

THE RISE OF "METAPHYSICAL"
• POETRY IN ENGLAND •



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1. THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM "METAPHYSICAL" AS APPLIED TO THE POETRY OF DONNE AND ITS INADEQUATENESS.

The first mention of the metaphysical qualities of seventeenth century verse was made by Drummond.

Drummond

"Poesy subsisteth by herself, and after one demeanour and continuance her beauty appeareth to all ages. In vain have some men of late, consulted upon her reformation, and endeavoured to abstract her to metaphysical ideas and scholastic quiddities, denuding her of her own habits and those ornaments with which she hath amused the world some thousand years."

His contemporaries recognised in Donne a man of more than ordinary talents, but are strangely silent concerning the literary influences, which were operating at that time. Involved, as they were, in the whirl of speculative enquiry, which produced about this time Descartes, Bacon and Hooker, they saw in Donne merely a creature of his times, and it was left for a later age to define the qualities of his style and method.

Dryden says of Donne :-

Dryden

"He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with the speculations of philosophy, where he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love."²

The epithet "metaphysical", having been thus applied to the work of Donne, it only remains for Dr. Johnson to extend this term, and so characterise a whole school of poets, who imitated his method and style of versifying.

1. Masson's "Drummond of Hawthornden", 257.

2. "Essay on Satire" (Scott and Saintsbury's edition, VIII. 6.).

Johnson

"About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets".¹

Since then, opinion has varied concerning the justness of the term "metaphysical", from the grossly exaggerated judgment of Morley, that "there is no reason, in or out of metaphysics, why the later Euphuistic poetry, of which Donne's verse is a type, should be called metaphysical",² to the scarcely less prejudiced dictum of Grosart, that "Donne intermeddled with problems and started enquiries uncommon in the period".³ Morley, following Dr. Johnson, failed to discriminate between the poetry of Donne and that of his successors; while Johnson characterised the whole school as "metaphysical", Morley, on the other hand, denies the appropriateness of the epithet to any member of the "school".

Drummond
and Dryden
use the
term cor-
rectly.

Dealing solely with the poetry of Donne, it needs little critical appreciation to discover, with Drummond and Dryden, that he is essentially a philosopher, giving a vigorous and pithy expression of a cold and prosaic good sense. There is seldom any appeal to the emotions or the passions, and at his worst, in Lamb's phrase, which is equally well applicable to Donne as to the preceding "philosophical" poets - Sir John Davies and Lord Brooke^e - his verse "is made frozen and rigid with intellect". He is continually employed in probing the inner secret of the mind and the soul, and though his analysis proceeds on the lines of the old schoolmen, by explaining obscurities in the light

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1. "Life of Cowley".
 2. Morley's "First Sketch of English Literature", 526.
 3. "Fuller's Worthies' Library" edition, II. XXXIV.

of sensible phenomena, he is none the less worthy to be described as "metaphysical".

Johnson's
wrong use
of the
term.

Johnson, however, uses the word in a much vaguer sense, implying no more than "learning".

"The metaphysical poets were men of learning and to show their learning was their whole endeavour".

The successors of Donne were men of learning, and if we thus interpret Johnson's remark, we appreciate the justness of it.

The term
not dis-
tinctive
enough.

However, although the term "metaphysical" has been justly applied to Donne's verse, it is not sufficiently distinctive enough to indicate his separation from the other poets of his age. To denominate a man merely for his philosophical tendencies, would link together such otherwise diverse writers as Donne and Shakespeare, the latter of whom, especially in his sonnets and his later plays, has a decidedly grave and philosophical cast. What really stamps the work of Donne with its inimitable and essential quality, is the base use which he make of his abstractions, in tracing resemblances that are fantastic, uncalled-for, and unseemly. He is a true philosopher, often expressing his great depth of thought with a brevity, which only serves to lend obscurity, at times heightened by his fantastic conceits. If these far-fetched conceits serve to distinguish his thought from that of his contemporaries, they also, by a misleading

The term
"fantastic"
also lack-
ing,

1. "Life of Cowley."

transition, place him among a host of imitators, who, making use of his style of metaphor and simile, seldom attain to his philosophical insight.

Thus, if the word "metaphysical" is of too wide a significance to represent exactly Donne's place in literature, in the same manner, the characterisation "fantastic" is also lacking. It is only by a combination of the two terms that Donne's verse can be accurately described. He is the outstanding disciple of the "Metaphysical - fantastic School".

11. THE INFLUENCE OF SPAIN ON DONNE.

His trav-
els to
Cadiz
and
Azores.

In 1596, Donne took part in the expedition of the Earl of Essex to Cadiz, and, in the following year, he ventured on the "island voyage" to the Azores, being present at the unsuccessful attack upon the island of St. Michael, situated in that group. It was this latter voyage which inspired the composition of the poems, "The Storm" and "The Calm", verses which excited the admiration of Ben Jonson to such an extent, that he knew part of them by heart. Years afterwards, in an undated letter from Court to Sir Henry Wotton, he writes:-

"Here's no more news than virtue; I may as well
Tell you Cales, or Saint Michael's tales, as tell
That vice doth here habitually dwell!"

Mr. Chambers, in his edition of Donne, gives the reading Calais for Cales, but its being mentioned in the same line as St. Michael, seems to indicate that Donne is referring to his two voyages with Essex. Two epigrams, first published by Mr. Gosse and again by Mr. Grierson² serve as additional, if not conclusive evidence, that Donne, by his "Cales", is referring to the modern Cadiz. The first is headed "Cales and Guyana" and undoubtedly alludes to the sacking of Cadiz by Essex in 1596, and the proposal that the fleet should then venture to the Spanish Main. The "late island" of the second epigram, to Sir John Wingfield, Mr. Grierson explains by a quotation from a letter from Captain Price to Cecil.

"Then we entered into the island of Cadiz with
our footmen" (Strype's "Annals", IV. 398)

The town of Cadiz is situated on an island.

1. Grierson, I. 184.

2. Ibid., I. 76

Donne's presence in these expeditions against Spain is an established fact, but the following extract from Isaak Walton's "Life of Dr. Donne" has occasioned much controversy.

"But he returned not back into England till he had stayed some years, first in Italy, and then in Spain, where he made many useful observations of those countries, their laws and manner of Government, and returned perfect in their languages."

