using an image or even an attitude towards an image. This rather vague statement will become more clear after a consideration of an example.

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1 Lewis, The Poetic Image (1947) 52

2 Ibid., 52

Probably the best example to start with is The Flea, a quaint little poem that would seem to have been greatly admired by Donne's contemporaries. Since it is short and not too complicated, it will give some idea of the working of the conceit.

> Marke but this flea, and marke in this,
> How little that which thou deny'st me is;
> It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
> And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee;
> Thou know'st that this cannot be said
> A sinne, nor shame, nor losse of maidenhead,
> Yet this enjoyes before it woe,
> And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two,
> And this, alas, is more then wee would doe.
>
> Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
> Where wee almost, yea more then maryed are.
> This flea is you and I, and this
> Our mariage bed, and mariage temple is;
> Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
> And cloysterd in these living walls of Jet.
> Though use make you apt to kill mee,
> Let not to that, selfe murder added bee,
> And sacrilege, three sinnes in killing three.
>
> Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since
> Purpled thy naile, in blood of innocence?
> Wherein could this flea guilty bee
> Except in that drop which it suckt from thee?
> Yet thou triumph'st, and saist that thou
> Find'st not thyself, nor mee the weaker now;
> 'Tis true, then learne how false, feares bee;
> Just so much honor, when thou yeeld'st to mee;
> Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee.
>
> (The Flea)

The idea which Donne is trying to express as wittily as he can is that his mistress should not worry about the loss of her virginity. The correlative of the poem is the flea which jumps from his body to hers. He points out that she is not at all ashamed or guilty because her blood is mingled with his within the flea. Yet, metaphorically, the flea is succeeding where the poet has failed. Combining two bloods, it has achieved the metaphysic of love; it has gained the perfect union of male and female,

mingling two in one to create a new, mysteriously united entity, the Paracelsian ideal. Vir sine foemina integer non est. Within the flea the lovers have a union more perfect than that of marriage. The insect actually is the lovers, it is their nuptial bed and the hymenial temple in which they are metaphorically cloistered.

But the cruel mistress would kill the flea, stamping out three lives. This would involve three sins. The first would be killing the poet, and to this her cruel nature has accustomed her. The second would be suicide, which the poet implores her not to add to the first sin. The third would be sacrilege, since the flea is their temple of marriage and the symbol of their mysterious unity. It might be noted in passing that Donne, the scholastic, does not consider it sinful to take the life of the flea, which has no soul.

"Cruell and sodaine" she kills the flea and commits the triple sin, and the poet adds yet another evil, that of killing the flea, in which there was no guilt except that taken in with her guilty blood. Finally Donne drops the consideration of the flea's innocence and with a typical tergiversation comments that neither he nor his mistress is any the worse because of the flea's death, and argues that yielding to him will harm her honour only to the same extent as the flea's death imperilled her life.

Evidently the image cannot be called simply a metaphor, for no clear-cut comparison is made. The basic metaphor is the abstract idea of the mingling of bloods. The flea and its actions

provide the objective correlative which gives Donne the starting point for his argument, allowing him to treat his idea in a manner which hides the simple idea in the complex arguments of the schools, typifying what E.M.W. Tillard calls the "logical structure... characteristic of Donne".[3] This structure, he says, "implies an unusual cast of mind; a reluctance to reach conclusions, a keener relish for the processes than for the issues of thought, a cast of mind the remotest possible from the sphere of action".[4] This "cast of mind" of which Mr. Tillard speaks, the habit of taking a metaphor and building it into a great logical structure, is what makes the metaphysicals and their imagery unique in English poetry and the cause of Dr. Johnson's famous censure of the metaphysicals of being "upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle".[5]

Dr. Johnson's criticism is not now generally accepted as a censure, but is still taken as a very acute comment on the metaphysical's poetic practise. Writing in an age when clarity of expression was an ideal and when metaphor had been reduced almost to the level of mere ornament, he was levelling a blow against the poet who affected the metaphysics, for to him the argumentative nature of the long conceit seemed quite unsuited to poetry. But there is a great deal more to the use of the

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3 Tillard, The Metaphysicals and Milton (1956) 5

4 Ibid. 5

5 Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (ed. Hill, 1905) i, 33

conceit than the effort of a wit to indulge in solemn metaphysics on trifling or obscene matters. Thomas De Quincey, in his attempt at refuting the censure of Dr. Johnson, comes closer to the correct appraisal of the developed conceit when he says that Donne used the curious type of imagery now being studied because he was a rhetorician. Beginning with the unqualified statement that "the very first eminent rhetorician in the English literature is Donne",[6] he goes on to lay his hand unerringly upon the intellectual nature of the conceit, the image which is not only a decoration to a poem, but which is the very soul of it.

> Dr. Johnson inconsiderately classes him in company with Cowley, &c., under the title of Metaphysical poets: metaphysical they were not; Rhetorical would have been a more accurate designation. In saying that, however, we must remind our readers that we revert to the original use of the word Rhetoric, as laying the principal stress upon the management of the thoughts, and only a secondary one upon the ornaments of style. Few writers have shown a more extraordinary compass of powers than Donne; for he combined what no other man has ever done - the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty. Massy diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis, thoughts and descriptions which have the fervent and gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Aeschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliancies is strewed over the whole of his occasional verses and prose. No criticism was ever more unhappy than that of Dr. Johnson's, which denounces all this artificial display as so much perversion of taste. There cannot be a falser thought than this; for, upon that principle, a whole class of compositions might be vicious by conforming to its own ideal. The artifice and machinery of rhetoric furnishes in its degree as legitimate a basis for intellectual pleasure as any other; that the pleasure is of an inferior order, can no more attaint the idea or model of the composition, than it can impeach the excellence of an epigram that it is not a tragedy. Every species of composition is to be tried by its own laws; and if Dr. Johnson had urged explicitly (what was evidently moving in his thoughts), that a metrical structure, by holding forth the promise of poetry, defrauds the mind of its just expectations, he would have said what is notoriously false. ... Weak criticism, indeed, is that which condemns a copy of verses under the ideal of poetry, when the

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6 De Quincey, Works (1862-71) x, 39

> mere substitution of another name and classification suffices to evade the sentence, and to reinstate the composition in its rights as rhetoric. It may be very true that the age of Donne gave too much encouragement to his particular vein of composition; that, however, argues no depravity of taste, but a taste erring only in being too limited and exclusive.[7]

Both Dr. Johnson and De Quincey, despite their differing views of the suitability of Donne's imagery to poetry, have evidently realized the nature of the conceit. It is subtle in the philosophical sense of the word; whether poetically or unpoetically does not effect this study. And it is a rhetorical device, a way of writing that adds overtones to ordinary poetic communication of an idea. The metaphor, whether simple or developed, conveys some idea or state of mind that cannot well be expressed in any other way. The conceit, the peculiar use of an image or attitude towards an image, conveys something further. It conveys, as John Peter puts it, a tone of voice.

With this in mind we return to The Flea. The conceit of the poem comes from the vision of a flea biting the poet and his mistress in turn. This vision is turned into a complex metaphor in which the union of two bloods in a third epitomizes the metaphysic of love treated so frequently in Donne's poems. Invoking the methods of scholastic disputation, Donne turns his metaphor into a fine theological argument, proves his argument, then denies it, refutes it with another argument, and finally, by a sudden tergiversation, makes the whole a masterpiece of irony. There is a great deal more implication than statement, although the implications are

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7 De Quincey, Works (1862-71) x, 39-40

made clear by the obvious attitude of the poet, show in the choice of the ludicrous flea as the objective correlative for what purports to be a poem of love.

In Lovers infinitenesse the idea is rather less definite and more abstract than that expressed in The Flea, and again it is developed by a conceit.

If yet I have not all thy love,
Deare, I shall never have it all,
I cannot breath one other sigh, to move,
Nor can intreat one other teare to fall,
And all my treasure, which should purchase thee,
Sighs, teares, and oathes, and letters I have spent.
Yet no more can be due to mee,
Than at the bargaine made was ment,
If then thy gift of love was partiall,
That some to mee, some should to others fall,
  Deare, I shall never have Thee All.

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

Yet I would not have all yet,
Hee that hath all can have no more,
And since my love doth every day admit
New growth, thou shouldst heve new rewards in store;
Thou canst not every day give me thy heart,
If thou canst give it, then thou never gavest it:
Loves riddles are, that though thy heart depart,
It stayes at home, and thou with losing savest it:
But wee will have a way more liberall,
Then changing hearts, to joyne them, so wee shall
  Be one, and one anothers All.

(Lovers infinitenesse)

Again we are not dealing with a simple metaphor or the equating of one thing with another. The metaphor, which is of course

the basis of the conceit, deals with a fixed quantity. The conceit, on the other hand, deals with an idea that is changing, growing or expanding. The basic metaphor in this poem is the idea that the union of the two lovers is like the formation of a corporation.

Donne begins with the simple statement that, since he has not all the love which his mistress can give, he will probably never get it all. Then comes the first image of the conceit, the notion that his money (his sighs and tears) has all been spent. He spent it buying the controlling interest in the corporation which is the union of his mistress and himself. But now it would seem that the company has expanded, and that other men are buying in. In other words, the lady is not keeping all her favours, not giving all her love, for the man who originally bought it with his currency of sighs and tears. The poet's argument is that he himself, since he bought the chief part when her stock of love was small, should now have all the supply of love she can produce. The last stanza turns back upon the argument and destroys all the reasoning with a series of paradoxes. Finally the poet returns to his basic metaphor, rejects the idea of buying the lady's heart outright, and calls upon her to form a joint corporation with him. This joint corporation, of course, represents the metaphysic of love which mysteriously makes two into one.

Donne uses this complex form of metaphorical statement, this conceit, because it is the only means of expression for what he has in mind. As in The Flea his idea is that of the mysterious union of male and female into a perfect third entity, a favourite

concept of his. But the poems differ. In each the poet adds to the concept which he embodies by means of an objective correlative and a metaphor his own attitude and the attitude of his mistress towards him. The aim is not expository, but dramatic. The idea can only be communicated by a poem that not only tells the reader that Donne is seeking a perfect union, but that conveys also his attitude, the tone of voice he would use if he were speaking rather than writing. This cannot easily be done by simple metaphor and denotative exposition. Were the poem a conventional love lyric calling upon a lady to grant her love to the importunate poet, then such metaphor and exposition would have sufficed. But Donne is not thinking in such simple terms. To him love is an experience that must not only be felt, but must be scrutinized and rationalized. His poem represents himself thinking out loud, and the subject is not only love. The subject is John Donne in love, and this is rather more complex.

We can compare these two poems, The Flea and Lovers infinitenesse. They are evidently quite similar, having a common theme, the metaphysic of love. They both take a complex and abstract metaphor and develop it into a conceit. While both are to some degree extensions of metaphors, neither is simply a developed metaphor. Both build an elaborate argument from an axiomatic basic metaphor. Both destroy the fruits of reason with a sudden tergiversation.

But there is a distinct difference in use. In one the correlative is an actual flea, giving the poet the idea that two bloods (spirits) can be united to form a third. This gives rise

to an ironic argument on the unimportance of the loss of virginity. The conceit is built up in fun, to be smashed as soon as it has been completed. In Lovers infinitenesse the conceit works from the other end. The objective correlative is the metaphor, the abstract idea of the mistress as a business enterprise which the poet has bought. There is not quite the same irony. Instead of an argument on the moral considerations involved in killing a flea, we find the discussion of a basic metaphor, carried on too far perhaps for taste, but not so far that it becomes ludicrous and destroys its own argument by a reductio ad absurdum. The tergiversation at the end does not reverse the argument of the conceit; it merely ignores it. In the second poem Donne drops all pretence at logic to show that his metaphysical idea of love is illogical and can best be expressed by a series of paradoxes. In the first he builds a logical argument into a reductio ad absurdum by showing that the point he has proven is specious.

To get some further idea of the nature and use of the first type of conceit, consider now a third poem of about the same length. This poem, The Primrose, being at Montgomery Castle, upon the hill, on which it is situate, is also formed by a conceit of the first type. Again we find some of Donne's ideas about love being expressed by a development of a basic metaphor, but the metaphor is more vague than those of the two poems just considered.

Vpon this Primrose hill,
Where, if Heav'n would distill
A shoure of raine, each severall drop might goe
To his owne primrose, and grow Manna so;
And where their forme, and their infinitie

Make a terrestrial Galaxie,
As the smalle starres doe in the skie:
I walke to finde a true Love: and I see
That 'tis not a mere woman, that is shee,
But must, or more, or lesse then woman bee.

Yet know I not, which flower
I wish; a sixe, or foure;
But should my true-Love lesse then woman bee,
She were scarce any thing; and then, should shee
Be more then woman, shee would get above
All thought of sexe, and thinke to move
My heart to study her, and not to love;
Both these were monsters: Since there must reside
Falsehood in woman, I could more abide,
She were by art, then Nature falsify'd

Live Primrose then, and thrive
With thy true number five;
And women, whom this flower doth represent,
With this mysterious number be content;
Ten is the farthest number; if halfe ten
Belonge unto each woman, then
Each woman may take halfe us men;
Or if this will not serve their turne, Since all
Numbers are odde, or even, and they fall
First into this, five, women may take us all.

(The Primrose)

This is a complicated idea expressed by a complicated conceit. The whole image is based on the fact that the normal primrose has five segments in its corolla, and that the country people of Donne's time considered the primrose with either more or less than five a token of true love. This idea is the basic metaphor. But Donne, before beginning the extension of the image, adds another idea, that the normal or perfect primrose, with its five segments, symbolizes the perfect woman. So the basic metaphor is complicated to such an extent that it becomes paradoxical. Five petals will be a perfect woman, but only more or less than five will symbolize true love; Donne's true love cannot be a perfect woman.

The poem opens dramatically upon a hill covered with primroses. Donne walks upon the hill to find a true love, a primrose with either more or less than five petals; therefore the lady must be more than a normal woman or less than one. If she is less than a normal woman, she is nothing, being lower than the cause of the poet's pains. If she is more than the normal woman she will be, as Grierson says, "that unreal thing, the object of Platonic affection and Petrarchian adoration."[8] So Donne decides to give up the idea of finding his true love, and tells women that they should be satisfied with themselves as they are, for five, the normal or perfect woman, is half of ten. If ten is the highest possible number and the real unit of counting, then the normal or perfect woman is half of the highest possible human achievement, which is the metaphysic of love, the perfect union of male and female into a third being. Cynically he adds that, if being half of the Paracelsian union is not enough to satisfy woman, they may consider that five, their number, is the first number made up of the addition of an odd number (three) and an even number (two), and so, since all numbers are either odd or even, they control human nature.

In this conceit, as in the other two considered above, we have a basic metaphorical idea being developed into an argument. But in this poem, unlike the other two, the argument is neither reduced to absurdity nor ignored. It is considered to be proven: four petals is a true love who is less than woman; six petals is

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8 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, 48-9

a true love who is more than woman; and five petals represents a normal or perfect woman who is not a true love. There is a deliberate confusion between the two possible interpretations of the basic metaphor; five petals could mean a normal woman, it could mean a perfect woman. This ambiguity is used skilfully. The change of thought in the last stanza is not a tergiversation, but a second argument based on the first, telling woman why they should avoid extremes.

So far we have considered three lyrics of about the same length, and tried to distinguish in them different ways in which the poet treated his basic metaphorical idea. As we took them in order we found that the idea itself became more complex, and the metaphor in its simplest form moved, as it were, farther away from its referent. In The Flea the metaphor had an actual object as its correlative and referent; in Lovers infinitenesse it was conceivably visual, but only by stretching the imagination; and in The Primrose it was a completely abstract notion, in which the primrose was the correlative but in which the idea of the primrose was the referent rather than the flower itself. If we go on to consider the longer didactic poems, we shall see that the basic metaphor becomes even less clear and even more remote from any tangible referent.

The Anniversaries of the death of Elizabeth Drury present conceits more abstract than those found in the three love poems. In the first the conceit is developed by a listing of the weaknesses of the world and the establishment of what would seem to be a logical relationship between them and the death

of the child. Donne anatomizes them under several headings: first the world's shortcomings are related to the child's early death. He mentions "What life the world hath still", a glimmering of reflected virtue left by her memory. He develops the anatomical metaphor, listing "The sicknesse of the World", "Impossibility of health", "Shortnesse of life", "Smallnesse of stature"; until he has proven his point that mankind has decayed to a mere shadow of what it was. With an appalling hyperbole he says:

> She, of whom th'Ancients seem'd to prophesie,
> When they call'd vertues by the name of shee;
> Shee in whom vertue was so much refin'd,
> That for Allay unto so pure a minde
> Shee tooke the weaker Sex; shee that could drive
> The poysonous tincture, and the staine of Eve,
> Out of her thoughts, and deeds; and purifie
> All, by a true religious Alchymie;
> Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
> Thou knowest how poore a trifling thing man is.
> And learn'st thus much by our Anatomie,
> The heart being perish'd, no part can be free.
> (The first Anniversary, 175-86)

The conceit develops further, demonstrating the decay of the lower forms of nature as well as that of mankind.

> ... the Springs and Sommers which we see,
> Like sonnes of women after fifty bee.
> And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
> Can well direct him where to looke for it.
> And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
> When in the Planets, and the Firmament
> They seeke so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies
> 'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone.
> (Ibid., 203-13)

Coherence, proper relations between things, reason, are all gone. Elizabeth Drury, beauty, is gone. Beauty is colour and proportion to the scholastic.

> And, Oh, it can no more be questioned,
> That beauties best, proportion, is dead,
> Since even griefe it selfe, which now alone
> Is left us, is without proportion.
> Shee by whose lines proportion should bee
> Examin'd, measure of all Symmetree,
> Whom had that Ancient seen, who thought soules made
> Of Harmony, he would at next have said
> That Harmony was shee, ...
>
> (Ibid., 306-13)

The logical argument continues. Colour is gone, since:-

> ... shee, in whom all white, and red, and blew
> (Beauties ingredients) voluntary grew,
> As in an unvext Paradise; from whom
> Did all things verdure, and their lustre come,
> Whose composition was miraculous,
> Being all colour, all Diaphanous,
> (For Ayre, and Fire but thick grosse bodies were
> And livliest stones but drowsie, and pale to her,)
> Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou know'st this,
> Thou knowst how wan a Ghost this our world is.
>
> (Ibid., 361-70)

Proportion and colour, the elements of beauty, being gone, there must also be a weakness in the correspondence between the heavens and earth. Finally Donne states the basic metaphor around which the whole argument has been built.

> But as in cutting up a man that's dead,
> The body will not last out, to have read
> On every part, and therefore men direct
> Their speech to parts, that are of most effect;
> So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
> Were punctual in this Anatomy;
> Nor smels it well to hearers, if one tell
> Them their disease, who faine would think they're well.
>
> (Ibid., 435-42)

In The second Anniversary the argument develops from the idea that the life of this world is bred from corruption; Elizabeth Drury is not to be mourned but envied.

> Forget this rotten world; And unto thee
> Let thine owne times as an old storie bee.
> Be not concern'd: studie not why, nor when;

Doe not so much as not beleeve a man.
For though to erre, be worst, to try truths forth,
Is far more businesse, then this world is worth.
The world is but a carkasse; thou art fed
By it, but as a worme, that carkasse bred;
And why should'st thou, poore worme, consider more,
When this world will grow better then before,
Then those thy fellow wormes doe thinke upon
That cerkasses last resurrection.

(The second Anniversary, 49-60)

The logical argumentative method is still being used. The "iust disestimation of this world" is followed by a contemplation of death. Death gives liberty to the soul, which is cramped in the body. In this life the soul must sweat and study to learn trifles, while in the next it will know everything by nature. In this life the soul is tainted by corrupt and sinful company, while in the next it will be surrounded by the greatest and best of men. The soul knows no essential joy in life; even if it did the essential joys of the earth would easily be surpassed by the accidental joys of heaven.

In these two poems we find another use of the conceit. Instead of having a basic metaphor being built up into a tight logical argument, we find the logical association of ideas and images being used to build the basic metaphorical idea into a long, quite loose disputation. In The first Anniversary the basic metaphor is the hyperbolical idea that the world is decaying because of the death of Elizabeth Drury. But instead of building the argument around the idea, as he has done in the three lyrics quoted above, Donne merely states it, going on to list as many things as he can to prove the truth of his statement, drawing his examples from the confused ideas of the universe which resulted

from the clash of old and new philosophies. There is no development of thought, no progress. The conceit is built up not to emphasize the basic metaphor or to use it for an argument, but to prove it beyond all doubt true.

The conceit in The Second Anniversary is developed in much the same way. The basic metaphor gets lost in a sea of words, so much so that the poet himself seems frequently to lose sight of it. Instead of a growth of thought there is a sequence of examples to prove the statement that the world travels through space uselessly.

> ... as a ship which hath strooke saile, doth runne
> By force of that force which before, it wonne.
> (Ibid., 7-8)

And Elizabeth Drury's death proves that only the next life is worth considering. This use of the conceit differs from the ones considered earlier in much the same way as exploring a house differs from building one. The length of the poem frustrates any attempt at giving the conceit the unity of the conceit of, for example, The Flea. The poet loses sight of his basic metaphor and the referent, and follows thought rather than construct new thought.

The next poem to consider is The Progresse of the Soule or Metempsychosis. Ben Jonson explained the metaphor to Drummond of Hawthornden, telling him that the conceit was

> ... that he sought the soule of that aple which Eve pulled and thereafter made it the soule of a bitch, then of a shee wolf, and so of a woman; his generall purpose was to have brought in all the bodies of the Hereticks from the

soule of Cain, and at last left it in the bodie of Calvin.[9] Although the interpretation was probably given Jonson by Donne himself, the poem shows that the progress of the soul is somewhat different. As Grierson points out, the theme "is the progress of the soul of heresy. And, as the seventh stanza clearly indicates, the great heretic in whom the line closed was not to be Calvin but Queen Elizabeth."[10]

> ... the great soule which here among us now
> Doth dwell, and moves that hand, and tongue, and brow,
> Which, as the Moone the sea, moves us.
> (The Progresse of the Soule, 61-3)

The basic metaphorical idea is that the soul which fled from the apple which Eve ate passed on through various creatures until it learned evil enough to become female.

> Prince of the orchard, faire as dawning morne,
> Fenc'd with the law, and ripe as soone as borne
> That apple grew, which this Soule did enlive,
> Till the then climing serpent, that now creeps
> For that offence, for which all mankinde weepes,
> Tooke it, and t'her whom the first man did wive
> (Whom and her race, only forbiddings drive)
> He gave it, she, t'her husband, both did eate;
> So perished the eaters, and the meate:
> And wee (for treason taints the blood) thence die and sweat.
>
> Man all at once was there by woman slaine,
> And one by one we'are here slaine o'er againe
> By them.
> (Ibid., 81-93)

So the soul passes from the apple, and enters in turn a mandrake plant, a bird's egg (the sparrow, symbol of lechery), a fish, a sea-bird, a whale, a mouse, an elephant, a wolf, an ape, and finally

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9 Drummond, 'Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden' in Ben Jonson (ed. Herford and Simpson, 1925) i, 136

10 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, xviii

a woman. In the second last stanza the soul enters the body of Cain's wife. Donne, we may presume, had not the daring to follow its progress to the Queen. The conceit ends:

> ... and fast there by one end,
> Did this Soule limbes, these limbes a soule attend;
> And now they joyn'd: keeping some quality
> Of every past shape, she knew treachery,
> Rapine, deceit, and lust, and ills enow
> To be a woman. Themech she is now,
> Sister and wife to Caine, Caine that first did plow.
> (Ibid., 504-10)

This is yet another way of using the fully-developed conceit. Donne does not take his basic metaphor as the starting point for either an argument or a discussion; he neither proves it nor explores it. He expands it, so that the whole poem becomes, rather than a development of a metaphorical idea, an enormous metaphor having as its referent the Pythagorean doctrine which "doth not onely carry one soule from man to man, nor man to beast, but indifferently to plants also". The conceit ends without a tergiversation or a new argument growing from the proven one or a triumphant Q.E.D. There is no room in it for any such thing; the whole poem has merely expanded a basic metaphor without changing or developing it in any way. The idea in this poem is not hidden within the conceit, it is magnified by it. Spreading his idea over a vast canvas, Donne bypasses his customary tongue-in-cheek cynicism and allows himself to descend to bitter and savage satire, indeed, to invective.

At this point, having given fairly close readings of five poems containing conceits of the first type, we should try to sum up some of the ways in which they were alike and some of

the ways in which they differed.

1. The Flea:
Donne takes a whimsical idea and makes it the axiom upon which he builds an argument that hides a relatively simple idea in a complex of philosophical subtleties. Having proven his point, he reduces his argument to absurdity and turns the whole poem into an exercise in wit and irony.

2. Lovers infinitenesse:
Donne takes a metaphorical idea and develops it into an argument. When he has proven his point he elects to ignore it, so creating the idea he wants to communicate, that love is not logical at all and can best be expressed by paradoxes.

3. The Primrose, being at Montgomery Castle, upon the hill, on which it is situate:
In this poem the basic metaphor is developed into an argument which is proven to the poet's satisfaction. But the argument is not aimed at any real or imaginary listener; the poet is speaking to himself. Having proven his point, he uses it as an axiom on which to base a new argument directed at womankind.

4. The Anniversaries:
The basic metaphors of these two poems do not develop into arguments: they are merely stated, and followed by a series of further statements bearing out their truth. Donne does not make any thought follow logically from another in the development of the conceit. He does not develop the basic metaphors; he discusses them.

5. The Progresse of the Soule or Metempsychosis:
The basic metaphor is neither developed nor discussed; it is expanded. Instead of using the notion to build up an argument, or stating the idea with proofs, Donne spreads the concept out and magnifies it.

What, then, do these poems have in common? Each of them consists of a long, worked-out comparison carried on for the full length of the poem. In each poem the conceit serves some purpose distinct from that of its basic metaphor, either that of adding an element of wit or that of imposing some unity upon a series of rambling thoughts and images. And in each poem the conceit works upon the reader as a tone of voice, implying by its aptness or ludicrousness and by its form the poet's attitude towards the subject of his poem.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEITS OF THE SECOND TYPE

The second type of conceit has already been the subject of some discussion in the first part of this work, where it was stated that such an image would be found when, in the course of writing, the poet seized upon some metaphor, simile, or fanciful phrase, and followed it through to a logical or mock-logical conclusion, either until his poem came to an end or another image suggested itself. In many cases, conceits of this type will differ from conceits of the first type only in the fact that, while the first type conceit is prearranged and provides the framework for an entire poem, the conceit of the second type emerges from the word-play of the poem and grows into a major image.

In the discussion of the types of imagery, the poem cited as being an example of this type of conceit was one of the poems To the Countesse of Bedford. We shall consider the poem here in greater detail.

Though I be dead, and buried, yet I have
  (Living in you,) Court enough in my grave,
As oft as there I thinke my selfe to bee,
  So many resurrections waken mee.
That thankfullnesse your favours have begot
  In mee, embalmes mee, that I doe not rot.
This season as 'tis Easter, as 'tis spring,
  Must both to growth and to confession bring
My thoughts dispos'd unto your influence; so,
  These verses bud, so these confessions grow.
First I confesse I have to others lent
  Your stock, and over prodigally spent
Your treasure, for since I had never knowne
  Vertue or beautie, but as they are growne
In you, I should not thinke or say they shine,
  (So as I have) in any other Mine.
Next I confesse this my confession,
  For, 'tis some fault thus much to touch upon
Your praise to you, where half rights seeme too much,
  And make your minds sincere complexion blush.
Next I confesse my'impenitence, for I
  Can scarce repent my first fault, since thereby
Remote low Spirits, which shall ne'r read you,

May in lesse lessions finde enough to doe,
By studying copies, not Originals,
Desunt caetera.

(To the Countesse of Bedford, 1-25)

The poem is unfinished, and therefore, since it probably never received any revision, shows us a very good example of the growth of the spontaneous conceit. The conceit develops out of the word-play of the poem and grows to become the major image.

Donne starts his poem with the common notion that the lover is metaphorically dead when he is away from his ideal mistress. But he modifies the idea: merely thinking of being with his beloved can resurrect him. The metaphorical concept of resurrection leads quite naturally to the metaphor of spring, and both these concepts lead naturally to the metaphor of Easter. By combining the four notions, Donne arrives at the basic metaphor which develops into his conceit.

The basic metaphor - the combined ideas of death, resurrection, spring, and Easter - develops into an allusion to that precept of the Roman Catholic Church which orders all the faithful to confess their sins at least once a year, specifying that this annual confession must be made during the Easter season. So there develops the conceit in its final form, and the poem begins to take the form of a confession. The conceit itself, taken out of its context, does not differ in any way from the examples cited of conceits of the first type. The idea might even have been carefully thought out before Donne started writing. But, the difference is that the poet does not start right from the beginning with a basic metaphor to develop; he starts writing

and then finds or brings in his basic metaphor.

The nature of the second type of conceit may become more clearly defined with the discussion of another poem, the Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse which also contains a conceit of the second type. Although it is developed in the usual way, there is a difference in the introduction. Instead of finding a conceit growing out of the poem and dominating what follows, we find the conceit being roughly introduced into the poem and moving farther and farther from the referent until it finally loses all the characteristics of the metaphor.

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

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

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

Is the Pacifique Sea my home? Or are
  The Easterne riches? Is Jerusalem?
Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltare,
  All streights, and none but streights, are ways to them,
  Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Sem.

We thinke that Paradise and Calvarie,
  Christs Crosse, and Adams tree, stood in one place;
Looke Lord, and finde both Adams met in me;
  As the first Adams sweat surrounds my face,
  May the last Adams blood my soule embrace.

So, in his purple wrapp'd receive mee Lord,
  By these his thornes give me his other Crowne;
And as to others soules I preach'd thy word,

Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne,
Therfore that he may raise the Lord throws down.
(Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse, 1-30)

As Donne approaches death he thinks of Heaven as a room in which the saints sing, as a choir, the praises of God. He prepares his soul (the instrument) for the music of which he will be part. Suddenly a metaphor appears, and develops rapidly into three metaphors.

1. Donne's doctors are like cosmographers, unemotionally studying his physical body, his microcosm.

2. Since they are cosmographers, Donne is the map which they are studying.

3. Maps all show straits; Donne's map shows the straits of the explorers and the straits of pain and death by which his soul must enter the next world.

The conceit grows from the basic metaphor of cosmography, which is made up at the beginning of these three notions. But then, instead of a development of the basic metaphor into a logical structure, we find that the basic metaphor is assumed, and its third component - the pun - gives rise to a new metaphor. Heaven, the culmination of the journey, becomes the west, the unknown place for which so many explorers of the time were sailing through straits. But the currents of the straits which Donne must sail will allow no return. This, however, is no cause for fear, since Donne sees that west and east merge in a full-size map. And, since Donne is a full-size map, his east and west - his death and his resurrection - will become one and the same.

In this case the conceit is not developing according to a logical plan. The basic metaphor is changing, developing into

new related imagery; and the conceit is moving farther from its referent.

In the next stanza the conceit develops still farther away from its referent, and becomes a discussion in which Donne points out that straits lead to practically all the desirable places in the world, implying that the straits he is suffering must be endured if he is to reach Heaven. Then comes the idea that the tree from which Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit stood on the same spot where the cross of Christ was later raised. This notion still has some connection with cosmography, but it has moved so far from the referent of the basic metaphor that it is near losing all claim to be called a metaphorical statement.

Finally the conceit breaks down completely, and the last images of the poem have no connection whatever with the cosmography metaphor.

By comparing this with the first poem considered in this chapter we see that there is a difference between the method by which the conceit is developed in each, in the way in which it is introduced, and in the way in which it comes to an end.

In A Valediction: of weeping we find a conceit of the second type appearing, like the conceit in the first poem, out of the word-play of the first part of the poem; and we find the conceit losing its unity and petering out before the end of the poem, as in the second example.

Let me powre forth
My teares before thy face, whil'st I stay here,
For thy face coines them, and thy stampe they beare,
And by this Mintage they are something worth,
For thus they bee

Pregnant of thee;
Fruits of much griefe they are, emblemes of more,
When a teare falls, that thou falst which it bore,
So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore.

On a round ball
A workeman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,
So doth each teare
Which thee doth weare,
A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
Till thy tearес mixt with mine doe overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.

O more then Moone,
Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy sphеare,
Weep me not dead, in thine armes, but forbeare
To teach the sea, what it may doe too soone;
Let not the winde
Example finde,
To doe me more harm, then it purposeth;
Since thou and I sigh one anothers breath,
Who e'r sighes most, is cruellest, and hasts the others death.
(A Valediction: of weeping, 1-27)

The poem concerns two lovers weeping. The idea of tears leads to the metaphor of coinage. The image of the mistress reflected in each tear makes it, as it were, a coin, valuable because of the stamp upon it. Three other metaphors follow in quick succession: the notion of pregnancy, of the tears as fruits of grief, and, returning to the stamp idea, of the tears as emblems of further grief.

From these ideas, to which is added the obvious allusion to the roundness of a tear, Donne comes to his conceit. The major image of the poem emerges as a comparison of the seventh type.[1] Each tear reflecting the image of the mistress becomes a globe,

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1 The developed image which takes the form of a self-explanatory analogy. See Chapter 2 above.

in the same way as a ball becomes a globe when a skilful workman paints on copies of the continents. The globe becomes a world, and the mixture of the tears of the two lovers becomes the dissolution of the heavens and the inundation of the world.

The conceit moves farther from its basic metaphor, although the idea is still being followed. The mistress becomes the moon, or, hyperbolically, more than the moon. As the moon draws the seas upwards, so the mistress draws seas of tears, drowning the poet.

The next metaphor still has some connection with the idea of the mistress as a geographical thing, but it has lost almost all connection with the basic metaphor of the globe. The wind, as well as the tide, has something to do with geography, but globes do not show wind storms. With the notion of the sea wind harming the poet the conceit fades out of the poem. The last image connects the wind - a development of the sea image - with the sighs of both lovers. With that the conceit has come to an end, just before the end of the poem.

In the three poems we have considered we have found three different uses of the second type conceit. One, in an unfinished poem, could have been made by the poet into a conceit of the first type; had he written a whole poem in such a way that all the imagery was united by one basic metaphor then the conceit would have been quite different in nature. Another appeared suddenly without warning; it emerged in the second stanza without having any roots in the first. It developed but without unity, moving farther away from its referent until it ceased to be one image. And a third

appeared out of a complex of metaphors and an allusion, developed, weakened, and disappeared. In The Canonization we will find the conceit developing out of some very complex imagery in the third stanza of a poem, and becoming a closely-knit discussion which dominates the poem to such an extent that the title is derived from it.

For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love,
  Or chide my palsie, or my gout,
My five grey haires, or ruin'd fortune flout,
  With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve,
   Take you a course, get you a place,
   Observe his honour, or his grace,
Or the Kings reall, or his stamped face
  Contemplate, what you will, approve,
  So you will let me love.

Call us what you will, wee are made such by love;
  Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
  And wee in us finde the'Eagle and the Dove.
   The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
   By us, we two being one, are it.
So to one neutrall thing both sexes fit,
  Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
  Mysterious by this love.

Wee can dye by it, if not live by love,
  And if unfit for tombes and hearse
Our legend bee, it will be fit for verse;
  And if no peece of Chronicle wee prove,
   We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes;
   As well a well wrought urne becomes
The greatest ashes, as halfe-acre tombes,
  And by these hymnes, all shall approve
  Us Canoniz'd for Love:

And thus invoke us; You whom reverend love
  Made one anothers hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
  Who did the whole worlds soule contract, and drove
   Into the glasses of your eyes
   (So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize,)
  Countries, Townes, Courts: Beg from above
  A patterne of your love!

(The Canonization, 1-45)

The basic metaphor lies in the implied comparison between the pair of lovers, who reject the world for more intense life in each other, and the great saints, who reject the world for a more intense life in God. At the beginning this is not clearly stated; the idea is there but has not yet been related to the referential notion of ascetic sainthood.

The poet begins by angrily addressing a friend, who has evidently been poking fun at him for his devotion to his mistress. He tells the friend to scoff at his poverty or at his physical weakness, but not at his love; the friend should work at improving his own position in the world, if he so wishes, but he should leave the poet to his loving.

The metaphors of the first stanza are connected with, but not directly related to, the basic metaphor. In two of the poems considered above we found a conceit developing away from its referent and fading into more related imagery. Here the conceit works the other way; as the poem progresses the image becomes more and more clear, closer and closer to the basic metaphor until finally it is stated clearly in line 36.

The first two stanzas are taken up by a series of metaphors, or rather, metaphorical statements, referring to the outside world which Donne and his mistress have rejected. Palsy, gout, grey hairs, and a ruined fortune represent Donne's state in the world. The friend's condition, or the condition which he would like to have, is represented by the two ideas of the king's face. The poet tells him either to go to court and get ahead by admiring the king's actual face, or to go into business and cultivate a fondness for the stamped

face of the king on money. The second stanza changes the theme; the metaphorical statements lose their personal quality and become a series of rhetorical questions in which the poet demands, sarcastically, to be told what harm he and his mistress do to the outside world by rejecting it.