Walton places these travels in Italy and Spain after the two expeditions of 1596 and 1597. In 1601, when Donne married, he had already been chief secretary to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Ellesmere, for six years, and in these circumstances, would scarcely have been able to undertake lengthy travels abroad, and make the "many useful observations" mentioned above.

Mr. Gosse, in his "Life and Letters of Donne", hazards the conjecture, that Donne's travels in Italy and Spain must be assigned to the years 1592-6, and this accords with ^{the} author of Walton's perplexities. His biographer relates that it was in 1594 that Donne first resolved to travel. Mr. Grierson, the latest critic of Donne, proves even more venturesome than Mr. Gosse in assigning a date to Donne's early travels.

"It is possible that before 1592 Donne had been sent abroad by relatives with a view to his entering a seminary or the service of a foreign power."

Literary criticism, which has truth as its object, can have but scanty relations with "the boundless history of the might-have-beens", but the conjecture that Donne's travels in Spain and Italy came before his voyages with Essex, reveals to us

1. Gosse, "Life and Letters of Donne", II. 191.

reasons why he, a law student, should have been accepted for a military enterprise. Previous acquaintance with the language and customs of Spain would be strongly in his favour, when seeking to accompany Essex.

At whatever age Donne undertook his visits to Spain and Italy, we have ample evidence that his keen observation took account of all he saw. In a letter to Sir Robert Ker, he speaks familiarly of the Spanish scenery and daily life, and the following passage from his "Elegy upon the loss of his mistress's chain for which he made satisfaction" throws an interesting side-light upon his wanderings.

"Or were they Spanish stamps, still travelling,
That are become as Catholic as their King."

This refers to the Spanish dollar, which was current almost the world over.

Knowledge
of the
Spanish
Language,

Walton informs us that, on his return from Spain, he was perfect in the language of that nation, and an autobiographical touch, in a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer, confirms this statement.

"This I made account that I began early, when I understood the study of our laws; but was diverted by the worst voluptuousness, which¹ an hydroptic immoderate desire of human learning and languages — beautiful ornaments to fortune." ²

From Walton's account it would seem that Donne "laid aside all study of the law" about the year 1592, and the earliest dated MS., inscribed 1593,³ indicates that his preoccupation with the Spanish language commenced shortly before this.

The glimpses into his library, with which he provides us in his verses and letters, show us how deep this "immoderate

1. Grierson, I. 97.

2. Gosse, I. 76.

3. British Museum, Harleyan MS. 5110.

desire of human learning and languages" really was. The dated MS. of 1593 contains his first three satires, in the first of which he gives an account of the books to be found on his shelves.

"Here are God's conduits, grave divines, and here
Natures secretary, the philosopher,
And wily statesmen, which teach how to tie
The sinews of a city's mystic body;
Here gathering chroniclers, and by them stand
Giddy fantastic poets of each land."

A letter to the Marquis of Buckingham, then travelling in Spain indicates the large number of authors of that country in his library.

"I can thus far make myself believe that I am where your lordship is, in Spain, that in my poor library, where indeed I am, I can turn mine eye towards no shelf, in any profession, from the mistress of my youth, Poetry, to the wife of mine age, Divinity, but that I meet more authors of that nation than of any other"²

His fond-
ness for
Spanish
Tags and
Proverbs.

Continental study of the Spanish language and its literary treasures had stored his mind with a wealth of short and pithy extracts, which he was continually putting to some use. Mr. Gosse has in his library a copy of the "Pseudo-Martyr", bearing at the bottom of the page the inscription.

De juegos el mejor es con la hoja.

(The best diversion is turning the page)

A letter of 1608 to Sir Henry Goodyer is headed "A.V. Merced"

(A Vuestra Merced — to your worship.)

On the engraving at the front of the editions of 1635 and 1639 is the motto,

1. Grierson, I. 145.

2. Gosse, II. 176.

Antes muerto, que mudado.

(Before I am dead, how I shall be changed.)

In a letter dated 1615, to Sir Henry Goodyer, he seizes the occasion to parade his Spanish learning.


"The Spanish proverb informs me, that he is a fool which cannot make one sonnet, and he is mad which makes two."¹

His Spanish Studies.

Quite early in life, Donne evinced a craving for the study of theological subtleties, and, not unⁿaturally, his attention turned to the Roman Catholic writers of Italy and Spain. About the year 1603 he writes to Sir Robert Cotton;

Valdes.

"I have read Valdesius, which you sent me, with much delight, as well as because the question is important, as perplexed. He is extremely full of authorities and citations, as almost every Spaniard is, and every lawyer."²

This refers to the work of Don Diego de Valdes (Jacobus Valdesius) "De dignitate regum regnorumque Hⁱspanⁱae et honoratis loco eis, seu eorum legatis, a conciliis ac Romana sede june debito" which was published in 1602, and a copy of which is preserved in the Cottonian collection. From the phrase "almost every Spaniard" it is plain that Donne was,  deeply interested in works of this character.

However, Donne's interest in the Spanish theologians did not preclude his reading of Spanish verse, as appears from the following letter to Sir Robert Ker, in 1608.

Montemor.

"I begin to be past hope of dying; and I feel that a little ray of Monte Mayor, which I read last time I was in your chamber, hath wrought prophetically on me, which is, that death came so fast towards me that the over-joy of that recovered me"³

1 Gosse, II. 79.

2 Ibid., I. 123

3 Ibid., II. 15.

This "little rag" is the "Diana Enamorada" of Jorge de Montemor, a Portuguese, who wrote in the Castilian tongue and whose work served as a storehouse for the matter of Barnabe Googe's Eclogues, published in 1563.

A Letter from Professor Fitzmaurice Kelly, provides an interesting page in "the boundless history of the might have beens", and, judged in the light of what we know of Donne's travels and studies, possesses a high degree of probability.

"Surely Donne may have read everybody from Boscan and Garcilaso to the early Lope de Vega, whose "Dragontea" was published in 1598, and his "Rimas" in 1602. He may also have read the "Romancero General", that great anthology of past and contemporary poets which was published in Madrid, in 1600 - 05. He may even have known the early work of Gongora in Espinosa's "Flores de Poetas Ilustres" (1605). In fact, with the exception of the drama, he may have possessed on his shelves nearly all that is best worth reading in Spanish verse.

In prose, no doubt, he was familiar with the mystics. He must have read Luis de Leon, Santa Teresa, San Juan de la Cruz, Granada, Juan de los Angeles, and the rest down to Malon de Chaide's "Conversion de la Magdalena". Of course Donne cannot have known Luis de Leon's verse (unless he saw it in MS, which is, I think, most unlikely); that was not published till 1631, the year of Donne's death, when Quevedo brought it out as an antidote to Gongorism."

After the Renaissance, the development of Spanish liter-

The relation of Spanish literature to English in the 16th century. ature presents many points in common with that of England. We can clearly distinguish two schools of poetry, identical in their origin, but sharply distinguished from each other --

Culteranismo and Conceptismo. the schools of "Culteranismo" and "Conceptismo." Of these two schools, Professor Fitzmaurice Kelly remarks that while the former played with words the latter played with ideas, a

distinction which roughly marks off the English Euphuists from Donne.¹

He continues:-

"A bizarre vocabulary was enough for a man to pass as "Culto": the "Conceptista" must be equipped with various learning, and must have a smattering of philosophy."²

Gongora.

Luis de Argote y Gongora, from whom the former school takes its name of "Gongorism", was born in 1561, and Mr. Bond in his "Works of John Lyly", notices that he is mentioned by Cervantes as a known writer, as early as 1584.³ Although his first published work appeared in 1605, his poems, like those of Sidney, Donne, and Shakespeare with his "sugar'd sonnets", appeared and were circulated in MS. Bond ascribes the inflated metaphorical style of "Love's Labour Lost", one of the earliest of Shakespeare's plays, to the influence of Gongora. The question becomes very perplexing, when Kelly explains⁴ the affected style of Gongora's later works was absolutely absent in his earliest poems.⁴ In his first period, Gongora had not attracted as much attention as he had wished, and it was not

Sotomayor.

until the return of Luis de Carrillo y Sotomayor from Italy, where he had come under the influence of Marini, that Gongora resolved to change his style, and dazzle and surprise his readers by his extravagance. As Donne's peculiar characteristics of style appeared in his earliest poems, it thus appears idle to attempt to trace them to Gongora's influence. The myth of Gongora's influence on English "Euphuism" has already been exploded, and with it must go the equally futile conjecture.

1. See Chapter VIII. 1

2. Fitzmaurice Kelly - "Spanish Literature", 300.

3. Bond - "Works of John Lyly", I. 151. (footnote)

4. Fitzmaurice Kelly, op. cit. 279 et seq.

ure that Donne owes ^{any} everything at all to Gongora.

Ledesma.

The Segovian poet, Alfonso de Ledesma Buitrago (1552 - 1628), Donne's senior by twenty one years, was the father of the school of "Conceptismo", with the metaphysical conceits, philosophic paradoxes, and sententious moralisings. His works are "Conceptos espirituales" (1600) "Juegos de la Noche Buena" (1611) and "Monstruo Imaginado" (1615), which although having more in common with Donne than "Gongorism", were all published too late to affect his early style.

Ticknor's description of the "Conceptistas", as "a sect composed in a considerable degree of mystics, who expressed themselves in metaphors and puns, alike in the pulpit and in poetry", indicates a close kinship with Donne, but it must remain extremely doubtful whether he ever saw their work in M.S. before publication.

Dr. Tucker in "The Foreign Debt of English Literature" endeavours to clear away some of the obstacles in the way of considering a possible Spanish influence on Donne.

"The estilo culto", otherwise known as "Gongorism", was a deliberate invention of which the main features were consistent avoidance of the natural word, and, as far as possible, of the natural order. Such tricks were congenial to the Spanish taste, which has always been too much inclined whether in verse or prose, to verbose and ornate expression. "Gongorism" is but a new species of Spanish artificiality in this respect, a national characteristic, recognised and

1. Ticknor - "History of Spanish Literature", III. 15.

ridiculed by Skakespeare in his Don Armado.

Before Gongora had introduced his new varieties of expression, this circle of Englishmen (i.e. Courtiers) had been more or less familiar with the sententious antitheses and fantastic prolixities of the prose of Guevara (of the early sixteenth century) whose "Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius" and "Golden Letters" combined the characteristic proverbial philosophising, often tediously platitudinarian, of his nation with the almost equally characteristic straining after uncommonnessⁿ of phrase."

This "Pre-Gongorism", of which Tucker speaks, though far removed from the style of Donne, has some of the elements from which that style developed.

Social relations of England and Spain at the time.

Henry the Seventh, as a security against the growing power of France, sought an alliance with the wary Ferdinand of Aragon, under whose rule Spain was rising to be the greatest nation of the sixteenth century. This alliance was cemented by the marriage of Henry's eldest son, Arthur, with Ferdinand's daughter, Catherine of Aragon. From this time, until the end of the century, Spanish affairs were constantly before the English mind. When Arthur died, a papal dispensation was procured, and Catherine was married to Arthur's brother, who afterwards became Henry the Eighth. Owing to the presence of a Spanish queen, the English court was frequented by hosts of Spanish courtiers, and it is from these, rather than from the influence of Gongora, that Shakespeare drew his

Spaniards at Court.

character of Don Armado. The manners of these Spaniards, whether of person or expression, were regarded as a proper subject of emulation by the gallants of the period. Henry's divorce from Catherine, the Reformation and succession of Edward the Sixth, the marriage of Mary and Philip in 1554, the succession of Elizabeth, coupled with her antipathy to Spain, which culminated in the defeat of the Armada in 1588, all served to complicate the affairs of England and Spain, and provide a steady stream of Spaniards to the English court. When the marriage of Prince Charles to a Spanish princess, was proposed, Donne evinced more than ordinary interest, as his letters of that time show.

Spanish
at
Oxford.

As a Roman Catholic undergraduate of Hart Hall, Oxford, Donne may have shared in the spirited study of the Spanish language and literature, which was so marked a feature of the University of that time. Spanish influence at Oxford arose at the period of Henry's marriage with Catherine. With the queen, came Luis Vives, whose relations with her were almost those of a tutor, and Catherine secured for him the professorship of Humanities at Oxford. This Spanish influence remained at Oxford, until the Civil War broke out, and was carried on chiefly by James Mabbe (Magdalen) and Leonard Digges (University)!