In the third stanza the conceit moves closer to its basic metaphor; the imagery of the outside world is left behind and Donne begins playing with comparisons and moving towards the sainthood metaphor. At first the ironic note is maintained; the friend is told that he can call Donne and his mistress flies, that he can use any number of ridiculous comparisons. But then the irony disappears, and the poem comes still closer to its basic metaphor. Cleanth Brooks points out, in his discussion of this poem in The Well Wrought Urn:

> For that matter, the lovers can conjure up for themselves plenty of such fantastic comparisons: they know what the world thinks of them. But these figures of the third stanza are no longer the threadbare Petrarchan conventionalities; they have sharpness and bite. The last one, the likening of the lovers to the phoenix, is fully serious, and with it, the tone has shifted from ironic banter into a defiant but controlled tenderness.
>
> The effect of the poet's implied awareness of the lovers' apparent madness is to cleanse and revivify metaphor; to indicate the sense in which the poet accepts it, and thus to prepare us for accepting seriously the fine and seriously intended metaphors which dominate the last two stanzas of the poem.[2]

With the phoenix image Donne is on the verge of his conceit of sainthood. Again we find his obsession with unity, his metaphysic of love. The lovers together form one entity, in this case the phoenix. The phoenix dies on his bed of flame, and rises from the

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2 Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn (1947) 13-4)

ashes rejuvenated and purified of the taints of old age. The lovers die (that is, reach a sexual climax) on their bed of love, and rise from the ashes, like the phoenix, with the one nature renewed and strengthened. The end becomes the beginning; like the phoenix (or, like the saint) the lovers die so that their true and higher nature may be confirmed. Although the word "die" is a pun, and an obscene pun at that, Donne is being perfectly serious. By the use of the pun and the phoenix image he has connected the notion of actual death (which, of course, must come before canonization) with the metaphorical death of the love which he is defending. The poem moves closer to its major image. The lovers will die, and will leave a legend behind them. At the time Donne was writing, legend had the specific meaning of a life of a saint. Should the legend of love's saints be considered not worthy of the heavy chronicles which the friend's outer world devotes to the lives of the great, still it is suited to the sonnet, for the well wrought urn will hold ashes as well as the large tomb.

Two antitheses are used to contrast the real world with the ideal world of the lovers, echoing the metaphors of the first two stanzas. The first antithesis opposes the chronicle, the weighty and often dull record of facts about great men's lives, to the sonnet, the small and exquisite poem; the second opposes the "halfe-acre tombes" which, with gross and vulgar ostentation, mark the resting places of the wealthy dead, to the "well wrought urne" which decently contains the ashes of modest people. One pair of metaphors underlines the outer world so idealized by the friend as a crude and unpleasant thing; the other pair shows the world of the

lovers, themselves, as something beautiful. By rejecting the coarseness of the world they become lovers; by rejecting the world they become saints. The sonnets of their love become hymns, and Donne finally makes a clear statement of his basic metaphor, that the lovers are "Canoniz'd for Love".

Having reached a clear statement of the basic metaphor Donne goes on to the development. Of this development Grierson noted, "Donne as usual is pedantically accurate in the details of his metaphor. The canonized lovers are invoked as saints, i.e. their prayers are requested. They are asked to beg from above a pattern of their love for those below."[3] The lovers, having become saints, have a legend and can be invoked. But their sainthood is in no way spiritual, except in a metaphorical sense; this is clearly borne out by the obvious metaphor of each lover being a hermitage for the other.

In The Canonization we find the conceit growing out of the imagery of the beginning of the poem. A series of metaphors of the practical world balanced against a series of metaphors of the ideal world of the lovers becomes the expression of the idea of renunciation. Renunciation in its turn leads to the basic metaphor of sainthood, which is developed logically into the major image of the poem.

Finally, we should consider one poem in which the conceit never reaches its full development at all, the Epitaph On Himselfe addressed to the Countess of Bedford. In this poem images are gathered together in such a way that the reader automatically looks

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3 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, 16

for a basic metaphor, a notion behind all the related metaphors giving them unity and coming more and more clear as the poem progresses. There is none; the last imagery of the poem shows a false unity. There is, I think, a frustrated attempt at developing a conceit of the second type out of the related images.

> That I might make your Cabinet my tombe,
> And for my fame which I love next my soule,
> Next to my soule provide the happiest roome,
> Admit to that place this last funerall Scrowle.
> Others by Wills give Legacies, but I
> Dying, of you doe beg a Legacie.
>
> My fortune and my will this custome breake,
> When we are senselesse grown to make stones speak,
> Though no stone tell thee what I was, yet thou
> In my graves inside see what thou art now:
> Yet th'art not yet so good; till us death lay
> To ripe and mellow there, w'are stubborne clay,
> Parents make us earth, and soules dignifie
> Vs to be glasse, here to grow gold we lie;
> Whilst in our soules sinne bred and pampered is,
> Our soules become worme-eaten Carkasses.
>
> (Epitaph On Himselfe, 1-16)

Here the would-be conceit starts with the hyperbolical notion of stones speaking. The stone of the first image becomes a gravestone. But mankind is made of clay, Adam; a body comes from the earthly parents as earth. The soul becomes the process by which certain kinds of earth are turned into glass. Having progressed from earth (the crude substance) into glass (the more refined and valuable substance) the human, union of body and soul, waits to become gold; as gold was believed to be the most perfect of all minerals, so the redeemed man, body and soul made perfect at the resurrection, can be represented by this valuable substance.

There is a development according to a logical method.

The stone image becomes a gravestone image and leads to the allusion to earth, another mineral and the substance of which man is made by God; the earth image develops into the glass image, and the notion of the perfection of minerals leads to the image of gold. And at that image the development of the notion abruptly halts. Donne moves towards some referent, some metaphor taken from his knowledge of alchemy and the relations between the minerals. Indeed, it could be argued that the relationship implied to exist between earth, glass, and gold constitutes a basic metaphor. But were we to argue so we would be faced with an unanswerable question: basic to what? After having developed the imagery towards some sort of unity and having argued some relationship between his images, Donne neglects to go on to his conceit. He produces a complex metaphor and lets it drop.

Although the alchemical notions behind the imagery do provide some sort of unity, the conceit does not reach completion, and so it should really be considered in the next chapter where conceits of the third type will be discussed. But, since the images gathered together develop towards the basic metaphor of a conceit of the second type, the poem has been considered here as an example of how the second type of conceit grows in a poem. It can also provide a link between the third type of conceit, the image which develops into the major image of a poem, and the third type, the developed metaphor or simile.

At this point, we should try, as we did in the first chapter of this section, to sum up briefly the differences and the similarities which were found in the uses of the conceit in

the poems considered.

1. To the Countesse of Bedford:
The opening lines discuss the subject and bring up the notion of death, resurrection, spring, and Easter. These combined ideas lead to an allusion to the Easter duty of the Catholic; on the basis of the four combined metaphors Donne develops a logical conceit and the poem takes the form of a confession.

2. Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse:
Three metaphors combine to form the basic metaphor of cosmography in the second stanza of the poem. They appear suddenly in that stanza, not growing out of related imagery in the first stanza. The conceit is not developed logically; as the basic metaphor changes and develops into new related imagery, the conceit moves farther away from its referent. Finally it moves completely away, and the last imagery is completely unrelated to the major image, the cosmography conceit.

3. A Valediction: of weeping:
The major image develops in the second stanza out of some vaguely related imagery in the first. As the notion develops through the second and third stanzas the conceit moves farther away from its basic metaphor until it finally comes to an end just before the end of the poem.

4. The Canonization:
The basic metaphor starts to emerge in the second stanza, developing out of a complex of metaphors presenting the antithesis between the practical world and the ideal world of lovers. As the imagery develops the basic metaphor becomes more and more clear, until finally it is stated as a simple metaphor. Having reached the basic metaphor, Donne goes on to a logical development which continues until the end of the poem.

5. Epitaph On Himselfe:
Donne relates a series of metaphors, goes through all the stages of developing the basic metaphor of a conceit of the second type, and then lets the poem drop before the conceit emerges.

Despite the differences in these five poems, there is one thing they all have in common. In each poem there is a major image, developed in the same manner as the conceit of the first type, although there is not always the unity found in the larger conceit. The differences are in the way the poet comes to his basic metaphor, the way he develops it into a conceit, and the way he disposes of the image.

CHAPTER 5

CONCEITS OF THE THIRD TYPE

Conceits of the third type are little more than simple metaphors or similes developed in much the same way as the longer types of conceit. Usually they do not have the complexity of the first and second types of conceit. They provide no logical framework upon which a poet can build his poem, nor do they expand to become major images. They appear and then disappear, as if Donne had planned a full conceit and changed his mind after three lines. To a comparison which is more or less simple and straightforward, he adds the element of wit and ingenuity which turns images into conceits. One is tempted to say that Donne could never leave an image alone; he always had to develop it, or justify it, or explain it.

An example is provided in the poem To Sr. Edward Herbert. at Iulyers:

> All that is fill'd, and all that which doth fill,
> All the round world, to man is but a pill,
> In all it workes not, but it is in all
> Poysonous, or purgative, or cordiall,
> For, knowledge kindles Calentures in some,
> And is to others icy Opium.
>
> (To Sr Edward Herbert, 39-44)

The conceit develops out of the medical imagery of the earlier part of the poem, and follows directly from the lines:

> ... Man into himself can draw
> All; All his faith can swallow, 'or reason chaw.
>
> (Ibid., 37-8)

The notions of swallowing (taking down whole by simple faith) and chewing (considering by reason) lead to the metaphor that states that the entire world, both physical and spiritual, is a pill. The pill can either be chewed by one's faculty of reason or swallowed by blind faith.

But, having written the metaphor - which is ingenious enough to be considered a conceit even if not developed - Donne goes on to modify his idea. The pill of worldly knowledge, he says, will not work for everybody. That is, it will not always have a salutary effect. Yet it will have some effect; it will be either poisonous, purgative, or a cordial medicine. The idea is taken from an earlier image in the poem, in which Donne is demonstrating how man degrades himself.

> So, to the punishments which God doth fling,
> Our apprehension contributes the sting.
> To us, as to his chickins, he doth cast
> Hemlocke, and wee as men, his hemlocke taste;
> We do infuse to what he meant for meat,
> Corrosivenesse, or intense cold or heat.
> For, God no such specifique poyson hath
> As kills we know not how; his fiercest wrath
> Hath no antipathy, but may be good
> At lest for physicke, if not for our food.
>
> (Ibid., 21-30)

Grierson's note points out that hemlock, which is food for young birds, is poison for men, and explains that "Our own nature contributes the factor which makes a food into a poison either corrosive or killing by intensity of heat or cold."[1] This same notion, then, is invoked to modify the metaphor of the world as a pill; to some it brings death, metaphorically, by excess of heat, and to others it brings death by excess of cold.

There has been, we can see, a complication of thought. A simple metaphor, the world is a pill, has grown out of two earlier metaphors, faith swallows and reason chews; it has been modified and explained by an echo of an image written much earlier in the poem. Instead of a simple metaphor, we find a fairly complex

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1 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, 158-9

metaphorical statement, with an idea expressed by the statement, extension, modification, and explication of a basic idea.

Another example of this type of conceit provides some contrast and brings us closer to an understanding of the uses and development of such images. The simplest form of the conceit of the third class is that of the ingenious or witty metaphor developing into a related metaphor, and the following example from a poem To Sr Henry Wotton will show in miniature the development of conceits.

> Cities are Sepulchers; they who dwell there
> Are carcases, as if there no such were.
> And Courts are Theatres, where some men play
> Princes, some slaves, all to one end, and of one clay.
> The country is a desert, where no good,
> Gain'd (as habits, not borne,) is understood.
> (To Sr Henry Wotton, 21-6)

Here we have three images in a sequence, demonstrating that the poet is rejecting all forms of social life. They provide, as it were, working models of the conceit; there is in each an extension and development of a metaphor, modifying a basic notion. The three images are quite simple: Donne states the metaphor that cities are sepulchres, and, to justify his metaphor, throws in another, that people who live in cities are not alive but dead; he adds the metaphor that courts are theatres, and extends it by calling the people living in and around the court actors; he finishes by calling the country a desert, and explains the metaphor by saying that the country is a desert because there is nothing good in it. Each of the three metaphors is stated and then modified in one of three ways:

1. Further metaphorical statement is introduced to justify the use of the basic metaphor and argue its aptness;

2. Further metaphorical statement is used to extend the basic metaphor, assuming its aptness;

3. Further statement, metaphorical or literal, is used to explain the basic metaphor and argue its aptness.

Most developed images, that is most of the longer conceits found in the poetry of the Metaphysicals, are developed in one or more of these ways. Of course, this cannot be seen very clearly in a long conceit where the poet has used all three methods to develop his imagery, but in a short conceit, such as the ones quoted above, the three methods emerge clearly. Because of this, there has been no attempt made to distinguish these methods of development in the two chapters on full-length conceits.

Another very simple example, and one which shows how the conceit varies, is the following from the poem Vpon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities.

> Nor shall wit-pirats hope to find thee lye
> All in one bottome, in one Librarie.
> (Vpon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities, 65-6)

Here we have two related metaphors, one evidently growing out of the other according to the second method listed above. But, in a way, the conceit is directly opposite to those listed above. One of the two metaphors is more important than the other. In the earlier cases there was a direct statement of the primary notion; cities are sepulchres, courts are theatres, the country is a desert. Each of these clear statements was followed by a more abstract modifying notion; city dwellers are carcasses, and so on. But in this case the stronger of the two metaphors is the second; the idea to be expressed is that the leaves of Mr. Coryat's book will

not to be found together, in the hold of one ship. The metaphor extending this comes first; the pirates who live by stealing the fruits of others' brains will not find the leaves together.

With these two examples we come closer to a full understanding of the nature of the developed conceit; we see that there are three ways in which a basic metaphor can be developed, and we see also that the order can vary. Developed images occur when:

1. The statement of a metaphor leads the poet to related imagery which modifies and strengthens the basic idea;

2. A group of images become somehow related, focusing in one metaphor which emerges as the chief idea, the basic metaphor.

The two examples considered above give us the developed image in its most rudimentary form. In the first short example we found three metaphors developed in three separate ways; in the second we found the development reversed, the related image coming first and the chief metaphor coming second. We have discovered five things about the development of images, and, although in most long conceits we will find the poet combining more than one of the methods of development, a clear understanding of these principles must lead us to a clearer understanding of the developed conceit, whether it be of the first, second, or third type.

A slightly longer example of the third type of conceit can be found in the poem To Sr Henry Wotton.

> Onely'in this one thing, be no Galenist: To make
> Courts hot ambitions wholesome, do not take
> A dramme of Countries dulnesse; do not adde
> Correctives, but as chymiques, purge the bad.
>
> (To Sr Henry Wotton, 59-62)

Here further metaphorical statements are used to explain and extend the basic metaphor, the medical notion behind the thought. The

elements of the conceit cannot be extracted from the image as readily as they were from the two earlier ones. There is a group of images bound together by a fairly loose idea, the differences of opinion between the school of Galen and that of Paracelsus. But, there is also an extension of a stated metaphor.

And the added metaphors, or the group of metaphors, do not stand out as having one clear function in the poem. They explain the metaphorical term "Galenist"; they also justify its use, and they assume its aptness and extend it. Donne has taken his basic notion, the metaphorical statement that one should be not a Galenist but a Paracelsian; he has explained it, and the explanation has become both an extension and an argument for the aptness of the metaphor.

So, after finding two ways in which developed images occur and three ways in which basic metaphors can be developed, we find that the processes are hidden by any real complication of thought. What really happens is that the development of an image is carried on by a combination of some or even all of the principles we have extracted from our short examples. While the principles can easily be seen in some short and clear passages, the complication of thought in a more involved (or perhaps we should say a more metaphysical) conceit cannot very well be unravelled and labelled in such a simple way. Still, the principles are valuable and they do tell us something about the development of imagery.

Keeping these principles (and, of course, their limitations) in mind, we now leave generalization and return to the consideration of examples. The next example of the conceit of the third type is

from a letter to Mr Rowland Woodward.

> Wee are but farmers of our selves, yet may,
> If we can stocke our selves, and thrive, unplay
> Much, much deare treasure for the great rent day.
>
> Manure thy selfe then, to thy selfe be'approv'd,
> And with vaine outward things be no more mov'd
> But to know, that I love thee'and would be lov'd.
>
> (To Mr Rowland Woodward, 31-6)

The basic notion is that man is a farmer, granted land by God and obliged to give an account, to pay his rent, on the day of judgement. The harder man works at his farming, then, the more produce will he have to pay his farm's rent when the time comes. The basic metaphor of this conceit is assumed and then extended. The extension goes only as far as the injunction to "Manure thy selfe", after which the conceit disappears and the poem ends with purely denotative language.

In this case the development of the conceit is not especially interesting. What is interesting is the way in which the conceit appears in the poem. The stanzas immediately preceding it have no agricultural imagery in them at all, and one is tempted to say that the conceit appears out of nowhere, like the geographical conceit in the Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse. Such, however, is not the case. The poem actually begins with a series of images drawn from farming.

> Like one who'in her third widdowhood doth professe
> Her selfe a Nunne, tyed to retirednesse,
> So'affects my muse now, a chast fallownesse;
>
> Since shee to few, yet to too many'hath showne
> How love-song weeds, and Satyrique thornes are growne
> Where seeds of better Arts, were early sown.
>
> (Ibid., 1-6)

The agricultural images then stop, and Donne moves on to a

theological argument in the middle of which comes one image that will reappear:

> ... in those faithfull scales, where God throwes in
> Mens workes, vanity weighs as much as sinne.
> (Ibid., 11-12)

There follows a discourse on the way to become virtuous, which is followed by:

> You know, Physitians, when they would infuse
> Into any'oyle, the Soules of Simples, use
> Places, where they may lie still warme, to chuse.
> (Ibid., 25-7)

This notion is developed into an argument for staying in retiredness, and this is followed by the agricultural conceit. Grierson's note on the image just quoted says that "Paracelsus refers more than once to the heat of horse-dung used in 'separations', e.g. On the Separations of the Elements from Metals he enjoins that when the metal has been reduced to a liquid substance you must 'add to one part of this oil two parts of fresh aqua fortis, and when it is enclosed in glass of the best quality, set it in horse-dung for a month'."[2]

An analysis of the prose content of the poem will demonstrate how the conceit emerges. Donne says that he has not been writing much poetry, his muse has been affecting fallowness; this fallowness was necessary because, although good seed had been planted, the muse had brought forth nothing but the weeds of love songs and the thorns of satire. Then he drops the agricultural imagery for the time being. Still on the subject of his poetry, he says that, although it is not sinful for him to love poetry, it causes an

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2 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, 149

omission of good which is as bad as sin. In this statement we find the image of the scales used by God on judgement day, a notion that he will use again talking of "the great rent day" on which man, the farmer of himself, will present his produce to God. Then comes the notion of man seeking himself within himself, an idea that seems suited to the later agricultural conceit but is instead expressed by the image of the glass focusing the sun's rays. They comes the alchemical image mentioned above, and finally we find the farming conceit.