The expedition of 1596, in which Donne took part, entered Portugal, captured the books of the Bishop of Algarve, and

conveyed them to Oxford. Having travelled in Spain and become acquainted with Spanish customs and learning, Donne may have been slightly influenced by their tricks of style, but daring in his originality of thought, Spanish influence upon him could only be very slight indeed.

11. THE INFLUENCE OF ITALY ON DONNE.

It has already been mentioned in the preceding section, that Donne visited Italy, most probably during the years 1594-5, and as in Spain, here also he became ^{abundantly} ~~absolutely~~ informed of all the customs of the country. Indeed, so thoroughly had he mastered the language of the country, and so well had he become acquainted with its customs, that in 1614, he unhesitatingly sought the post of Ambassador there, vacated by Sir Dudley Carleton. With this object in view, he addressed himself to the Earl of Somerset who then had great influence as a favourite of the King.

The evidence of his letters and of his friend Walton indicate that Donne made a deep and analytical study of the Italian theological writers, but on the only occasion on which he himself spoke of the presence of Italian books in his library, he mentioned the books of verse ^{alone} ~~about~~ "giddy fantastic poets of each land"

The Westmoreland MS. of his epigrams has Italian titles to some of his verse, as, "Caso d'un muro" (Fall of a wall), "Zoppa" (A lame beggar) and "Nave Arsa" (A burnt ship)²

His studies in the Italian tongue, beyond the "giddy fantastic poets" of his library, seem to have been confined chiefly to the theological writers of the Roman Catholic Church.³

It seems but natural that such an accomplished letter-writer as Donne should have turned to the masters of this style of writing in the Latin and Italian tongue. In an undated letter to

-
1. Walton says that Donne returned from Italy and Spain "perfect in their languages."
 2. Grissoni, I. 76.
 3. See later - Chapter V.

Sir George More, his father-in-law, he shews his acquaintance with the letters of Seneca, Pliny^{ny}, Cicero, St. Paul and the Italians.¹

Relation of Italian literature to English in the 16th. century. The imputation that Donne's fantasticalities were due to an imitation of the Italian poet Marini, was first made by Johnson in his "Life of Cowley".

"This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marini^{and} his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge; and by Johnson whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments."

Imitation of Marini is patent in the case of Cowley and of Crashaw, but it is extremely doubtful, after a consideration of the dated of their compositions, whether Donne owes anything at all to Marina.

Marini. Giovanni Battista Marini, to whom Professor Fitzmaurice Kelly ascribes the vicious style of Gongora, was born in 1569, four years before the death of Donne. His style was carried to Spain by Luis de Carrilo y Sotomayor, where it found a fitting soil for development in the pre-Gongorism which already existed there, in the form of antitheses, obscurities, and avoidance of the natural word, elements of Renaissance decay which characterised the work of Guevara.

The first published work of Marini was the "Adone", which appeared in 1623, much too late to have had any effect on Donne's style, which was characteristic from his earliest writings. The "many useful observations", made by Donne on his visit to Italy, as related by Walton, may have included the perusal of

1. Gosse, I. 86.

Marini's verse in MS, but this must be regarded as extremely doubtful. However, if Marini can be considered as "the father of the fantastical school in Italy", distinguished by a continual usage of certain peculiarities of style, he is by no means the initiator of those peculiarities. Mr. F.J. Snell in his "Italian Literature" shows clearly that Marini merely popularised what was in existence long before his time.

"Literature was vitiated by two principal faults—far-fetched analogy and an excessive love of antitheses. As instances of the former may be quoted such circumlocutions as "ardenti zecchini della bianca del cielo" (glowing zecchins of the bank of the sky), "luchi lucenti del celeste cribro" (shining holes of the heavenly sieve), and "luminose agnelle" (bright lambkins), for the stars.

These faults do not cling exclusively to the seventeenth century. For similar abuses Tasso had already rebuked a grandson of Ariosto, but then offences of the kind were rare. The extravagance reached its culminating point in the writings of Giambattista Marini"

re-
Marinism.

M. Frederic Loliée in his "Short History of Comparative Literature" expresses a like opinion.

"Lope de Vega did not consciously exaggerate when he said that Tasso was merely "as the day-dawn to Marini's sun":

The existence of a pre-Marinism in Italy, coupled with the fact that Gongora's style was congenial to the Spanish taste owing to the anticipation of many of the elements of his manner of composition, indicate that Marini and Gongora are merely factors in the movement, which owes its origin to the Renaissance.

1. *op. cit.* 99.

2. *op. cit.* 186.

s travels.

Although Donne did not visit France at the time of his early travels, he accompanied Sir Robert Drury there in 1611, this being the occasion of two of his finest poems—

"Sweetest love, I do not go for weariness of thee" and "A Valédiction forbidding mourning"

s French
rvant.

That Donne had a French servant appears from a letter to Sir G.B.

"Therefore I only send you this letter
and my promise to distribute your other letters,
according to your address, as fast as my Monsieur can
do it!"

Donne's preoccupation with Satires in his early years, no doubt stimulated a desire to read Regnier's work which appeared in 1612. His journey to the French Court, in 1611, brought him into contact with French thought and in 1613 he wrote to George Gerrard.

"I make shift to think that I promised you this book
of French Satires!"¹

which, Mr. Gosse thinks, refers to Regnier's "Satyres et autres
oeuvres folastres"

Montaigne.

A letter to Sir George More in 1603² discloses his study
of Montaigne.

"Michael Montaigne says he hath seen (as I remember)
400 volumes of Italian letters!"³

Bartas.

Beyond the above references to Montaigne and Rabelais, Donne makes no mention of contemporary French poetry in his letters. Sir Sidney Lee, however, has traced a curious parallel between his work and that of the Huguenot poet, Du Bartas.

1. Gosse, I, 201.

2. Ibid., II, 10.

3. Ibid., I, 122.

In 1592, Joshua Sylvester wrote an English version of part of Du Bartas's "Seconde Sepmaine", published in 1584. A complete translation followed in 1605. Mr. Morley noticed that all Du Bartas's work abounded in conceits, and that parts were translated into Latin, Italian, and German. Donne, who deserves the epithet "myriad-minded almost as much as Shakespeare, did not fail to notice the Huguenots' struggles against the Spaniards at the siege of Sanserra in 1573, which lasted for nine months with almost indescribable hardships for the besieged.

"Or like the scum, which, by need's lawless law
Enforced, Sanserra's starved men did draw
From parboil'd shoes and boots, and all the rest
Which were with any sovereign fatness blest!"

In Du Bartas, Sir Sidney Lee notices uncouth metaphor and harsh epithets, and remarks that Dr. Johnson's criticism of the "metaphysical school" might be applied equally well to the work of Du Bartas.

"Donne clothed elegies, eclogues, divine poems, epicedes, obsequies, and satires in a garb hardly distinguishable from the style of Du Bartas and Sylvester. The intellectual texture of Donne's verse is usually stiffer and subtler than that of Huguenot poetry. Yet the so-called metaphysical vein, which is usually said to have been inaugurated in English poetry by Donne is entitled to rank with Du Bartas's legacies to this country."²

1. Grierson, I.91. (See also II.74.).

2. French Renaissance in England, 354.

When we remember Donne's feverish desire for knowledge of all descriptions, and some of the obscure sources from which he obtained his information,¹ it must be allowed that Donne may possibly have been acquainted with Du Bartas's work, or at least with Sylvester's translation. But the "so-called metaphysical ^{view}view" is certainly not a "legacy to this country" from the work of Du Bartas, but was here long before Donne and Du Bartas commenced to write at all.² Mr. Grierson in his recent edition of Donne's works has compared his author with Du Bartas, and although he introduces parallel passages from the translation of Sylvester, he adds that "there are very few passages where one can trace or conjecture echoes or borrowings".³ It is just the qualification, "subtle and stiffer", which distinguishes Donne's conceits from those of his predecessors in England as well as abroad.

1. See later - *Bianthanatos*.

2. See later - Chapter VIII.

3. Grierson, II. 4.

IV. A. THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER LANGUAGES ON DONNE.

Although, by reason of the early date of his compositions Donne could scarcely have been influenced by Marini and Gongora it is not so evident that his appetite for fantasticalities was not whetted by his knowledge of Italian and Spanish poetry before Marini. All the elements of Donne's style were present in English poetry before he wrote,¹ yet, as the finished product of the decadent tendencies of the Renaissance, his reading of foreign poetry, which contained in alike manner the seed of decay, forced him to make a continual practice of usages, which before his time were rare.

Similarly a perusal of Du Bartas or Sylvester might have incited him to greater licence, though such is the glamour of originality which his verse exhibits that, in the absence of a quotation of parallel passages, it is impossible to detect French influence with any certainty. The tastes of the English "metaphysical school" are characteristics of Italian, Spanish and French literature of the period. In Professor Hale's happy phrase they were "in the air of that age".² What makes the detection of cross influences so difficult, is that originality of thought was the essential characteristic of a metaphysical poet, and in the absence of parallel passages, we are driven to a purely historical investigation. The preceding sections, containing ample proof of Donne's acquaintance with European literature, provide the merest shadow of evidence

1. See Chapter VII C.

2. Craik's "English Poets", I. 559.

that he was indebted to any Continental poet for his style. Following in the wake of critics who allege, in turn, that Donne owes a debt to Italy, France and Spain, comes Mr. Grierson, with his darkly veiled hint of the possible influence on Donne of the Persian. "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam.

The parallel passages are:-

"If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two
Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre fit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and harkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home."

Donne's "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning."

"In these twin compasses, O love, you see
One body with two heads, like you and me,
Which wander round one centre, circle wist
But at the last at one same point agree."

Wingfield's edition of Omar Khayyam.

Whether Donne's "hydroptique immoderate desire of human learning and languages" extended to Persian, Mr. Grierson can adduce no evidence to support. However, bearing in mind Donne's faculty for probing into knowledge of all kinds, the possibility of his having an acquaintance with the Persian language is by no means remote. Turning from the internal to the external evidence the probability becomes much stronger. In the year 1613 he wrote,

"Except demonstrations, I find nothing without perplexities. I am grown more sensible of it by busying myself a little in the search of the Eastern tongues, where a perpetual perplexity in the words cannot choose but cast a perplexity upon the things." ²

1. Grierson, I. 49.

2. Gosse, II. 16.

The quatrains of Omar Khayyam (c. 1018-1123), the astronomer poet of Persia, were first translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald in 1859. The work has a marked Epicurean philosophical cast and may be justly compared with Donne's verse in many of its usages and sentiments. Of metaphors drawn from art and not from nature the "Rubaiyat" affords many examples of which the following from Fitzgerald's translation are typical.

Death is a door:-

"There was a Door to which I found no key:
There was a Veil past which I could not see:"

(Stanza XXXII.)

Life is a caravan journey:-

"The Stars are setting and the caravan
Starts for the Dawn of nothing - Oh, make haste."

(Stanza XXXVII.)

The world is

"Nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
Played in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go."

(Stanza XLVI.)

The following quotation, reminiscent of Donne, might well have been taken from his earlier verse.

"Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday,
Why fret about them if To-day be sweet!"

(Stanza XXXVII)

It would be an extremely easy task to provide from Donne's works an extensive commentary upon these lines from Omar Khayyam.

"The Grape that can with logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects compute:
The Subtle Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute." (XLI)

Deeply interested, as Donne was, in astronomical discoveries, and with a self confessed taste for the Eastern tongues, there is strong support for the theory that Donne was acquainted with the verse of Omar Khayyam. Both were essentially philosophers and both employ a similar medium for the expression of their views. Judged in the light of philosophical methods, there is nothing remarkable in their use of metaphors and similes, which are distasteful to many when they occur in verse. If their metaphors cannot, strictly speaking, be called poetical, they are at least entitled to the epithet philosophical.

However, although the study of Omar Khayyam's verse was an employment which would have suited the tastes of Donne, there is no shadow of evidence that the Persian poet was Donne's master in his art.

V. THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOLASTICISM AND THEOLOGICAL STUDIES.

It is hardly necessary to investigate "ad nauseum" the extent of Donne's theological learning¹ for he seems to have devoured everything in the nature of theological subtleties that came to his hand. The circumstance of being born a Roman Catholic, in the midst of Elizabethan England, coupled with the fact that Papists were only allowed to proceed to degrees at the universities, after taking an oath, to which few of them could conscientiously subscribe, turned the attention of the young Donne to a consideration of the merits and demerits of the Romish faith when compared with the Protestant.