The conceit has come out of the poem by a process of relating ideas, both straightforward ideas and metaphorical notions. The steps have been:

1. The poem begins with an introduction which uses some agricultural imagery, probably developing out of the metaphorical word, "fallowness";

2. The agricultural images cease and are followed by some moralistic argument, in the course of which Donne uses the notion of the general judgement and God using scales to weigh misdeeds against good deeds;

3. The moral argument brings Donne to the statement that man seeks himself within himself, the idea behind the image that man is a farmer of himself;

4. Returning to the original notion of retiredness, Donne develops the Paracelsian image mentioned above, with its implied reference to manure;

5. Finally Donne develops the image of man as a farmer of himself. The conceit comes from the agricultural imagery at the beginning of the poem, from the notion of deeds and misdeeds being weighed by God at the judgement, and from the implication of the alchemical conceit. The poet uses the outside of the images; he takes the notion of farming and imposes it upon the actual argument of the poem, combining the external idea of farming with the more serious moral ideas to reach his concluding image in which he says:

(a) man is like a farmer,
(b) he will have to give an account of his work,
(c) he should improve his farm and work hard so that he

can show results when his time comes to render
an account.

Many conceits will be found to have emerged from poems in a similar way. The imagery of a poem becomes related, perhaps by plan or perhaps by mere coincidence. In some cases the relationship between images will become so close that they will merge into a basic metaphor and a conceit of the second, or perhaps even the first type. In other cases, as in the poem just considered, the relationship will be accidental and somewhat vague, and the referents - the external parts of the metaphorical statements - will be combined with the actual argument of the poem. This will result in the appearance of a conceit, sometimes a conceit of the second type - a major image - and sometimes a conceit of the third type.

In many cases we cannot see the evolution of the conceit as clearly as in the poem just considered. Frequently there is no evolution; the conceit develops from a simple metaphor.

... Preachers which are
Seas of Wit and Arts, you can, then dare
Drowne the sinnes of this place, for, for mee
Which am but a scarce brooke, it enough shall bee
To wash the staines away.

(Satyre IIII, 237-41)

Here we are dealing with the witty development of a metaphor. The poem in which this image occurs is the fourth Satyre, a collection of unrelated images, most of which are plainly meant to be facetious. The metaphor is extended, giving us a metaphorical statement with four distinct images, two pairs relating size and ability. The great preacher is like a sea, so vast is his learning and ability; so he should drown the sins of London. This is a common enough type

of image, the development of one metaphor into another related metaphor. But in the extension of the image, Donne does not go on in quite the ordinary way. His next related metaphor does not so much advance his line of thought as restate it in miniature for a ludicrous effect. He is a sea, like the great preacher; therefore he cannot drown the sins of London. He is only a brook; therefore the best he can hope to do is wash away the stains of sin.

In this case the development of the conceit has occurred because Donne wished to inject a note of irony, to twist a conventional image and so express a cynical attitude of self-deprecation. The grandiose metaphor is stated and developed into a related metaphor. Then it is restated in a ridiculously diminished form which is developed into another related metaphor. The effect of the image is that of Horace's famour line:

Parturient montes, et nescitur ridiculus mus.

So we see that the conceit of the third type, like the two longer types of conceit, does more than convey an idea; it conveys a state of mind, giving the reader not only the poet's idea but his attitude towards that idea. The argumentative image almost always results from an effort on the part of the poet to relate his idea to himself. Donne's love lyrics do not describe love, nor do they plead in Petrarchan conventionalities; they describe Donne in love and the effect of the emotion upon him. His satires do not merely chastise the evils of the time; they list the evils as they directly effect Donne. And Donne's religious poetry deals with the relationship between God and the poet himself. It is this added effort, the problem of doing more

than expressing an idea, which causes the complication of thought to which we can attribute the complication of imagery and argument. For example, in Donne's invective against the courts in the fifth Satyre, he rushes on from one image to another until he finds one that can be developed.

> O Age of rusty iron! Some better wit
> Call it some worse name, if ought equal it;
> The iron Age that was, when justice was sold; now
> Injustice is sold dearer farre. Allow
> All demands, fees, and duties, gamsters, anon
> The mony which you sweat, and swears for, is gon
> Into other hands: So controverted lands
> Scape, like Angelica, the strivers hands.
> If Law be in the Judges heart, and hee
> Have no heart to resist letter, or fee,
> Where wilt thou appeale? powre of the Courts below
> Flow from the first maine head, and these can throw
> Thee, if they sucke thee in, to misery,
> To fetters, halters; But if the injury
> Steele thee to dare complaine, Alas, thou go'st
> Against the stream, when upwards: when thou art most
> Heavy and most faint; and in these labours they,
> 'Gainst whom thou should'st complaine, will in the way
> Become great seas, o'r which, when thou shalt bee
> Forc'd to make golden bridges, thou shalt see
> That all thy gold was drown'd in them before;
> All things follow their like, only who have may have more.
> Judges are Gods; he who made and said them so,
> Meant not that men should be forc'd to them to goe,
> By meanes of Angels; When supplications
> We sent to God, to Dominations,
> Powers, Cherubins, and all heavens Courts, if wee
> Should pay fees as here, Daily bread would be
> Scarce to Kings.
>
> (Satyre V, 35-63)

Donne starts by twisting an image from Juvenal and goes on to explain what it means and justify its use. He states plainly what is wrong with the age, and gives an example. Then he quibbles over the two senses of the word "heart" and moves on to describe the source of legal jurisdiction as literally a source, pouring out a river into which an innocent can be sucked by a current. Changing the image,

he says that complaints are only attempts to swim against the current. Changing it still further, he makes the judges seas rather than rivers, and brings in the notion of bribes as golden bridges. But the gold with which the bridges would have been built, he adds, has all been swallowed up by these seas that come from the source, divine justice. At this point the river and bridge conceit is dropped, before it has been united into one logical image. The notion of gold and that of the divine authority vested in judges leads to the next image, that judges are like God in that our prayers and supplications must be brought to them by means of angels. In the case of the judges, however, the angels which intercede for us are not of the heavenly choir; they are golden angels, coins.

In this short passage there has been some sort of development given to at least three separate images. None of them have been given the unity and logical sequence of the second class of conceit. They are, as it were, incomplete conceits, one following the other, one growing out of connotations of the other, one complicating the other, as the poet rushes to get his state of mind on paper. The iron image is explained by purely denotative language, the source image gives rise to a series of connected images leading to the bridge of gold image, and the two latter images are developed into a new image, an ironic conceit based on a notion and a pun. There is one conceit of the fourth type and there are two of the third type; all three come from the same furious state of mind, but there are three different referents, iron, rivers, and angels. It is this continual changing of referents which makes some of Donne's

poems collections of conceits of the third type, metaphorical statements developed but not built into major images or logical arguments.

We will now try to sum up what has been learned about the conceit of the third type, attempting at the same time to avoid undue repetition of those characteristics which are common to the first, second, and third types: logical, argumentative structure, logical or quasi-logical method, and so on. It has been established that the conceit of the third type is a metaphor or simile, ingenious in nature, which has been developed in much the same way as the two longer types of conceit, but has not been given the magnitude of a major image. In considering a simple example it was learned that the short conceit (and so the longer conceit as well) could be developed by the use of one or more of three methods: justification by further metaphorical statement, extension by further metaphorical statement, or explanation of an image by further statement which is either metaphorical or literal. Another short example demonstrated that developed images could occur in two separate ways; when the statement of a metaphor led the poet to related imagery modifying his metaphor, or when a group of images became interrelated and focused in one metaphorical notion.

It was also seen that conceits of the third type emerged from a poem by means of a vague interrelationship of imagery, not close enough to provide the unity of the major image. And finally it was seen that the third type of conceit would, like the first and second types, convey a "tone of voice" and effect a complication of thought and argument.

CHAPTER 6

CONCEITS OF THE FOURTH TYPE

The fourth type of conceit has been defined in this work as a loose category, comprising any witty or ingenious turn of phrase, short, hyperbolical metaphors or similes, paradoxes or oxymora. The term, admittedly, is a blanket term and does not say very much about Donne's imagery. But, some term must be used to cover the many typically metaphysical phrases found in Donne, phrases that cannot be dismissed as purely denotative language and yet cannot strictly be called metaphorical. Images they are, certainly, but they are just as certainly not the common form of image, the equating of one thing with another. Sir Herbert Grierson,[1] in the introduction to his Metaphysical Lyrics and poems, includes in a discussion of Donne's imagery a series of quotations. Among the quotations are:

> For Godsake hold your tongue and let me love.
> (The Canonization, 1)

> Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
> Nor question much
> That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arme.
> (The Funerall, 1-3)

> I long to talke with some old lovers ghost,
> Who dyed before the god of Love was borne.
> (Loves Deitie, 1-2)

Each of these quotations is an example of what is called, in this study, a conceit of the fourth type. A consideration of them will bring us closer to an understanding of the category. As they stand they are not images, but purely denotative statements. The first certainly is prose; the wreath of hair in the second is a real object and not a metaphor; and ghosts, in the seventeenth century, were not considered to be figments of the imagination. But, within the contexts of the poems from which they are taken, all three are

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[1] Grierson, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems (1921) xxi-ii

images and parts of larger images.

The first quotation is the opening line of The Canonization. The basic metaphor in this poem is that of the rejection of earthly life for a more intense life, the first step towards sainthood. The poem begins in media res: some friend has been mocking the poet for his dedication to love. Donne tells his friend that he should mock weakness or poverty, but not dedication to love. The first image of the poem, then, is this imaginary address to a friend; and the friend, who is censured in such abrupt terms, epitomizes the practical world, the antithesis of the poet's world of love. There is an antithesis of metaphorical statements; the friend and his practical world are balanced against Donne and his mistress and their ideal world, the worldly life of debased man against the intense life of the saints. The demand for silence, then, becomes the first of the series of metaphors which constitute, as it were, the preamble to the canonization conceit which gradually emerges from the changing imagery to dominate the poem. The abruptness of the demand gives the imagery the metaphysical "tone of voice". In the context of the poem, then, the apparently denotative statement can be seen to be the first of a series of metaphors and an important part of the larger image of the poem. It is a conceit of the fourth type, a witty turn of phrase; and one that, on closer examination, proves to be a metaphor and an integral part of a poem.

The second quotation seems at first sight not to be an image at all, since the wreath of hair is obviously an actual wreath and not a metaphor for something else. Yet the first three lines of The Funerall are cited by Grierson as an example of Donne's

imagery. Contemporary critics, reading the lines, would call the wreath a symbol, which is rather different from an image. But, in fact, the lines constitute what Donne himself would have called a conceit, "A fanciful, ingenious, or witty notion or expression", and what is called in this study (for the sake of distinguishing it from the metaphysically developed conceits) a conceit of the fourth type. Again it acts as a tone of voice, an ingenious phrase preparing the reader for the complex imagery which will follow it and grow out of it. Considering the entire poem will show that the apparently denotative, if ingenious, statement of the opening lines become part of a metaphor because of the imagery following.

> Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
> Nor question much
> That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arme;
> The mystery, the signe you must not touch,
> For'tis my outward Soule,
> Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
> Will leave this to controule,
> And keepe these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution.
>
> For if the sinewie thread my brain lets fall
> Through every part,
> Can tye those parts, and make mee one of all;
> These haires which upward grew, and strength and art
> Have from a better braine,
> Can better do'it; Except she meant that I
> By this should know my pain,
> As prisoners then are manacled, when they'are condemn'd to die.
>
> What ere shee meant by'it, bury it with me,
> For since I am
> Loves martyr, it might breed idolatrie,
> If into others hands these Reliques came;
> As'twas humility
> To afford to it all that a Soule can doe,
> So,'tis some bravery
> That since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you.
>
> (The Funerall, 1-24)

In the first stanza the wreath of hair is nothing more than a symbol of love, a symbol so uncommon as to shock the reader into

awareness. Then Donne starts adding new meanings to it; the wreath becomes an "outward Soule". In other words the wreath of hair has an existence between the mundane and the heavenly; metaphorically it is the earthly soul, the half-spiritual part of Donne's nature which has become through love a three-part nature rather than a two-part nature. So, by the end of the first stanza, the wreath, at first merely an ingenious notion, has become a metaphor, and, although the metaphor is not developing in the dialectical manner of the longer conceits, it is developing into further imagery. Included among the further imagery is the implied notion that Donne's nature has become tripartite; ordinary men have body and soul, two natures, but Donne has body, soul, and the symbol of love which acts as a soul to his body while the soul is away. The imagery of the first stanza can be summarized as:

1. the imagined preparation for burial;
2. the denotative statement about the wreath of hair;
3. the description of the wreath as a mystery and a sign;
4. the metaphor of the wreath as an outward soul;
5. the descriptive (and comparatively unimportant) metaphor of the outward soul as a viceroy controlling the body.

It should be noted here that the image is <u>not</u> being developed in the dialectic manner used in, for instance, <u>The Flea</u>. The wreath of hair is literally the <u>conceit</u> or <u>concept</u>, and the metaphor of the outward soul is secondary to the notion of the wreath; the wreath is related to the metaphors which follow it and which express what the symbolic wreath means to the poet. The images which follow are not metaphors for the wreath but are about it,

although it is not itself metaphorical.

In the second stanza a comparison is made between the thread of nerve growing downward from the poet's brain and the threads of hair which form the wreath and which have grown upward from his lady's brain. To a schoolman, obviously, up is better than down; therefore the hairs of the wreath can unite Donne's body better than his nerves and muscles. This development of the conceit again is not dialectical, nor is it metaphorical. The actual wreath of hair, which has already been described metaphorically as an "outward Soule", is used for the sake of an analogy, one of the false turns of logic so frequently found in Donne's love poetry.

In the third stanza the wreath becomes a relic, and a series of new related metaphors are introduced. But the meaning of the wreath of hair is still uncertain and the poem ends with the mystery still unresolved.

The reason for this discussion of The Funerall, which might seem to be quite superfluous, has been to examine the phrase about the wreath of hair in its relation to the entire poem, to show that it is not metaphorical, and to find out why so eminent a critic as Grierson has quoted it as an example of Donne's imagery. Obviously it is an image, because it is charged with more intense meaning in the context of the poem than it would have as a simple statement, because its tone of voice, its abruptness and intention to shock, gives the poem greater meaning, and because the minor images of the poem all focus in the wreath. It is, then, a major image although it is not a metaphor; it is an ingenious turn of

phrase, a conceit by the dictionary meaning. But, unlike the images here called conceits of the first, second, and third types, it is not developed in the dialectical manner, nor is it metaphorical like them. Therefore it has been necessary to consider such "images" as belonging to yet a fourth category, that of conceits of the fourth type. Into this category one can put the three images quoted above.

Conceits of the fourth type, although they cannot easily be anatomized, have, like the other types, many different uses in Donne's poetry. Indeed, most of Donne's images could fit the category; puns and quibbles, for instance, are really special types within the category, and so are the many odd or hyperbolical metaphors or similes found in his verse. An examination of several of them should bring us to a better understanding of metaphysical imagery.

The simplest form of this device is, of course, the witty or ingenious turn of language, the development of language in such a way that, although a reader may find neither a pun nor a metaphor, he is still aware that he is not reading purely denotative language. For examples of this, consider the following passage, in which Donne hurls a confused mass of insults against the people of his age. Puns, metaphors, similes follow each other with little regard for order, and all are coloured by Donne's ingenious wit and extravagance of invention, and by his vitriolic tongue, held firmly in his cheek.

> The men board them; and praise, as they thinke, well,
> Their beauties; they the mens wits; Both are bought.
> Why good wits ne'r weare scarlet gownes, I thought

This cause, These men, mens wits for speeches buy,
And women buy all reds which scarlets die.
He call'd her beauty limetwigs, her haire net;
She feares her drugs ill laid, her haire loose set.
Would not Heraclitus laugh to see Macrine,
From hat to shooe, himselfe at doore refine,
As if the Presence were a Moschite, and lift
His skirts and hose, and call his clothes to shrift,
Making them confesse not only mortall
Great staines and holes in them; but veniall
Feathers and dust, wherewith they fornicate:
And then by Durers rules survay the state
Of his each limbe, and with strings the odds trye
Of his neck to his legge, and wast to thighe.
So in immaculate clothes, and Symetrie
Perfect as circles, with such nicetie
As a young Preacher at his first time goes
To preach, he enters, and a Lady which owes
Him not so much as good will, he arrests,
And unto her protests protests protests,
So much as at Roms would serve to have throwne
Ten Cardinalls into the Inquisition;
And whisperd by Jesu, so often, that A
Pursevant would have ravish'd him away
For saying of our Ladies psalter; But'tis fit
That they each other plague, they merit it.
But here comes Glorius that will plague them both,
Who, in the other extreme, only doth
Call a rough carelessenesse, good fashion;
Whose cloak his spurres teare; whom he spits on
He cares not, His ill words doe no harme
To him; he rusheth in, as if arme, arme,
He meant to crie; And though his face be as ill
As theirs which in old hangings whip Christ, still
He strives to looke worse, he keepes all in awe;
Jeasts like a licenc'd foole, commands like law.
Tyr'd, now I leave this place, and but pleas'd so
As men which from gaoles to'execution goe,
Goe through the great chamber (why is it hung
With the seaven deadly sinnes?). Being among
Those Askaparts, men big enough to throw
Charing Crosse for a barre, men that doe know
No token of worth, but Queenes man, and fine
Living, barrells of beefe, flaggons of wine;
I shooke like a spyed Spie.

(Satyre IIII, 190-237)

In this passage we find a confusion of imagery typical of Donne. Most of these images fit into the category of conceits of the fourth type, and an examination of the imagery of the

passage will serve to demonstrate the nature of the metaphysical image in its simplest form.