Having arrived at the age of nineteen, he was still undecided whether or not he should abjure the faith of his parents and embrace that of the established Church. In 1593, Cardinal Bellarmine published at Lyons his "Disputationes de controversiis fidei adversus hujus temporis Haereticos." Donne, esteeming Bellarmine "the best defender of the Roman cause"; undertook a deep study of this book, and in 1594, shewed a copy to the Dean of Gloucester "marked with many weighty observations under his own hand". This early task, completed certainly before he was twenty-two years old, and indicating a comprehensive study of the whole question, shews how deeply Donne had drunk from the wells of scholasticism and theology, a fact which necessarily influenced all his work.

1. Walton's "Life of St. Donne".

Doubtless his tendency towards the southern lands of Italy and Spain was furthered by the sympathy which he could find there from his fellow Papists. His visit to Italy was intended to precede a journey to Palestine.

tended
sit to
rusalem.

"The time he spent in Spain was, at his first going into Italy, designed for travelling to the Holy Land, and for viewing Jerusalem and the sepulchre of our Saviour."

Lack of travelling companions, and the means of ensuring a supply of money for his expenses, caused him to return to Spain, where he evidently entered deeply into the intricacies of religious dissension. Even when he had become a Protestant he still preserved a kindly feeling for the Spanish theologians. Writing to the Marquis of Buckingham, who was visiting Spain in 1623 he says:-

"Their authors in Divinity, though they do not shew us the best way to heaven, yet they think they do. And so, though they say not true, yet they do not lie, because they speak their conscience....And, since, in charity, I believe so of them for their divinity, in civility, I believe it too for civil matters that therein also they mean as they say, and by this time, your lordship knows what they say."²

alysis of
00 Authors.

After his preferment to the Deanery of St. Paul's, Donne indulged entirely in his theological studies, and as evidence of earnestness of his task, Walton relates that at his death "he left the resultance of fourteen hundred authors, most of them abridged and analysed with his own hand". In his "Pseudo-Martyr" (1610) he shewed that a Roman Catholic subject could and ought to take the oath of Allegiance to his English sovereign. "Ignatius his Conclave" (Concave Ignatii)

-
1. Walton's "Life of St. Donne".
 2. Gosse, II. 176.

deals with the great founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius Loyola. His "Bianthanatos" is "a declaration of the paradox or thesis that Self-Homicide is not so naturally sin, that it may never be otherwise", and "there is prefixed an enormous list of nearly a hundred authorities, quoted in the body of the work, among whom being such names as those of Schlussemburgius and Pruckmannus at which the modern eyes gaze with respectful awe"¹

Sir Leslie Stephen has pointed out that much of Donne's knowledge of angels, as it appears in such poems as "Air and Angels" comes directly from a study of Thomas Aquinas's "Summa Theologia"², which was accepted by the Roman Catholic Church as the orthodox presentation of its beliefs and so must have received attention from Donne. Following Sir Leslie Stephen's direction, Mr. Grierson has made a comprehensive selection of parallel passages from Donne's work and from the "Summa Theologia" (Grierson--Donne's Poetical Works, Vol. II. passim). However it is not to the content of Scholasticism but to its method that Donne owes so large a debt. To the schoolmen, who brought the Aristotelian logic to the support of the Papacy and its tenets, all questions were given a philosophical form and a theological hearing, and it was from long acquaintance with their methods that Donne derived to some extent the peculiar metaphysical and fantastical aspects of his style. It has been a fashion to scoff at the so-called puerilities of the schoolmen who argued in all sincerity on such propositions as --"How many

1. *Gosse*, I. 259.

2. *National Review*, XXXIV. 600.

Donne's
scholasti-
sm.

angels can stand on the point of a needle?", or "Can God make two hills without the intervening valley?" But these arguments when reduced to the modern forms of "What is the nature of spirit" and "What is space" have perplexed the philosophers of to-day just as much as in the middle ages. The following stanza from "Air and Angels" illustrates Donne's debt to the scholasticism, a debt which is apparent almost throughout his work.

"Twice or thrice had I loved thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame,
Angels affect us oft, and worshipp'd be
Still when, to where thou wert, I came,
Some lovely glorious nothing did I see.
But since my soul whose child love is,
Takes limbs of flesh, and else could nothing do,
More subtle than the parent is
Love must not be, but take a body too;
And therefore what thou wert, and who
I bid love ask, and now
That it assume thy body, I allow,
And fix itself in thy lips, eyes, and brow".

This curious combination of scholasticism and Donne is described by Sir Leslie Stephen as "the natural utterances of the schoolmen coming to court." and as an "odd combination of syllogism and sentiment."² Donne in his most characteristic moods resembles very closely a scholastic lecturer and nowhere is this more clearly seen than in his "Lecture upon the Shadow",³ As the shadow cast by one's body grows smaller towards mid-day, until the sun is overhead and "to brave clearness all things are reduced", so love in its growth loses all its "disguises and cares". This is love at its full.

1. Grierson, I. 22.

2. *National Review*, XXXIV. 600 and 601.

3. Grierson, I. 71.

"Except our loves at this noon stay,
We shall new shadows make the other way."

These shadows of mutual deceit instead of growing less like the shadows of the morning of love, "grow longer all the day!" Having explained the progress of love in the manner of the schoolmen, by bringing to his aid an analogy from natural phenomena, he sums up his argument in the concluding couplet.

"Love is a growing, or full constant light,
And his short minute, after noon is night."

In the "Valediction forbidding Mourning" he provides us again with an excellent example of his scholastic methods.

"Dull sublunary lovers' love
-Whose soul is sense—cannot admit
Of absence, 'cause it doth remove
The thing which elemented it.

But we by a love so far refined,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind
Care less eyes, lips and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th'other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun."

olastic
hods.

Although at first the scholastic methods were confined to the schools, and applied to discussions of intricate questions of theology, the method after a time became of more importance than the subject.