First we find Donne's ironic comment on the mutual flattery practiced at court (ll. 190-1); both the beauty complimented by the courtiers, and the wit complimented by their ladies are bought; the beauty is cosmetic and the wit borrowed from books. This leads to another conceit: worthy men (those from whom the courtiers have bought their wit) seldom wear scarlet gowns, symbols both of office and luxurious living (ll. 192-4). Not only have the courtiers bought all their wit, but the courtiers' ladies have bought all the red dye. This notion becomes a quibble: "women buy all reds which scarlets die". "Which" at the time could be read as the personal pronoun, and "scarlet" evidently has at least the secondary meaning of "prostitute". Because of these double meanings the verb, "die", has three interchangeable meanings: the obvious meaning of effecting a change in colour, "Women buy all the red material which dyes scarlet"; the second meaning of meeting death, "Women who die prostitutes buy all the red material"; and, of course, the common Elizabethan pun is also involved.[2] In one line, then, two words have each two meanings, and another has two important meanings and another meaning by association.

After the digression Donne returns to the flattery of court, giving for effect the obvious and threadbare examples (l. 195). He breaks off again to an ironic hyperbole; the sight of the courtier

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2 'Die' had, during the period of Donne, the vulgar meaning of reaching sexual climax. Cf. Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn (1947) 16. See also Chapter 4 above pp. 67-8.

perfecting his garments would arouse laughter in Heraclitus, the weeping philosopher (ll. 197-8). He examines himself, according to Donne, as if he were preparing to enter a mosque(l. 199). This, an allusion to the elaborate rubrics governing the cleanliness of Moslems going to prayer, puts the courtier's preparations in a ridiculous light. This is intensified by the metaphor which follows. Macrine calls his clothes to confession; they must make a complete examination of themselves (ll. 200-4). While in an ordinary confession one is only obliged to confess mortal sins, when Macrine calls his garments to confession, they must confess not only mortal stains, but also venial faults; by venial sins they are led to greater crimes, venial sins are occasions of such sins as fornication.

Donne has, in these few lines, made the vanity of the courtier perfectly ridiculous by describing it in terms of the most serious of human matters, religion. The ironic religious conceit does more to discredit courtiers than a page of invective.

The next conceit adds to the same effect by describing the fastidiousness of the courtier in terms of Albrecht Durer's grim realism (ll. 204-6). Finally his careful dress is made to seem completely ludicrous by the perfection of a simile: "Perfect as circles". (ll. 207-8) The inference, of course, is that nothing is as perfect as a circle, except the dress of the courtier.

After using a string of conceits to satirize the dress of the courtier, Donne begins a new series to satirize his behaviour. (ll. 208-17). His entrance, for which he has made the careful preparations of a Moslem entering a mosque, is now made

with the case of a young preacher going to his first sermon. The young preacher, fastidious, wary of possible error, and exerting every effort to make a good impression, is a figure for laughter, and so is Macrine. The courtier arrests a lady; Donne puns on the meaning of the word by stating that he makes the arrest although the lady owes him nothing, not so much even as good will. His protestations of love or whatever are related in a fine hyperbole to the protestations of protestants; so much does he protest that equivalent protestations at Rome would have ten Cardinals sent to the Holy Inquisition. And the phrase, "By Jesu", recurs so often that a listening pursuivant would think that he was reciting "our Ladies psalter" and drag him off as a papist. In this section, as in the section of Macrine's clothing and his vanity, the courtier is made ridiculous by exaggerated metaphor and simile, by the invocation of secondary meanings of words, and by elaborate hyperbole.

With the foppish courtier demolished, Donne turns to another figure of the court, the miles gloriousus.(ll. 219-28). The section begins with a few examples of the soldier's behavior, his carelessness and his affectation of a rough manner. His entrance is described graphically by a fine conceit; while Macrine came in like a Moslem entering a mosque, Glorius comes in lika a scout calling a camp to arms. The fierce expression on his face, evidently a part of his soldierly affectations, is made ridiculous by the comparison to the villainous faces of the Roman soldiers in early tapestries of the Crucifixion. Finally two similes satirize the military assumption of authority; his joking is like that of the court fool and his commands are given as if the power of the

nation were backing them. Like a licenced fool his wit consists of insulting remarks, and like the law he has no mercy.

Donne leaves the court, not cheerfully, as if going to a better place, but only as cheerfully as a man leaving a hated prison cell to go to his execution. (11.229-32). The comparison aptly describes the mood, and the hyperbole conveys the poet's attitude towards the evils of Elizabethan society. The attitude is emphasized by the allusion to the allegorical figure of the seven deadly sins hanging in the great chamber through which he passes on his way out.

The guards come in for a share of Donne's ill temper.(11. 232-6). He compares them to Ascapart, the thirty-foot giant of the legend of Sir Bevis, adding the bold hyperbole: "... men big enough to throw/ Charing Crosse for a barre." He describes their natures by mentioning their only criterion of worth, and adds another hyperbole, calling them barrels of beef. Grierson, in his notes on the line, says cautiously, "The name 'beefeater' has, I suppose, some responsibility for the jest."[3]

Among these gigantic guardsmen Donne trembles, with another far-fetched simile, "like a spyed Spie".

These images are really metaphysical conceits stripped bare of elaboration, and the element of ingenuity and wit in them is the factor which confuses the commentator as he tried to examine the special qualities of the longer, dialectical conceit. The same process that produces the simile of a spied spy produces the basic notion that, with the addition of carefully worked-out correspondences,

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3 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, 125

becomes the conceit of such a poem as The Flea. It is among these odd scraps of imagery that one finds the nature of metaphysical metaphor and simile and the simplest examples of the distortion of language that seemed so reprehensible to later critics. For, what this study pedantically labels "conceits of the fourth type" are exactly what the metaphysicals would have called, proudly, "conceits"; metaphysical, quasi-logical elaboration and extension develop them into what are here called conceits of the first, second, and third types.

The fourth type of conceit can provide the framework for an entire poem without any metaphysical development of a basic image. For example, in The Message, a poem that seems to belong more to the Cavalier tradition than the metaphysical, the poet introduces the conceit that his mistress has his eyes and his heart, and he pleads with her to return them

> Send home my long strayd eyes to mee,
> Which (Oh) too long have dwelt on thee;
> Yet since there they have lean'd such ill,
> Such forc'd fashions,
> And false passions,
> That they be
> Made by thee
> Fit for no good sight, keep them still.
>
> Send home my harmlesse heart againe,
> Which no unworthy thought could staine;
> But if it be taught by thine
> To make jestings
> Of protestings,
> And crosse both
> Word and oath,
> Keepe it, for then 'tis none of mine.
>
> Yet send me back my heart and eyes,
> That I may know, and see thy lyes,
> And may laugh and joy, when thou
> Art in anguish
> And dost languish

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

(The Message, 1-24)

There is a development of the conceit, but not a metaphysical development. The conceit begins as a plea for the return of the poet's eyes, which have been too long fixed upon the lady. With a sudden reversal, he tells her to keep them, since they have contracted evil from her. The second stanza changes the idea and brings a plea for the return of the poet's heart. There is another reversal, and he tells her to keep the heart as well, for the same reason. The final stanza brings another reversal and another plea for the return of both eyes and heart.

In spite of the unity of imagery provided by the recurrence, in slightly changed forms, of the conceit, this poem is not developed metaphysically, nor is the notion of the return of eyes and heart a conceit of the first type. The poem changes its idea as it develops and there are three complete tergiversations, but the image itself, the lost eyes and heart notion, remains unchanged. There is no argument; Donne wastes no logic on his conceit. Still, the idea that a lady could keep (and corrupt) the eyes and heart of a man is certainly far-fetched and ingenious, and so it is, by definition, a conceit. Since there is no logical development, the conceit, although it is the whole poem, belongs to the category now under discussion.

A similar case is that of The Sunne Rising, in which the imagery and narration of the poem are given unity by one image, the conceit of an address to the sun. Again the image is not

developed in any dialectical manner. It simply is implied in the opening words:

> Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,
> Why dost thou thus,
> Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?
> Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?
> (The Sunne Rising, 1-4)

At the end of the poem the sun conceit is still unchanged; the poem has developed without any corresponding development of the conceit.

Sometimes the conceit is developed for a few lines, although the development is, in such cases, not in the dialectical manner of the conceit of the third type.

> Thou at this midnight seest mee, and as soone
> As that Sunne rises to mee, midnight's noone,
> All the world growes transparent, and I see
> Through all, both Church and State, in seeing thee;
> And I discerne by favour of this light,
> My selfe, the hardest object of the sight.
> (Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, brother to the Lady Lucy, Countesse of Bedford, 25-30)

The imagery of light and vision then develops into a conceit of the third type, one, in fact, that was severely censured by Dr. Johnson.[4] But the conceit, the notion of the clarity of thought and the intensity of emotion at the thought of the dead noble making midnight like noon, is quite separate from the conceit which follows it and is related to it. First there is the conceit that midnight is a sort of noon in reverse, the darkness of which allows the poet to see the soul of the dead man and his own soul. Then follows the related conceit of God as the glass and a good man as the trunk of

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4 Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (ed. Hill, 1905) i, 27

the telescope by which we see the truth. This is a metaphysically, or rather, dialectically developed conceit. The former, the paradoxical equating of midnight with noon and light with darkness, is purely a conceit, an ingenious notion, without the philosophical follow-through.

Next to the ingenious phrase, the most common use of the conceits of this category is in the odd or hyperbolical metaphor or simile. For example:

> And now the Springs and Sommers which we see,
> Like sonnes of women after fiftie bee.
> (The first Anniversary, 203-4)

The ingeniousness of the simile needs no comment. Nor is any comment needed on the hyperbole of the metaphor:

> When my Soule was in her owne body sheath'd,
> Nor yet by oathes betroth'd, nor kisses breath'd
> Into my Purgatory, faithlesse thee, ...
> (Elegie VI, 11-13)

And no commentary is needed to show the ingeniousness and aptness of:

> And as our bodies, so our mindes are crampt:
> 'Tis shrinking, not close weaving that hath thus,
> In minde, and body both bedwarfed us.
> (The first Anniversary, 152-4)

Such similes and metaphors as these scattered throughout Donne's poetry provide the quality of ingeniousness and quaintness that is the outstanding characteristic of metaphysical poetry. They are actually the simplest form of the far-fetched comparison, the metaphysical image by which, as Johnson said: "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions."[5]

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5 Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (ed. Hill, 1905) i, 20

And Dr. Johnson gave us what is probably the most acute evaluation ever made of metaphysical imagery when he added:

> No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables. ... If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may sometimes be found buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who know their value.[6]

The conceit of the fourth type, then, is the true essence of the metaphysical conceit; in its qualities one finds epitomized those qualities which, when developed, create the great and involved and curious images of Donne and his followers. As simile or metaphor, the conceit of the fourth type is the vehicle for the "tone of voice" of the longer, dialectical conceit. As ingenious or witty turn of phrase, it advances the effect of Donne's verse by its shock value, its ability to make the reader sit up and take notice of Donne's state of mind. The real nature of the metaphysical poet's peculiar imagery is found in such lines as:

> Your (or you) vertue two vast uses serves,
> It ransomes one sex, and one Court preserves.
> (To the Countesse of Bedford, 25-6)

Or in the brilliant irony of:

> Here's no more newes, then vertue,'I may as well
> Tell you Cales or St.Michaels tale for newes, as tell
> That vice doth here habitually dwell.
> (To Sr Henry Wooton, 1-3)

Or in the verbal trickery of:

> Some sitting on the hatches, would seeme there,

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6. Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, (ed. Hill, 1905) 21

With hideous gazing to feare away feare.
(The Storme, 51-2)

Or in such conceits as:

... Then, as if he would have sold
His tongue, he prais'd it, and such wonders told
That I was faine to say, If you'had liv'd, Sir,
Time enough to have beene Interpreter
To Babells bricklayers, sure the Tower had stood.
(Satyre IIII, 61-5)

CHAPTER 7

DEVELOPED COMPARISONS

In the opening Chapter of this work an attempt was made at an analysis of that complex pattern of thought associations by means of which communication between the poet and his reader is made possible. This process of equating things, combining words, and getting a measure of communication through the coincidence of certain mutual thoughts and concepts about the things and the words is usually called, for the sake of simplicity, metaphor or comparison. In the second Chapter it was stated that a close scrutiny of Donne's poetry had revealed that there were at least seven different ways in which he used the process. Seven headings were drawn up, two describing what might be called simple metaphors, short images, and five others describing developed metaphors, comparisons stated or implied and discussed at some length. It is with these five different uses of metaphor that this Chapter will be concerned.

Developed metaphors are merely metaphors that take up several lines rather than only one or a few lines. Every developed metaphor has a basic metaphor, the statement or implication of a metaphor out of which the lengthier image grows. In Chapter Five three ways in which the basic metaphor could be developed were considered. The three methods of development used by the poet either singly or in combination were then said to be:

1. The introduction of further metaphorical statement to justify the use of the basic metaphor and argue its aptness;

2. The use of further metaphorical statement to extend the basic metaphor, assuming its aptness;

3. The use of further statement, either metaphorical or literal, to explain the basic metaphor, again assuming its aptness.

The same Chapter stated that there were two occasions on which the

poet seemed to use these methods of development:

1. When the statement of a metaphor led the poet to create further imagery modifying and strengthening the basic idea;

2. When a group of images became somehow related, focusing in one metaphorical notion which emerged as the chief idea or basic metaphor.

These elements of developed imagery can easily be isolated when we take them out of a context. But, when we are dealing with an actual image we may find a combination of two or even three of the methods used and it may be quite impossible to say whether the poet created related imagery from his basic metaphor or whether the imagery itself came to focus on a single metaphor. Still, knowledge of these elements is a vital factor in the understanding of developed imagery, and, although we certainly cannot label every image with one of three methods and one of two causes, to ignore them would greatly impair a study of Donne as a creator of images.

The first of the five types of developed metaphor is the extended image which provides the framework for an entire poem. It is really the same as the conceit of the first type. The reason why two headings are needed is that the image, in such cases, has two separate existences. It is a conceit and a comparison, a "tone of voice" and a means of communicating an idea.

In the Divine Meditations of 1635 there is a sonnet consisting of such a developed metaphor. This sonnet is probably the best example of the metaphor of the first type for discussion. The basic metaphor expresses what was then a common notion, and so the development of the image does not take the more common form of fanciful embroidery obscuring the metaphorical aspect until it is

almost impossible to see the metaphor for the conceit.

> I am a little world made cunningly
> Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,
> But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night
> My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.
> You which beyond that heaven which was most high
> Have found new sphears, and of new lands can write,
> Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
> Drowne my world with my weeping earnestly,
> Or wash it, if it must be drown'd no more:
> But oh it must be burnt; alas the fire
> Of lust and envie have burnt it heretofore,
> And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,
> And burne me o Lord, with a fiery zeale
> Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heale.
>
> (1635 Holy Sonnet 2, 1-14)

Donne develops the image from the then-common notion that a man was a microcosm, a little world.

> The world that I regard is my self; it is the Microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on; for the other, I use it but like a Globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and Fortunes, do err in my Altitude; for I am above Atlas his shoulders.[1]

Donne recreates, as it were, this common idea by treating the metaphor as if it were fact. He uses the second of the three methods listed earlier, and the first of the two causes. That is, assuming the aptness of the metaphor, he extends it by further related metaphorical statement.

The development of the image follows logically from the statement of the metaphor and Donne's tacit assumption of its truth. The real world, the planet on which we live, is made up of two hemispheres, one of which receives light from the sun while the other is dark. Oceans are spread across its face. And God, after punishing the sins of men by the Great Flood, promised Noah that the world

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[1] Browne, Religio Medici (1906) 83

would never again be wiped out by water. The second punishment would come in the form of fire.

From the microcosm image Donne selects and rejects as he thinks fit. He sees in the two hemispheres of the world the dichotomy of body and soul. The body, made up of earthly elements, is dark; made of the slime of the earth, it has life only as animals have. The soul, made in the image and likeness of God, is light; made by God of nothing, it has life as the angels have. The body returns to dust when it dies; the soul cannot die, except by sin. Donne's microcosm differs from the globe because sin has taken the divine light from the part that should be light. Body and soul are alike in their darkness; the soul is dead and the body will die. His prayer is for purgatory punishment, for new seas to augment the penetential flow of tears on the face of his microcosm, to drown his world and give him oblivion, free from his sins and their consequences. But, remembering the promise that the world would never again be destroyed by water, he realizes that his prayer must be in vain. His microcosmic world must be burnt. With this, the imagery becomes much more complex.

The image of fire has always several different meanings. In this poem, Donne takes two fire images, each of which is directly opposite to the other. The statement is that his little world must be destroyed, according to the prophesy, by fire. But it was fire, the heat of lust and envy, that destroyed his world before. And that fire left his world worse, left it black with sin. The prayer is for the fire of the Paraclete, the fire that purges the world of sin and darkness.

This method of development is typical of Donne. The poet considers all the various aspects of the referent of his image, which in this case is the outer world which represents Donne's personal world, and from them he selects whatever will help reinforce his argument or idea. In this way one image is made into a poem, and the metaphor is brought home, as it were, with greater force because of the increased weight.

In other examples of the developed metaphor, the poet extends the idea without forcing so close an analogy between his referential notion and the idea he wants to communicate. The developing imagery is more <u>about</u> the referent than <u>from</u> it.

To what a combersome unwieldinesse
And burdenous corpulence my love had growne,
  But that I did, to make it lesse,
  And keepe it in proportion,
Give it a diet, made it feed upon
That which love worst endures, <u>discretion</u>.

Above one sigh a day I'allow'd him not,
Of which my fortune, and my faults had part;
  And if sometimes by stealth he got
  A she sigh from my mistresse heart,
And thought to feast on that, I let him see
'Twas neither very sound, nor meant to mee.

If he wroung from mee'a teare, I brin'd it so
With scorne or shame, that him it nourish'd not;
  If he suck'd hers, I let him know
  'Twas not a teare, which hee had got,
His drinke was counterfeit, as was his meat;
For, eyes which rowle towards all, weepe not, but sweat.

What ever he would dictate, I writ that,
But burnt my letters; When she writ to me,
  And that that favour made him fat,
  I said, if any title bee
Convey'd by this, Ah, what doth it availe,
To be the fortieth name in an entaile?

Thus I reclaim'd my buzard love, to flye
At what, and when, and how, and where I chuse;
  Now negligent of sport I lye
  And now as other Fawkners use,

I spring a mistresse, sweare, write, sigh and weepe:
And the game kill'd, or lost, goe talke, and sleepe.
(Loves diet, 1-30)

The most basic form of the image is the statement that love is a falcon too fat to hunt. The referent is, ludicrously enough, a corpulent falcon. The discussion and development of the image is involved with ways in which to get this bird back in shape, and this discussion is carried on by means of a series of further metaphorical statements related to the implied basic metaphor. (The basic metaphor is implied because its actual statement comes only from a union of the first and last stanzas.) Unlike the poem just considered, which developed by a series of analogies, Loves diet develops by connected images and by argument. Each sign of love is food for the fat falcon, but Donne proves, metaphysically, that the food is not really food at all, and so love becomes thin again.

The referent of the image being a fat hunting bird, the argument is involved with the way in which the bird can be reduced in size. The difference between this development and the development in the sonnet just considered is that, instead of pressing all the points of contact between the referent (the falcon) and the thing being spoken of (love), the poet adds new metaphors, forcing a relationship between them and the basic notion.

The image, as it appears in the context of the poem, is: that love is like a falcon, and Donne's falcon has become too fat because it has been fed on an extravagant diet of sighs, tears, and letters. To reduce this falcon to fighting trim again, so that Donne will be able to woo instead of mope, will involve a reducing diet, a

diet of love's least-liked food, discretion. The metaphor develops into a list of the foods of love. Notice, in passing, that the metaphor of discretion as the worst food of love is ignored after its statement; in the development of the image the word is given its literal meaning.

The foods on which love feeds and grows fat are sighs, tears, and letters. But, in the development of the image, Donne takes away each of them by giving a proof that they do not really nourish; in other words, he starves love metaphysically. The sigh granted every day is not purely a sigh of love, for Donne's poverty and his sins occasion it; therefore there is not very much nourishment from that. The sigh from the lady is not nourishing because Donne proves that it was not meant for him. The tear dropped by the poet is not nourishing, because he has added to it the elements of anger and shame. Like the sigh, it is not purely a result of the pangs of love, and will therefore not be nourishing to the falcon. The lady's tears will be no more nourishing, because Donne can demonstrate that they are merely imitations, without any emotion. He reinforces his argument with another apparently reasonable image: the lady's eyes flow with what would seem to be tears not because she is weeping, but because her eyes are perspiring with the constant effort of rolling at all men. Donne's letters will not nourish the falcon, because he burns them immediately. The lady's letters would give nourishment, were it not for the fact that Donne can prove that they were not written for love of him alone. So the falcon of love, metaphysically starved, will grow thin and hungry; Donne will be able to go hunting again and indulge

once more in the fashionable flirtations of court. If the bird is allowed to grow too fat to hunt, he will merely be able to sit unhappily moping.

This development of the metaphor is in the argumentative or dialectical or metaphysical manner which gave to the school of Donne the misleading name of "metaphysical" poets. All the convenient ramifications of the basic metaphor are forced by the use of spurious logic, the ideas are "yoked by violence together".[2] Such development of imagery as this caused Johnson to write of the metaphysicals that "Their attempts were always analytick; they broke every image into fragments."[3] And, although the famous comment is obviously an overstatement, it is certainly one of the most perceptive statements ever made on the nature of metaphysical poetry.

This process of development or extension of a metaphor, either by forcing all the possible analogies between the referent of the metaphor and the subject of the poem or by introducing apparently logical ramifications of the basic metaphor, is used more or less in practically all of Donne's poems. These two ways in which images are developed might be called the practicable equivalents of the three methods listed earlier, which were concerned more with the reason and the method than purely with the way in which the poem containing the image evolved. Whereas the poet usually uses only one of the two ways just stated, he often combines

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2 Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (ed. Hill, 1905) i, 20

3 Ibid., 21

two or even three of the methods listed above. The earlier list of methods demonstrated the why aspect of the development of the image either as conceit or as metaphor; the two methods just stated are concerned purely with the how aspect of the developed image as metaphor. The process of developing an image, of course, involves almost always one of the two how methods, one or more of the three methods listed earlier, and is carried on for one of the two causes listed. And a process similar to that seen in the two long metaphors just discussed (with some variation in the number of the elements used and the extent to which they are used) is carried on in the development of most extended metaphors: the metaphor of the first type, which is usually the same as the conceit of the first type; the metaphor of the second type, which is also usually the same as the corresponding conceit; and the metaphors of the third and fourth types, which are frequently the same as the conceit of the third type.

Even a fairly cursory examination of one or two cases of each of the types just mentioned will demonstrate that much the same process is at work and that much the same attitude towards the image is being shown as in the development of the two metaphors of the first type studied above. For an example of the development in the metaphor of the second type, consider the cosmographical metaphor in the Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse, a poem already considered in the course of this work.

The most basic form of the metaphor is stated in the second stanza of the poem:

Whilst my Physitians by their love are growne

Cosmographers, and I their Mapp, who lie
Flat on this bed, that by them may be showne
That this is my South-west discoverie
Per fretum febris, by these streights to die,

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

(Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse, 6-15)

In the second stanza quoted we find the actual statement of the metaphor (ll. 6-7), while in the rest of the quotation (ll. 8-15) we find the listing, and indeed forcing home, of the analogies between the referent (the map) and the subject of the poem (Donne on his death bed). In the next two stanzas of the poem (ll. 16-25) further imagery is introduced, ramifications of the basic metaphor. That is, having accepted the notion that he is a flat map, that by straits he must die, but that East and West coincide in a flat map, Donne goes on to consider possibilities.

Is the Pacifique Sea my home? Or are
The easterne riches? Is Jerusalem?
Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltare,
All streights, and none but streights, are wayes to them,
Whether were Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Sem.

We thinke that Paradise and Calvarie,
Christs Crosse, and Adams tree, stood in one place;
Looke Lord, and finde both Adams met in me;
As the first Adams sweat surrounds my face,
May the last Adams blood my soule embrace.

(Ibid., 16-25)

In an earlier discussion of this image as a conceit, there was some discussion of the way in which the development of the conceit moved the subject away from the basic metaphor of cosmography. Now, closer consideration of the same image as a metaphor rather than a conceit shows why the centre of the developed image has become lost

in the development. The statement of the metaphor led to the forcing home of further analogies between the referent and the subject. While this is being done the development is compact and perfectly logical, the image has unity so that the metaphor itself is not obscured. But in this poem, in which the two methods are combined, the other form of development is introduced after the exhaustion of analogies. The poet begins to introduce apparently logical and reasonable ramifications of the image. The Pacific, then a mysterious and romantic thought, coincides with the fabulous East; if the West is Donne's death, as the earlier analogies showed, it is also the way in which he will reach untold wealth and the home of his desires. And straits, the straits of sickness as well as the geographical straits, are the only way to reach this culmination of a journey. The argument in these lines is a logical ramification of the analogies of the second and third stanzas (ll. 6-15). In the last of the stanzas quoted, the analogy of the meeting of East and West on flat maps and the meeting of death and heaven, sorrow and joy, in the case of a virtuous man brings another related image, the notion that the tree of knowledge which caused man's fall and the cross which caused his salvation stood upon the same spot of ground. The final image is an analogy from the ramification of the earlier analogy: the two Adams should meet in Donne, both the first Adam who degraded mankind, and the last Adam who saved mankind, for Donne's West (death) will become his East (heaven) by both his physical death in the sweat of Adam[4] and his spiritual birth in the blood of

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4 In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. Genesis 3:19

Christ.[5]

In the metaphor of the third type, the short developed image, a similar method of development is found.

> Whilst thus to ballast love, I thought,
> And so more steddily to have gone,
> With wares which would sinke admiration,
> I saw, I had loves pinnace overfraught.
> (Aire and Angels, 15-18)

The metaphor of "ballasting" love has the obvious ramification that love has a boat, a pinnace, and also that the ballasting is being done to make this pinnace sail more steadily. The third related image is the metaphor that Donne's love is too heavy a cargo for the pinnace, from which it follows logically that the boat is too heavy and will not be steady on course anyway. The idea is that Donne planned a small flirtation for the good of his reputation as a courtier and to keep in practice in the fashionable pastime. That would be ballasting love to make love's boat sail more steadily. But his love grew until it was too great for him to control. The boat, overballasted, was worse than before. The opening metaphor implied the metaphor of the boat; the two together had certain ramifications. Because of these, and by these, the image became a developed metaphor.

The forcing of analogies and ramifications is the way in which even less complicated developed metaphors are written.

Then from those wombes of starres, the Brides bright eyes,

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5 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Hebrews 9:13-4

> At every glance, a constellation flyes,
> And sowes the Court with starres, and doth prevent
> In light and power, the all-ey'd firmament.
> (Eccloque, 25-8)

Despite the apparent lack of unity in this image, the development takes place in a manner similar to that used in the other images considered. The faulty construction gives the effect of mixed metaphor: that is because Donne has not taken the actual referent, but the implications of it, as the starting point of development. The image of the bride's eyes as the wombs that bring forth stars is carried on, but the womb idea is not, except insofar as a womb is an organ which brings forth new bodies. In other words, while most developed images use a literal interpretation of the referent for the development, this image develops while recognizing the basic metaphor as a metaphor.

The same processes are used even in the development of the fourth type of metaphor, in which the extension of the basic image is not so much metaphorical as linguistic, often involving nothing more than explanation of the content of the image. Consider the way in which the following image develops:

> ... through no familie
> Ere rigg'd a soule for heavens discoverie
> With whom more Venturers more boldly dare
> Venture their states, with him in joy to share.
> (Elegie on the L.C. 13-16)

The content of the image is the statement that those who mourn the late noble would have been glad to have died with him. Such an image as this needs extension, largely because a terse and unmodified metaphor could not express the whole of the idea. And the notion that the mourners are venturers trusting themselves to the soul

rigged for heaven's discovery by L.C.'s family is not so much a new image as a complement of the basic idea, the metaphor of rigging. It is a ramification, and so integral a part of the rigging metaphor that it can scarcely be called a metaphor itself, for it is really only a part of the larger image.

Another example of this development by completion of an idea can be seen in the following quotation, in which the idea is complemented by one further phrase:

> Adam and Eve had mingled bloods, and now
> Like Chimiques equall fires, her temperate wombe
> Had stew'd and form'd it.
>
> (The Progresse of the Soule, 493-5)

The notion of stewing and forming are merely ramifications of the simile of the alchemist's fires, demonstrating further the truth of Johnson's comment on the analytic minds of the metaphysical poets. The poet's attitude is obviously that: if the action of the womb allows the use of the simile of the alchemists' fires, then the action must be the same as that of the fires - warming, softening, giving shape. It was this attitude, and a corresponding attitude among appreciative readers, that led the metaphysicals to write in developed images.

There is another type of developed image, one that does not use the process of piling up analogies and quasi-logical ramifications of the referent. This is the seventh type of comparison, which takes the form of an analogy between two images, or between an image and a denotative statement, joining the two into a self-explanatory whole.

> As th'earth conceiving by the Sunne,
> Yeelds faire diversitie,

Yet never knowes which course that light doth run,
So let mee study, that mine actions bee
Worthy their sight, though brinde in how they see.
(The Litanie, 50-4)

This example, which was considered in some detail in Chapter Two above, shows more clearly than a definition exactly what this type of comparison is, and how it works. Another example worth considering is the following:

And as friends may looke strange,
By a new fashion, or apparrells change,
Their soules, though long acquainted they had beene,
These clothes, their bodies, never yet had seene.
(Epithalamion X, 208-11)

A few lines after comes another example:

Now, as in Tullias tombe, one lampe burnt cleare,
Unchang'd for fifteene hundred years,
May these love-lamps we here enshrine,
In warmth, light, lasting, equall the divine.
(Ibid. XI, 215-8)

This type of image is evidently more purely descriptive than any other, giving at least the illusion that its purpose is close to exact denotation. In the examples quoted both halves of the whole image have been metaphors, and both halves have had an independent metaphorical function. But the second half, the complement, illuminated the first half; the reader has met, not the usual complication of the image, but a simplification of it. The development was not an exercise in wit, but a poetic use of the means by which one simplifies and explains an abstract idea. This is even more evident in cases in which the complementary half is not metaphorical.

... for hearing him, I found
That as burnt venome Leachers do grow sound
By giving others their soares, I might growe

Guilty, and he free.

(Satyre IIII, 133-6)

The whole image has the same effect as any other image: it creates a measure of empathy between the reader and the poet. But it differs from most images in that the creation of empathy is made a device for exact denotation. Indeed, in some cases, the metaphorical aspect of the two halves is completely subjected to the denotative function of the whole image, and only the connotations of the words used admit the image to the canon at all. It differs from the other types of developed image found in Donne's poetry because its development is not carried on in a dialectical manner with constant pressing of analogies and connected images. It is often a conceit and usually both parts are metaphorical; but in its role as a developed image it can best be called a comparison partaking of the natures of both and still different from both.

A complete recapitulation of this Chapter and its consideration of the purely mechanical aspects of the development of metaphors into long images would be liable to the charge of unnecessary repetition. The Chapter itself is perhaps liable to both the accusation that it wastes words on obvious matters and that it dismisses some points in a very perfunctory manner. But, its purpose has been to examine the manner in which images are developed as metaphors in Donne's poetry, and it has concerned itself with that subject as much as the scope of the present study allows. There has been a certain amount of repetition from earlier parts of the work, because of the close connection between the developed image and the conceit. And because of this connection, this Chapter took from Chapter Five the three grammatical methods and the two

occasions of development. These aspects of developed imagery, which emerged from a consideration of the short conceits of the third type, are important in the study of all developed images, although it is only in the short image that they can easily be seen. The contribution made to the study by this Chapter has been in its consideration of the actual method of composition used in the development of a metaphor into an extended comparison, and the implicit revelation of the analytic frame of mind that led Donne to "break every image into fragments".

CHAPTER 8

SIMPLE COMPARISONS

This study uses the term "simple comparison" to describe any comparison that is not developed or extended or in any way made into a long and complex image. The list of types of comparison given in Chapter Two contained two types of simple comparison: the simile or metaphor that is not developed into a long image, and the metaphorical use of a single word. In other words, the simple comparison is the elementary form of imagery, the most easily comprehended form of the poetic image. It would perhaps not be an overstatement to say that most of the imagery of English poets other than those of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras consists largely of simple comparisons. Here it must be made clear that "simple" in this case is being used in a restricted sense, meaning merely "uncomplicated in form". All images, of course, work by a complex pattern of thought associations.

In some long images the basic metaphor, a simple comparison, is stated, as in:

> And by these hymnes, all shall approve
> Us Canoniz'd for Love.
>
> (The Canonization, 35-6)

As it has been quoted, the metaphor of canonization is a simple comparison, but within the context of the poem it is a metaphor basic to a complex developed image. The difference between the simple and developed comparison can perhaps best be seen by contrast, by considering a developed image in which related simple comparisons occur.

> Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
> Where wee almost, yea more then maryed are.
> This flea is you and I, and this
> Our mariage bed, and mariage temple is;

Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
And cloysterd in these living walls of Jet.
(The Flea, 10-15)

The basic metaphor of the long image is the idea that the flea, which has bitten both the poet and his mistress, has achieved the ideal, the perfect union of male and female, two made into one. This is not explicitly stated, but is implied in the developing argument of the image. Within the argument which develops the metaphor into a long and complex image, there are a few simple comparisons which, although related to the original idea and an integral part of the development, have an independent existence as metaphors. The argument says that the flea has achieved the perfect union; the incidental imagery of the poem, extending the main idea, says that the flea is the temple of Hymen, the nuptial bed, and adds that the union of the two bloods (spirits) within the flea is like the union of two persons (spirits) within a cloister. There are two undeveloped metaphors (ll. 12-13) and one metaphorical use of a word (cloysterd, l. 15). The developed basic metaphor of the poem and the three lesser images use the same process, the metaphorical process outlined in Chapter One, but there is an obvious difference in use. In the case of the developed metaphor, the idea is made into an argument, a fairly long discussion, while in the case of the simple comparisons there is merely a statement of the idea. The images work in the same way; the difference is chiefly one of extent.

Once the metaphorical process has been studied and is thoroughly understood, the use of the simple comparison in both its forms becomes so elementary that, like the atom before the twentieth

century, it defies analysis. There is little, if anything, to discuss. And in Donne's poetry, simple comparisons, the most common of poetic devices, are surprisingly few, for, as Johnson said of the metaphysicals, "In forming descriptions, they looked out, not for images, but for conceits".[1]

Donne's simple comparisons often have an element of the conceit about them, and seem to be on the verge of development.

> A Taper of his Torch, a copie writ
> From his Originall, and a faire became
> Of the same warme, and dazeling Sun, though it
> Must in another Sphere his vertue streame.
> (To Sir H.W. 5-8)

The images quoted are somewhere in between the categories of developed and simple comparisons. There is, in at least the first two images of the passage, a sort of double metaphor. The King's authority must be a torch before the Ambassador's can be a taper lit from the torch. His qualities must be called original copy before the qualities of the Ambassador can be called a transcript. The third image is really a comparison of the fourth type. The Ambassador is a beam from the King's sun; the image is complemented by the further statement that the beam must shine in a different sphere and complicated by the statement that it must "his vertue streame", which changes the idea.

Clearly what Donne intended was a sort of parallel construction, in which three images alike in form would join to form one stanza full of extravagant flattery both of the King and his Ambassador, Sir Henry Wotton. But each image is really a combination of two metaphors, one more vital to the poem than

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[1] Johnson, Lives of the English Poets (ed. Hill, 1905) i, 33

the other, and yet dependent upon the other for its meaning; and the third image of the stanza is complicated so that it actually becomes a developed image, while the first two, although not extended, at least reflect the analytical process behind the developed image. Such an image as "A Taper of his Torch" is certainly a simple comparison, a metaphor decorating one line of poetry; still it has characteristics of the developed image.