"In the instruction of the schools and Universities, importance was attached as much to method as to matter. The logic of Aristotle was the instrument of discussion. The syllogism was the weapon of assault and defence. Every subject was taken up into the formal scheme of logic, with its premises and conclusions - analysed, defined and argued with keen dialectic skill. Gradually the Schoolmen lost interest in the practical questions of faith and busied themselves with mere speculative abstractions and subtle logical puzzles."

It was the content of scholasticism, which first engaged the attention of Donne, when he was hovering between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant faith, but it was the method which gained so much upon him, that it became part of his poetical temperament. Deeply impressed by the scientific discoveries² of the time, he soon learned what was valuable in the scholastic system. Though using their methods, Donne could afford to scoff at their attitude to knowledge.

"O, wrangling schools, that search what fire
Shall burn this world, had none the wit
Unto this knowledge to aspire
That this her fever might be it."³

"To schoolmen to bequeath my doubtfulness"⁴

The whole question of Donne's debt to the Schoolmen is summed up by Mr. Grierson as follow:-

"Scholastic theology is made the instrument of courtly compliment and pious flirtation."⁵

The subject is characteristically Donne's, and so to a large extent is the conception, but the method, shown by all its poetical appendages, is essentially scholastic.

1. Alexander, "History of Philosophy."
2. Gosse, I. 257. - Galileo and Copernicus.
3. Grierson, I. 21.
4. Ibid., I. 57.

DONNE'S LEGAL STUDIES.

As far as I am aware, no one has yet suggested that legal studies have had any influence whatever in producing these meteoric flashes of "metaphysical wit" in poets before Donne. However it is interesting to note how many of the poets mentioned in the next section, who may be considered as Donne's predecessors in his art, pursued a study of law. The University of Padua, where Chaucer met Petrarch, was at that time specially renowned for its interest in legal studies; Barnabe Googe, the writer of ecloques, epitaphs and sonnets, was the son of Robert Googe, Recorder of Lincoln; Turbervile, after a distinguished career at Oxford, studied at the Inns of Court; Gascoigne, leaving Cambridge without taking a degree, finished his education at the Middle Temple and Gray's Inn; and Sir John Davies, educated at Oxford, was admitted a member of the Middle Temple in 1587. Gongora when sixteen years old, left his native town of Corboda to read law at Salamanca.

The important part played by the law student in the literature of the early Elizabethan period has been recognised by Webbe in his "Discourse of English Poetry" (1586)

"And once again, I am humbly to desire pardon from the learned company of Gentlemen Scholars and students of the Universities and Inns of Court, if I omit their several commendations in this place, which I know a great number of them have worthily deserved, in many rare devices and singular inventions of poetry".²

Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke), who did not continue his university education at the Inns of Court proceeded to Heidelberg

1. "At first Padua was a school only of the civil and canon law" —

Ency. Brit., XXVII. 453.

2. Op. cit., I. 9.

His ^{works} visit provides us with some of the first usages in English literature of similes and metaphors drawn from the legal studies of the time.

Such are the following:-

"Love, I did send you forth enamell'd fair
With hope, and gave you seisin and livery
Of beauties shy, which you did claim as Heir,
By objects and desire's affinity."

"And do you now return lean with despair?
Wounded with rival's war, scorched with jealousy?
Hence chageling, Love doth no such colours wear!
Find sureties so at Honour's sessions die"

Davies. Sir John Davies continues:-

"Wit is the mind's chief judge, which doth control
Of Fancy's court the judgments, false and vain"

Then doth th' aspiring soul the body leave,
Which we call Death; but were it known to all,
What life our Souls do by this death receive,
Men would it birth or gaol-delivery call."

Donne. After leaving Oxford and Cambridge without taking a degree, Donne was entered at Lincoln's Inn on May 6th. 1592. However, his stay here was very short, as Walton relates, for he "presently laid aside all study of the law, and all other sciences that might give him a denomination".⁵ For the next ten years, although he had ceased to be identified with the Inns of Court, yet legal study possessed certain irresistible attractions for him. His visit to Italy and Spain gave him opportunities for making "many useful observations of those countries, their laws and manners of government",⁶ and when in the household of Sir Francis Wally, we find that he studied

1. *Caesars* - Sonnet 71.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *House Teipsum*, 120 (Grosart's ed.).

4. *Ibid.*, 159.

5. Walton's "Life of Dr. Donne".

6. *Ibid.*

"the Civil and Canon Law; in which he acquired such a perfection as was judged to hold proportion with many who had made that study the employment of their whole life".¹

Thus we are not surprised to find that the casuistry of the law was manifest in the texture of his verse. Trained in legal argument, as he was in the subtleties of the schools, he continually turned to his legal knowledge for his similes. His works provide us with the most ingenious law similes in the English language.

"I ask no dispensation now,
To falsify a tear, a sigh, a vow;
I do not sue from thee to draw
A "non obstante" on nature's law;
These are prerogatives, they inhere
In thee and thine; none should forswear
Except that he Love's minion were."

"Father, part of his double interest
Unto Thy kingdom, Thy Son gives to me,
His jointure in the knotty Trinity
He keeps, and gives to me his death's conquest.
This Lamb, whose death, with life the world hath blest,
Was from the world's beginning slain, and He
Hath made two wills, which with a legacy of His and
Thy kingdom do Thy sons invest.
Yet such are Thy laws, that men argue yet
Whether a man those statutes can fulfil;
None doth; but thy all-healing grace and Spirit
Revive again what law and letter kill,
Thy law's abridgement, and Thy last command
Is all but love; O let this last will stand."²

1. Walton's "Life of St. Donne".

2. Giescon, I. 329.

VII. THE "METAPHYSICAL SCHOOL" IN ENGLAND BEFORE DONNE.

Renaiss-
e and the
of simile
meta-
r.

In the preceding sections, a consideration of the justice of finding Donne's masters in Spain, Italy and France has revealed the fact, that elements of the so called "metaphysical wit" may be found quite early in the literatures of those nations. So early indeed can the movement be traced, that there can be no doubt that its origin synchronised with that somewhat indefinitely limited period, known as the Renaissance. Unquestionably a revived interest in the poetry of Ancient Greece is responsible for the wealth of metaphor and simile, which are outstanding features of the Renaissance verse.

(A) Comparison and contrast--the outcome of the Renaissance.

tt and
rarch.