This short discussion may seem to have negated the listing of types of images. Actually it has not, but it has shown something further about Donne's imagery, and further demonstrated the analytical turn of his imagination, the fact that Donne always thought about his images. Usually, I believe, the poetic image is a result of the union of imagination and fancy. Donne's images seem always to be results of a combination of imagination, fancy, and reason. The hard, unemotional nature of Donne's imagery as imagery can be seen in the metaphors of Satyre I:

> Away thou fondling motley humorist,
> Leave mee, and in this standing woodden chest,
> Conforted with these few bookes, let me lye
> In prison, and here be coffin'd, when I dye;
> Here are Gods conduits, grave Divines; and here
> Natures Secretary, the Philosopher.
>
> (Satyre I, 1-6)

The metaphors in this passage are far from being profoundly emotional or even evocative, at least in the context in which Donne has put them. They communicate, not the anger which underlies the whole poem, but rather a pose of wry self-deprecation. To be "coffin'd" in his study at death seems quite a pleasant idea to Donne; how different the same image seems in:

> Some coffin'd in their cabbins lye,'equally

Griev'd that they are not dead, and yet must dye.
(The Storme, 45-6)

The first group of images work by contradiction, by using metaphors that appear to be unpleasant to describe that which the poet thinks is very pleasant. The intruding gallant is called a clown, a "fondling motley humorist". And from the opening insult, Donne rushes on to admit his anti-social behavior and to list the images which the gallant would use to describe his study and his habits. The room in which the poet sits contentedly among his books is a "standing woodden chest"; at his studies Donne is "In prison"; when he dies the study will be his coffin, as, indeed, it is now since he is dead to the social world. The obvious meaning of the three metaphors is that study is a very gloomy way to pass ones time, but, in fact, they communicate the very opposite idea. By an ironic admission of the truth of the statements which the gallant might make, Donne implies that he feels it better to be dead in a study than alive in polite society. The feeling conveyed by the metaphors is made to turn back upon itself and negate itself. What is conveyed is that attitude of not caring, of having such contempt for the listener that whatever he might say means nothing; his images can be interpreted in a way directly opposite to the way in which he meant them. A similar use of metaphor can be found in another poem in which Donne dismisses an intruder:

Call us what you will, wee are made such by love;
Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us finde the'Eagle and the Dove.
(The Canonization, 19-22)

The last metaphors of the passage are not as subtle in their working as the others; nor are they any more emotional or evocative.

Churchmen are conduits of God simply because they are the means by which knowledge of God streams to earth from heaven. Philosophers are secretaries of nature because through them the knowledge of natural life is made known to the world. The metaphors describe, but they only communicate the poet's state of mind if the reader happens to concur with Donne's implication that knowledge of God and nature is a good and a pleasant thing.

The peculiarity of the imagery just considered lies in the fact that the images themselves, although they communicate by the references of words in the usual metaphorical process, communicate also by symbols; that is, they are both poetry and prose. It is the context, the speech more than the imagery, which conveys Donne's attitude, making the reader interpret images of death and imprisonment into pleasant thoughts and making him reverse the sombre connotations of "grave Divines" and "Natures Secretary, the Philosopher". This reasonable imagery is characteristic of Donne, the poet who always thought about his poems, and who, because he always thought about his poems, tried to communicate passion rather than emotion, and to communicate it by tone and argument rather than by the emotive power of scattered images. In the study of the simple comparison this fact emerges. In the study of the longer developed comparisons and conceits the tone and the argument interfered, as it were, with the vision, so that the exact, logical use of the metaphor as a descriptive device could not be seen. But now we can see that Donne's strongest feelings are conveyed in the broad sweep of a long passage, by the development of an image rather than by the image itself. Donne's comparisons, despite all that has been said about their

extravagance, are almost always reasonable, defencible by reason; and to Donne, it would seem, reason was far more important than emotion.

In this way the nature of the sleep between death and resurrection is described;

> Thinke that they bury thee, and thinke that right
> Laies thee to sleepe but a Saint Lucies night.
> (The second Anniversary, 119-20)

Saint Lucy's day is the shortest day in the year. The reader, knowing this, can easily understand the comparison. Because of the shortness of the day, the night of Saint Lucy's feast is the longest of the year. The comparison, then, communicates the comfort of faith that death will not be oblivion, but only an exceptionally long sleep, a very long period of darkness that will come to an end. Yet the emotion in the image does not seem profoundly moving; at least it is not as profound as the thought. And certainly the emotion of the metaphor is not as intense as that expressed in the following long image, although both use the same referent.

> Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
> Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,
> The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
> Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
> The worlds whole sap is sunke:
> The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk,
> Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunke,
> Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seeme to laugh,
> Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.
> (A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, 1-9)

One can easily see the difference between the thought in the short image and that in the developed image. Although both are based on the same idea, the longer image with its related imagery and its

development communicates a state of mind and an atmosphere, while the shorter communicates only an idea and a part of the poet's state of mind, scarcely more than prose would have done. In the longer image the shortness of Saint Lucy's day means a great deal to the poet, epitomizing his mood. In the shorter image the length of Saint Lucy's night is only an approximate analogue for the length of the sleep of death. Both convey more than prose, but the short image is much less intense than is the longer one. To Donne emotion was something to be rationalized, and rationalization involved definitions and ramifications and subtle distinctions. And so his short images, simple comparisons, never convey the power and passion of his conceits and extended images; they are, one might say, overshadowed.

Donne's simple comparisons often convey more by their tone than by their actual content. We see, for example, an image that should be in a love lyric used ironically to convey contempt:

> At last his Love he in a windowe spies,
> And like light dew exhal'd, he flings from mee.
> (Satyre I, 106-7)

Many of Donne's comparisons are not the stuff of poetry at all:

> And they who write to Lords, rewards to get,
> Are they not like singers at doores for meat?
> (Satyre II, 21-2)

Equally unpoetical is the reference to the lungs as "bellows":

> For, wee to live, our bellowes weare, and breath,
> Nor are wee mortall, dying, dead, but death.
> (Elegie on Mris Boulstred, 29-30)

And many of Donne's simple comparisons are short conceits, odd and shocking comparisons. A man spending the Christmas season in the country instead of at court is described as an:

Unseasonable man, statue of ice, ...
(Ecclogue, 1)

The ladies attending a bride are warned to:

Conceitedly dresse her, and be assigned,
By you, fit place for every flower and jewell,
Make her for love fit fewell
As gay as Flora, and as rich as Inde.
(Epithalamion made at Lincolnes Inne, 19-22)

That a bride should be as gay as Flora and as rich as the Indies is not a startlingly new thought, but that she should be fuel for love is typical of Donne. The idea is commonplace, but the comparison is not.

The metaphorical use of a single word is probably the simplest form of the poetic image, since it is easily comprehended, almost incapable of conveying complex feelings or ideas, and bears even less intensity of feeling than does the simple metaphor or simile. It is almost always an incidental image, although conceivably a poem could have such a comparison as its most important image. Such comparisons, although they do charge the word with greater and more intense meaning than it would have in normal use, communicate very little compared with the depth of meaning of more extended imagery. It would seem that the narrow space allowed by one word confines the metaphorical process. Consider the metaphorical adjectives of the following:

Oh monstrous, superstitious puritan,
Of refin'd manners, yet ceremoniall man,
That when thou meet'st one, with enquiring eyes
Dost search, and like a needy broker prize
The silke, and gold he weares, and to that rate
So high or low, dost raise thy formall hat.
(Satyre I, 27-32)

The idea of establishing a proportion between the dress of a

gentleman and the height to which one raises his hat to him is a conceit; the image of the broker is an ordinary simile; words such as "superstitious", "refin'd", "ceremoniall", and "formall" are in the category of metaphorical words. One can easily see that they are images, that they use the metaphorical process; but it is equally evident that they do not communicate any great amount of poetic feeling, any more than does the metaphor in:

> Yet though he cannot skip forth now to greet
> Every fine silken painted foole we meet, ...
> (Ibid., 71-2)

Or the metaphorical adjective of:

> Canst thou for gaine beare? and must every hee
> Which cryes not, Goddesse, to they Mistresse, draw,
> Or eate thy poysonous words?
> (Satyre III, 26-8)

The one-word comparison as a verb conveys something that is less poetic feeling than an overtone of meaning. By using this device Donne describes an action, achieving almost the effect of a pun. The subtle intrusion of sin and death into the garden of Eden is described by a verb connecting the concept with the serpent:

> O Sonne of God, who seeing two things,
> Sinne, and death crept in, ...
> (A Litanie, 10-11)

The image has its being not so much in the conventional personification of sin and death as in the metaphorical use of the verb. The verb is more obviously a metaphor in:

> And spying heires melting with luxurie,
> Satan will not joy at their sinnes, as hee.
> (Satyre II, 79-80)

And in:

> Who can blot out the Crosse, which th'instrument
> Of God, dew'd on mee in the Sacrament?
> (The Crosse, 15-16)

The investigations of this Chapter have brought to light one fact that was obscured by the passionate arguments and startling comparisons of the longer developed images. That is the fact that Donne's comparisons are usually logical ones made without any apparent emotion; and that Donne's reason always worked on his comparisons, making certain that distinctions, definitions, and so on could be invoked to prove the comparison good. If we realize that a well-trained analytical mind produced John Donne's images, then we can understand the nature of metaphysical imagery, the conceits of the group of English poets of which Donne was leader.

CHAPTER 9

PUNS

The OED defines a pun as "The use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more meanings or different associations, or the use of two or more words of the same or nearly the same sound with different meanings, so as to produce a humourous effect; a play on words".[1] Punning seems to have been considered a legitimate device by writers and readers during the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Shakespeare's great skill as a punster is well known, and does not appear to have received any adverse comment until Samuel Johnson denounced his "quibbles". Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, said Dr. Johnson,

> whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety, and truth.[2]

Although Donne's plays with the meanings of words are not as numerous as Shakespeare's, it cannot be denied that he was an extremely skilful punster. Usually his puns show a considerable amount of subtlety and real wit. Usually they have been cleverly integrated into the context of a poem, and often they have been made metaphorical and developed into important images. In at least one case a pun has been made the basic metaphor for a long conceit.

The simplest form of pun is the use of a word which combines two words that sound alike but have different meanings.

What delicacie can in fields appeare,

---

1 OED sb 1

2 Johnson, Works (1796) ii, 94

Whil'st Flora'herselfe doth a freeze jerkin weare?
(Ecclogue, 7-8)

The pun is almost too simple to need any commentary. The double meaning is, as it were, isolated to one word; it is terse and witty as it stands, and neither affects the context to any great extent nor is affected by it in turn. Indeed, we cannot be certain whether the pun was intentional or merely accidental; we cannot even be certain that it was not merely a printer's error. At any rate, the passage is about the frozen state of the countryside, and a frieze jerkin is called a freeze jerkin.[3] The notion, of course, is metaphorical. The countryman protects himself from the winter wind with his frieze coat. The flowers and trees, being frozen, can be said to have wrapped themselves in a coat of winter. So we have the pun, freeze jerkin. The two meanings are brought together within one word. Here it can be noted that the use of the pun does not detract from the even flow of the poem. Had Donne written "thick jerkin" instead of using the pun, the lines would have remained substantially the same and the metaphor would have been changed only slightly. Had he written "snow jerkin" the metaphor would have been unchanged. But, by using the pun, he strengthens the effect of the metaphor, combining two metaphors

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3 The context in which the word appears seems to verify the statement that Donne intended a pun, although the statement is made without documented evidence. The OED says that the alternate spelling, 'freeze' instead of 'frieze', was in use at the time (1613) when Donne wrote the Ecclogue, citing a reference dated 1611 in which the word is spelled 'freeze', and another as late as 1683 using the spelling, 'Freez'. See OED, freize, sb 1. Despite this, Donne's habitual uses of words and the poem itself allow at least the suspicion that the word is a pun.

in one as he combined two words. Without the pun the lines would be good; with it they are stronger. Donne does not "leave his work unfinished" for a pun.

In other cases the pun is more important to the exposition of the poem.

> My minde, neither with prides itch, nor yet hath been
> Poyson'd with love to see, or to bee seene,
> I had no suit there, nor new suite to shew,
> Yet went to Court.
>
> (Satyre IIII, 5-8)

There is a difference between the pun on the meanings of a word with the sound of "freeze" and this pun, with its two similar words related to the court. In the first example, the two words, "frieze" and "freeze" were drawn together within one word. The context evidently implied that "frieze" was the required word; the spelling, "freeze", showed that both words were to be considered together. The combination gave new life to the metaphor of nature wearing the coat of winter. In the second example the two words used in the pun are not drawn together; both words are stated. Instead of joining the two words, as it were, forcibly, Donne relates the two words to one thing. Men go to court either to present some suit, or to be admired in a new suit. The pun on the two meanings of the word, "suit", is not brought about by combining the meanings in one word, but by relating both to the word, "Court". The second pun has not the terseness of the first. And, while the first could have been omitted accidentally without greatly changing the poem, the second is a part of the actual exposition, the prose content of the poem.

In the Holy Sonnet on the Nativitie the pun depends on two

meanings of one word. The use of a pronoun instead of a repetition of the word complicates the pun so that only a close reading will reveal it.

> Seest thou, my Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he
> Which fils all place, yet none holds him, doth lye?
> (Holy Sonnet 3, 9-10)

This pun is obviously not intended to be humourous. It is intended to convey tersely within the limited framework of the sonnet the paradox of the Nativity, and the paradox finds expression in the use of two meanings of the word, "place". God fills all place (i.e. space) but no place is large enough to hold God.

> Immensitie cloysterd in thy deare wombe.
> (Holy Sonnet 2, 14)

And no place (house) could be found in which Christ could be born. There are two meanings to place; the word means both space and a particular part of space, a room or a house. The paradox of religion, that God is in no particular place although he is in every place, is combined with the mention of the Gospel's statement that no place could be found in Bethlehem for the Nativity of Christ.

This pun also differs from the first example given. The first pun considered was one word made up of two. The context gave one meaning, the spelling gave another, and so two words, sounding alike but having similar meanings, were joined. The second pun related two words that sounded alike but had different meanings by suggesting a similar function for both. The words themselves were unchanged. The third pun made clever use of differing aspects of one word, suggesting by its context the different meanings of

the word, "place". From this it can be seen that even the simple pun, the play on two words, is more complex than it might seem and works in more than one way.

The most common pun in Donne's poetry is the pun on the words, "sun" and "son". This pun, especially when used in a religious poem, is often metaphorical.

> Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine,
> I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine.
> (Holy Sonnet 1, 1633, 4-5)

That the poet is a son of God is a matter of faith, and is written as a factual statement. But, by adding the notion of shining, the statement is made a pun and a metaphor. There is the combination of two meanings of the word with the sound of son; there is also the metaphorical statement about the soul's ultimate relation to God.

The same pun is used in praise of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. In the seventh sonnet of La Corona it becomes an integral part of a conceit. The ascension of Christ, God the Son, is related to the rising of the sun; the exposition of the former idea is parallel to the development of the latter, so that, by the use of the pun, the passage is both denotative and metaphorical.

> Salute the last and everlasting day,
> Joy at the uprising of this Sunne, and Sonne,
> Yee whose just teares, or tribulation
> Have purely washt, or burnt your drossie clay;
> Behold the Highest, parting hence away,
> Lightens the darke clouds, which hee treads upon,
> Nor doth hee by ascending, show alone,
> But first hee, and hee first enters the way.
> (Ascention, 1-8)

In this case both words are given and the pun results from the context. Every day begins with the rising of the sun, the last day of the world will begin with the rising of the Son of God, and the ascension of

Christ marked the beginning of the everlasting day of the new order. As the ascension of the Son started a new day in the world, Donne describes the ascension in terms of the rising of the sun to start a new day. To make his point clear he repeats the sound using the different spellings, "Sunne" and "Sonne".

In another sun pun, in a letter To Mrs M.H., Donne uses a combination of context and spelling, as he did in the first example considered.

> Mad paper stay, and grudge not here to burne
> With all those sonnes whom my braine did create.
> (To Mrs M.H., 1-2)

The pun joins two notions: first, that Donne wants to burn his verses; second, that Donne fathered the verses. The ideas of burning and creation, of suns and sons, result in the use of the pun.

A more complex pun on the two words with the sound of son can be found in the Epithalamion made at Lincolnes Inne.

> And you frolique Patricians,
> Sonns of these Senators wealths deep oceans,
> Ye painted courtiers, barrels of others wits,
> Yee country men, who but your beasts love none,
> Yee of those fellowships whereof hee's one,
> Of study and play made strange Hermaphrodits,
> Here shine.
> (Epithalamion made at Lincolnes Inne, 25-31)

Grierson points out that the men to whom Donne is referring are those who would be the sons by marriage not of the Senators themselves, but of their money; more simply, they are young men who want to marry the daughter of a rich man. But, at the same time, they are suns, in that they would drink up the "wealths deep oceans". Grierson strengthens the case for the reading by a quotation from The

Storme.[4]

it rain'd more
Then if the Sunne had drunk the sea before.
(The Storme, 43-4)

Another example of this pun, again referring to Christ, is in A Hymne to God the Father.[5]

But sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore.
(A Hymne to God the Father 15-6)

The pun develops from the notion that the Son manifests God's mercy; as the sun in the sky dispels actual darkness, so the Son of God dispels metaphorical darkness, or sin.

Donne's double meanings are not always easily seen; in some cases it is their very simplicity that makes a reader miss them. In The Progresse of the Soule, for example, Donne says that he has lived almost six lustres, lustres being periods of five years. But, since a lustre is also a sort of cloth, Donne's lustres are not lived out but worn out.

... my sixe lustres almost now outwore.
(The Progresse of the Soule, 41)

Another example is the more famous

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,

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4 Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (1912) ii, 94

5 Helen Gardner's edition of the Divine Poems uses the reading:

Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne
Shall shine as it shines now.

Although these readings, which are taken from the MSS, make the pun less obvious than it is in the 1633 edition, which Grierson accepted on these two lines, Miss Gardner's notes indicate that a pun is intended. See Gardner, The Divine Poems (1952) 110

The Element of fire is quite put out.
(The first Anniversary 205-6)

The word is written as if the ordinary meaning were intended; it is then followed by a verb suggesting quite another meaning. The living of thirty years (six lustres) becomes the wearing out of six lustres (lustrous cloths). The rejection of the theory that fire was an element becomes the putting out of the fire. The verb creates the pun.

The pun becomes more complex when it is developed, as in the passage quoted above from one of the La Corona sonnets. Often, the pun is accepted as a factual statement and a poem, or a large part of a poem, is written around it.

Hast thee harsh verse, as fast as thy lame measure
Will give thee leave, to him, my pain and pleasure.
I have given thee, and yet thou art too weake,
Feete, and a reasoning soule and tongue to speake.
Plead for me, and so by thine and my labour
I am thy Creator, thou my Saviour.
(To Mr T.W., 1-6)

Here the pun suggests the conceit. Donne has given his verse feet, he says, but the measure is lame. The pun on the two meanings of the word feet (feet and metrical feet) becomes a metaphor. Since he has given his verse feet and, of course, the ability to speak and plead, he is the creator of the poem.

Another example of a pun developing into a conceit is the pun on the word, "comprehend", in Vpon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities. In this case the pun is at the end of the conceit rather than at the beginning, and the whole is written to make the pun effective.

... if thy leaves do then
Convey these wares in parcels unto men;
If for vast Tons of Currans, and of Figs,
Of Medicinall and Aromatique twigs,

Thy leaves a better method do provide,
Divide to pounds, and ounces sub-divide;
If they stoope lower yet, and vent our wares,
Home-manufactures, to thick popular Faires,
If omni-praegnant there, upon warme stalls,
They hatch all wares for which the buyer calls;
Then thus thy leaves we justly may commend,
That they all kinde of matter comprehend.

(Vpon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities, 37-48)

The pun is the focal point for the elaborate insult. Coryat's book, according to Donne, has a noble future. The leaves of his book will be useful to mankind - for wrapping pills for the health of the world, stopping muskets for the safety of England, but most of all for wrapping produce. And, because the leaves of the book will wrap such a great variety of things, Donne, the critic, can freely say that they comprehend all kinds of matter.

In such poems as the two just quoted the pun becomes a major image. In the first the two meanings of "feet" suggested a conceit; in the second connected images formed a conceit which culminated in the statement of the pun. In the Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse the pun becomes the uniting factor, the notion holding together the cosmographical conceit.

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

(Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse, 6-10)

The poem has been quoted in full and discussed above both as a conceit and as a metaphor. The conceit begins with a sort of double metaphor; Donne's physicians are cosmographers and he is the map they are studying. The pun on the two meanings of the word,

"straits", becomes a new metaphor. The three metaphors combine in the development of the conceit.

One of Donne's favourite puns is that on the two meanings of the word, "angel". Angels, of course, are much in the mind of anyone so much given to theology as Donne. And an angel is a coin. The pun appears in Elegie XX. Loves Warre.

> France in her lunatique giddines did hate
> Ever our men, yea and our God of late;
> Yet she relyes upon our Angels well,
> Which nere returne; no more then they which fell.
> (Elegie XX, 9-12)

In Elegie XI it is developed into a long conceit. The poem describes how Donne lost his mistress's bracelet, and was obliged to give her twelve golden angels to be melted down for a new one. Making the pun the basic metaphor for an extended conceit, Donne bewails the loss of the coins by complaining of the injustice of casting twelve good angels into the fire prepared for the wicked angels.

> Mourne I that I thy seavenfold chaine have lost;
> Not for the luck sake; but the bitter cost.
> O, shall twelve righteous Angels, which as yet
> No leaven of vile soder did admit;
> Nor yet by any way have straid or gone
> From the first state of their Creation;
> Angels, which heaven commanded to provide
> All things to me, and be my faithfull guide;
> To gaine new friends, t'appease great enemies;
> To comfort my soule, when I lie or rise;
> Shall those twelve innocents, by thy severe
> Sentence (dread judge) my sins great burden beare?
> Shall they be damn'd, and in the furnace throwne,
> And punisht for offences not their owne?
> They save not me, they doe not ease my paines,
> When in that hell they'are burnt and tyed in chains.
> (Elegie XI, 7-22)

The poem continues with the development of the pun. Donne lists the different types of less worthy coins, ones deserving to be cast into the "everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels". He

strengthens his pleas by invoking the scholastic doctrines on angels.

> Thou say'st (alas) the gold doth still remaine,
> Though it be chang'd, and put into a chaine;
> So in the first falne angels, resteth still
> Wisdome and knowledge; but, 'tis turn'd to ill:
> As these should doe good works; and should provide
> Necessities; but now must nurse thy pride.
> And they are still bad angels; Mine are none;
> For, forme gives being, and their forme is gone:
> Pitty these Angels; yet their dignities
> Passe Vertues, Powers, and Principalities.
>
> (Ibid., 69-78)

It is easily seen that, as the poem progresses, the pun becomes less a verbal pun and more an elaborate metaphor based on a pun and developed wittily and ingeniously into a long conceit.

Before ending any discussion of Donne's use of puns in his poetry, we have to consider his puns on his own name. "For", George Saintsbury says, "he was never weary of punning on his name."[6] Walton tells us that, "Immediately after his dismission from his service, he sent a sad Letter to his Wife, to acquaint her with it: and, after the subscription of his name, writ, John Donne, Anne Donne, Vn-done, and God knows it proved too true."[7]

In Donne's poems there are two puns on the name. One is in the recurring line in A Hymne to God the Father:

> Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
> Which is my sin, though it were done before?
> Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne,
> And doe them still: though still I doe deplore?
> When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
> For, I have more.
>
> (A hymne to God the Father, 1-6)

The pun is repeated in the second stanza and in the third.

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6 Saintsbury, 'Introduction' to Poems of John Donne (ed. Chambers 1901) i, xxxii

7 Walton, Lives (1927) 29

I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne
Shall shine as it shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done,
I have no more.

(Ibid., 7-12)

Here the pun is an exercise in wit, but not in humour. Donne uses it to make a sharp, clear point; even when God has done so much he has not yet got Donne safe in Heaven. It is such a device as a clever preacher might use; the seeming paradox and the pun together make the point clear without any waste of words.

Finally, from a letter To Sr Henry Wotton:

But, Sir, I advise not you, I rather doe
Say o'er those lessons, which I learn'd of you:
Whom, free from German schismes, and lightnesse
Of France, and faire Italies faithlessnesse,
Having from these suck'd all they had of worth,
And brought home that faith, which you carried forth,
I throughly love. But if my selfe, I'have wonne
To know my rules, I have, and you have
DONNE:

(To Sr Henry Wotton, 63-70)

CHAPTER 10

QUIBBLES

Usually no distinction is made between puns and quibbles. Dr. Johnson uses the word quibble to mean pun; and the OED gives as the first definition of the word, "A play upon words, a pun."[1] But there is, quite definitely, a distinction, which is implied in the second OED definition: "An equivocation, evasion of the point at issue; an argument depending on some likeness or difference between words or their meanings, or on some circumstance of no real importance."[2] Neither definition is clear, although both come near explaining what the verbal trick really is. The device here referred to as a quibble can best be defined as an implied pun. This definition can be clarified by a consideration of the language in the following passage from Satyre IIII. The lines begin with a pun on the meanings of the word, "spare", and go on with the meanings of the word, "crown".

> ... He tries to bring
> Me to pay a fine to scape his torturing,
> And saies, Sir, can you spare me; I said, willingly;
> Nay, Sir, can you spare me a crowne? Thankfully I
> Gave it, as Ransome; But as fidlers, still,
> Though they be paid to be gone, yet needs will
> Thrust one more jigge upon you: so did hee
> With his long complimentall thankes vexe me.
> But he is gone, thankes to his needy want,
> And the prerogative of my Crowne.
>
> (Satyre IIII, 141-50)

The verb, "spare", has only one meaning out of context; the double meaning comes from Donne's manipulation of the line. There is a difference between "Can you spare me" and "Can you spare me a crown": the context gives different meanings to the verb by changing the object. The play on the meanings of the word, "crown", is similarly

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1 OED sb 1, 1

2 OED sb 1, 2

effected by Donne's handling of the context. The two meanings are not brought together and contrasted within one sound; the pun is not direct. The reader could be literal, and say that Donne had not the prerogative of his crown since he gave it away.

The two double meanings in the passage quoted are not exactly the same as puns. The first of them might be called a pun, since it combines two senses of a word within one sound. But it has not the directness of the simple pun. If the quibble on the meaning of "space" is compared with the pun in

> What delicacie can in fields appeare,
> Whil'st Flora'herselfe doth a freeze jerkin weare?
> (Ecclogue, 7-8)

the difference becomes quite clear. "Freeze", the word spelled, and "frieze", the word obviously implied by the context, are two different words, although they sound alike. The line says that Flora is wearing a frieze or heavy wool jerkin; the spelling brings in the sense of freezing. The two words, which are not even remotely connected in meaning, are brought together. In the quibble on "spare" there is only one meaning to the word; there are two meanings to the sentences. Similarly, the two meanings of "crown" are not brought together; the double meaning is used to develop the witty notion that, since Donne has given his follower a crown (coin), he can escape him by the prerogative of the crown (the right of a king). There is no contrast, neither is there any joining of the words. In both of these there is a pun of sorts, a diffuse double meaning not brought to the sharp focus of the real pun. It is this device which we call a quibble.

Another example can show perhaps more clearly what is meant

by a quibble, and how it differs from a pun.

> ... he hath travayld; Long? No; but to me
> (Which understand none,) he doth seeme to be
> Perfect French, and Italian; I replyed,
> So is the Poxe.
>
> (Satyre I, 101-4)

A pun is obviously intended. Donne's idea is to juxtapose the notion that the travelled man is, or seems to be, as polished as a European, with the reference to syphilis. The traveller is perfect French and Italian; syphilis is the French pox or the Italian pox. But the play on words is not stated; it is implied. There is no actual union of the two ideas, French citizen and French pox. There is an implied pun, a quibble.

Elegie XI, itself an extended pun, contains within the discussion of angels a passage on foreign coinage which is full of quibbles.

> Were they but Crownes of France, I cared not,
> For, most of these, their naturall Countreys rot
> I think possesseth, they come here to us,
> So pale, so lame, so leane, so ruinous;
> And howsoe'r French Kings most Christian be,
> Their Crownes are circumcis'd most Iewishly.
> Or were they Spanish Stamps, still travelling,
> That are become as Catholique as their King,
> Those unlickt beare-whelps, unfil'd pistolets
> That (more than Canon shot) availes or lets.
>
> (Elegie XI, 23-32)

Donne is playing with the meanings of words, but in a roundabout way. The idea is that, although the King of France bears the title of His Most Christian Majesty, French coins are usually cut around their circumference - literally circumcised. The pun implied in the line comes from a too literal interpretation of the word, "Christian", in the title, and the addition of a reference to the Judaic custom of circumcision to modify the comment on the paring

of French coinage. The quibble on Spanish coins is similar. Donne starts with the title of His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain; to the title he adds a reference to the use of Spanish gold for corrupting statesmen of European nations and for paying agents. Since the Spanish coins have become so universal, so catholic, they can be said to be as catholic as their king. In this case the two meanings of the word are united in the sound of one word; but the device is not a simple pun, because it is meaningful only within the context of the lines in which it appears. The third quibble in the passage calls the Spanish coin by another name, a pistolet. The idea is that the pistolet, since its chief use is bribery, does more harm to another country than a cannon could do. The quibble is concerned with the two meanings of the word, "pistolet", and the reference to cannon, since a cannon is of the same family as the weapon named by the second meaning of pistolet. The pistolet, a coin, does more harm than a cannon; a pistolet, a small side-arm, does more harm than a cannon. The first paraphrase obviously says what the poet means, while the second brings out the secondary meaning which connects the cannon with the coin and adds to the line metaphorical expression of the damage being done by Spanish gold.

In Satyre II the same double meaning is used, but in a manner that brings it somewhat closer to the simple pun.

> Rammes, and slings now are seely battery,
> Pistolets are the best Artillerie.
>
> (Satyre II, 19-20)

The quibble again uses the two meanings of the word, "pistolet", and the comparison with heavier ordnance. But it is less diffuse than the earlier example. Paraphrased as "The best weapons are pistolets",

the double meaning comes out with the force and terseness of the simple pun. Both meanings of the word are balanced, and only the context makes one more important than the other. In the earlier quibble the pistolets are called "unfil'd", a reference to the fact that they were not carefully shaped and rounded. From this we can see that one meaning only of the word was in mind when Donne wrote the line and the notion of cannon was brought in afterwards. Both are quibbles, and not simple puns, but the second example is closer to the simple pun because it is more compact. Both are quibbles because the double meaning depends upon the context for its effect.

A slightly more complex quibble can be found in An Anatomie of the World.

> Who, though she could not transubstantiate
> All states to gold, yet guilded every state,
> So that some Princes have some temperance;
> Some Counsellers some purpose to advance
> The common profit; and some people have
> Some stay, no more then Kings should give, to crave;
> Some women have some taciturnity,
> Some nunneries some graines of chastitie,
> She that did thus much, and much more could doe,
> But that our age was Iron, and rustie too,
> Shee, shee is dead.
>
> (The first Anniversary 417-27)

The key word here is the verb, "transubstantiate", and the quibble is between the literal meaning of the word, "gold", and its metaphorical meaning, i.e. a precious quality. But the word is not repeated, although the idea is, in a changed form. The quibble uses two words, "gold", and "gild", one a noun suggesting the literal meaning of the word, the other a verb suggesting its metaphorical meaning. There is also some confusion between the meanings of the repeated word, "state". The reader cannot be certain whether Donne means a political state or a state of being.

The quibble is followed by a series of ironically hyperbolical statements which further the confusion between the two possible meanings of the word, "state". The alchemical notion of the changing states of metals is brought in again with a rephrasing of an epithet borrowed before from Juvenal: O Age of rusty iron ! (Satyre V, 35) The whole passage is an extended metaphor complicated by the fact that the two most important words in the referential notion - "gold" and "state" - have each two meanings. Donne's statement is that Elizabeth Drury, although she was not able to perfect all the elements of the world to their highest form, was still able to lend some of her own perfected form to the world and give a thin coating, as it were, to the lower elements and to those less perfect. The first part of the metaphor - the notion of the transubstantiation of all states of elements to the highest form, gold - takes the form of a literal statement, although it is probably metaphorical. The second part - the gilding of every state - is a metaphor whose referent is the first metaphor. While both are metaphorical, the second is more obviously metaphorical than the first. There has been a change in the idea expressed by the referent, gold. The idea is further complicated by the fact that no clear distinction is made between the two possible meanings of the word, "state". In the first part a state is evidently a state of being; in the second it is both a state of being and a political state. But the use of the word in its political sense is not inapplicable to the first statement.

By close reading it can be seen that both uses of the word, "state", have two meanings, one of which is primary and can

easily be seen, and another which is secondary and comes from the context. The primary meaning in the first use is evidently a state of being. In the second use this is a secondary meaning, and the primary meaning is evidently a political state. In the context the primary meaning of the second use becomes the secondary meaning of the first. The first notion - that of transubstantiation - gives both uses their alchemical meaning; the series of ironical statements that follows the quibble gives both uses their political meaning. The whole image depends upon the possible meanings of two words and upon the extent to which they are metaphorical. The statement that "she could not transubstantiate/All states to gold" has the metaphorical meaning that she was unable to perfect the whole world; it is also an illustration, possibly meant to be read quite literally as "she was incapable to performing wonders." We cannot be certain whether the notion is merely an illustration coloured by the preciousness of gold or whether the notion is the referent for a metaphor. It is this sort of confusion which creates the device here called a quibble. The simple pun balances two meanings of a word, making one meaning quite suitable to the context and letting the other add a new shade of meaning; such images occur when, for instance, Donne speaks of the damnation of his angels, intimating that the angels of which he speaks as heavenly beings are really gold coins. The quibble often implies such a device, but does not clearly express it, and depends on confusion between meanings.

In Donne's poetry there are many more simple quibbles, some little more than feeble attempts at punning, such as:

He gazeth on her face with teare-shot eyes,

And up lifts subtly with his russet pawe
Her kidskinne apron without feare or awe
Of nature; nature hath no gaole, though shee hath law.
(The Progresse of the Soule, 477-80)

Here Donne is playing with the implications of the phrase, "natural law"; although there is a natural law, there is no natural jail for the punishment of transgressors. There are two meanings for "law" in this case; a law is a rule and the law is the system by which rules are enforced. The device could be called a simple pun on the word, "law", were it not for the fact that such a pun could not be extracted from the context. The double meaning only exists because Donne has argued it into the word.

In Vpon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities there is a quibble in which the confusion exists between ideas rather than meanings of words.

If for vast Tons of Currans, and of Figs,
Of Medicinall and Aromatique twigs,
Thy leaves a better method do provide,
Divide to pounds, and ounces sub-divide.
(Vpon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities, 39-42)

The quibble in this passage is not between the meanings of the word, "divide", so much as it is between the types of division suggested. The leaves of the book, Donne says, will divide produce in that they will wrap pounds and ounces; they will also divide produce, in that calculations will be worked out on their margins.

Probably the simplest quibble in all of Donne's poetry is the one in a letter To Mr R.W., where the similarity of the sounds of two words leads to a developed metaphor.

All newes I thinke sooner reach thee then mee;
Havens are Heavens, and Ships wing'd Angels be,
The which both Gospell, and sterne threatnings bring.
(To Mr R.W., 15-17)

Another simple quibble appears in the Epithalamion, in which Donne plays with two ideas expressed in like words. Man is made of dust and will go to the worms; gold is dust and silk comes from worms. The quibble emerges as:

> Thus thou descend'st to our infirmitie,
> Who can the Sun in water see.
> Soe dost thou, when in silke and gold,
> Thou cloudst thy selfe; since wee which doe behold,
> Are dust, and wormes, 'tis just
> Our objects be the fruits of wormes and dust.
> (Epithalamion, 149-54)

We see that the quibble is quite different from the ordinary pun. The chief difference is that the quibble usually implies the double meaning instead of stating it. Where the pun depends for its effect upon using a word in its proper context and adding a secondary meaning from the overtones of another word, the quibble depends upon confusion between the possible meanings of one or more words.

The simplest form of quibble is that which, without putting a double meaning into a word or phrase, repeats it so that the same words have another sense.

> And through that bitter agonie,
> Which is still the agonie of pious wits.
> (A Litanie, 163-4)

The word, "agony", is used to great effect simply by implying the contrast between the agony of Christ on the Cross and the agonized disputations of theologians. There is only one meaning for the word in this context, but the senses in which it is used are obviously different.

The quibble can arise as a ramification of a pun. For example, in Goodfriday, 1613, Riding Westward, a quibble emerges

from the conventional pun on Christ as the Son of God and the Sun of the world.

> This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the East.
> There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
> And by that setting endlesse day beget;
> But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall,
> Sinne had eternally benighted all.
> Yet dare I'almost be glad, I do not see
> That spectacle of too much weight for mee.
>
> (Goodfriday, 1613., 10-16)

In other words, if Christ, the Son, had not risen (the Sun), then the world, without a sun, would have been "benighted" and left in perpetual darkness. The metaphorical pun gives rise to the notion of darkness, which is developed for three lines. The darkness notion is followed by yet another quibble, arguing the idea that death must be faced before man sees God and confusing the literal and metaphorical senses of the notion of death. The idea of seeing or not seeing is carried on from the night quibble which developed from the original pun.

> Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye;
> What a death were it then to see God dye?
>
> (Ibid., 17-18)

The confusion of senses of a word in argument is the means by which very many quibbles are developed, and, indeed, the word properly used refers to such confusion.

A Litanie ends with a perfect quibble; the poet states the theological doctrine that sin, since it was not created, is not real, and is, in fact, nothing, a negation; since sin is nothing then it should not be found anywhere. By assuming the doctrine and reading a philosophic term as a literal term, Donne goes on to a logical conclusion.

> As sinne is nothing, let it no where be.
>
> (A Litanie, 252)

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