As far as England is concerned, Renaissance culture was introduced in poetical form by Sir Thomas Wyatt, who, having travelled in Italy came under the influence of Petrarch, some of whose sonnets he translated, along with others from the Italian of Serafino dell'Aquila. Wyatt's continual employment of comparison and contrast, usages reflected from his translations, is a characteristic of his own compositions, and after the publication of Tottel's Miscellany in 1557, became a dominant feature of English verse. When at his best, Petrarch's similes and metaphors arrested the attention, not so much by their singularity and ingenuity as by their justness and beauty. However, in excess of metaphor there lies a danger which even Petrarch could not avoid-- the use of conceits.

legitimate
aphor.

It is scarcely necessary to dwell at length on the legitimate use of metaphor and simile in explaining or describing what is unknown by what is known. This is to be found even in the earliest literature of Greece, where the Homeric similes rose to such excellence that they have never been surpassed.

conceits.

The distinguishing feature of the Renaissance "conceits" is that they are the products of conscious intellectual operations and are not the "spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions", which one would expect in the domain of love-poetry. The Renaissance brought with it an originality and individuality of thought, and such circumstances heralded the birth of the "conceit", which held sway for more than a century, and penetrated the literature of Italy, Spain, France, England and Germany. "Concettism" in Italy, "Euphuism" in England "Cultorism" in Spain, the "Pleiade" in France and the pedantic mannerisms of Hoffmanswaldau and Lohenstein in Germany are all different and contemporary expressions of a movement, which owes its origin to the Renaissance, and is distinguished to a greater or lesser extent in each separate country, by the inordinate desire to manufacture conceits.

equity.

"Poor painters oft with silly poets join,
To fill the world with strange, but vain conceits".
(Arcadia, ll. 272.-ed.1724)

lation
the con-
t to "meta-
sical" wit.

It has been customary to describe the conventional conceit of the sonneteers, and the far-fetched and ingenious metaphor of Donne irrespectively as "conceits", but after a consid-

eration of the following passages it will be seen that it is necessary to introduce distinguishing and characteristic epithets for each.

I burn and am a cold
I freeze in midst of fire
I see she doth with hold
That most I do desire.

(Gorgeons Gallery of Gallant Inven-
tions

If men be worlds, there is in every one
Something to answer in some proportion
All the world's riches; and in good men, this
Virtue our forms form, and our Soul's soul is.
(Donne)²

The first of these passages contains the metaphor of a lover alternately burning and freezing - a mere commonplace of the contributors to the *Miscellanies*, while the second passage is remarkable for the weightiness and subtlety of the thought expressed. Herein lies the difference between the conventional love conceit and what may be justly termed the metaphysical fantasticality. The distinction was noticed by Gascoigne in his "Certain Notes of Instructions concerning the making of Verse or Rhyme in English" published in 1575.

"If I should undertake to write in praise of a gentlewoman, I would neither praise her crystal eye, nor her cherry lip, etc. For these things are "trita and obvia".³

The conventional conceit generally consists in a comparison of external features, the flushed or paled face of the lover immediately suggesting the metaphors from heat or coldness, there are few less pleasurable tasks in English literature

1. Collier's ed. (*Blue Series Reprints*), 57.

2. Grierson, I. 210.

3. Gregory Smith's "Elizabethan Critical Essays", I. 48.

fashion-
n differ-
composit-

than a study of the seventeenth miscellany writers and sonnet-
eers, with their fashioning and re-fashioning of out-worn con-
ventional conceits. The brightness of a mistress's
~~huskies~~ eyes is repeatedly compared to the sun, love is a
snare, the troubles of a lover are like those of a shipwrecked
mariner; these, and many more of a like nature, are continually
appearing in the love-verses of the period. Such conceits as
the following from Wyatt, possessing a flavour of the meta-
physical in their abstractness, become mere common-places when
introduced into the verse of succeeding poets and poetasters.

physical
bits be-
conven-
tunities.

"My galley, changed with forgetfulness,
Thorough sharp seas in Winter nights doth pass
'Tween rock and rock; and eke mine enemy alas!
That is my lord, steereth with cruelty;
At every oar, a thought in readiness;
As though that death were light in such a case,
An endless wind doth tear the sail apace
Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness.
A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain
Hath done the wearied cords great hindrance,
Wreathed with error and eke with ignorance,
The stars he hid that led me to this pain;
Drowned is reason that should me consort;
And I remain, despairing of the port."

Against conventionalities and common-places Donne resolute-
ly set his mind, and such is his desire for originality, that
though we may catch echoes in his verse from some preceding
poet, in scarcely any case can we detect parallel passages of
continued similarity. Though it would be unwise to impute to
Donne a definite and conscious literary revolt the words of
Carew and Drummond² stand as enduring testimonies to his inno-
vations.

1. Hall - "Works of Wyatt and Surrey," II. 9.

2. Quoted before

"The Muses' garden, with pedantic weeds
O'erspread, was purged by thee; the lazy seeds
Of servile imitation thrown away,
And fresh invention planted; thou didst pay
The debts of our penurious bankrupt age."

(b) The "metaphysical conceit" — a comparison of
hidden likenesses.

Excess of ^{the} use of the metaphysical conceit has stamped indelibly Donne's verse with a quaintness and fantasticality, together with a weightiness and subtlety of thought, features which have called forth a mass of criticism from his successors. The first detailed examination of the elements of the metaphysical conceit was made by Dr. Johnson in his "Life of Cowley", and if this criticism be limited merely to the work of Donne, it still serves us the most searching analysis of his method of writing. Keeping in mind the fact that Donne was essentially a philosopher, the following quotation from Johnson is much to the point when the indicated alteration has been made.

"To write on their ~~this~~ plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet."

Deep study was necessary to provide material for metaphor and simile, and the sensible phenomena of nature were often neglected in favour of the products of art and manufacture. The sciences of medicine, astronomy, geography were all utilised by Donne in providing his comparisons, while philosophy, theology, politics and alchemy all proved fruitful sources of his "wit". This mind stored with all the learning accessible at the period was chiefly engaged in parading its acquired knowledge.

1. Carew - "Elegy on the Death of St. Donne", 25.
2. "Life of Cowley".

"The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour..... nature and art were ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions."

However a mass of knowledge, though essential, was not the distinguishing feature of Donne's work. It is his method of presentation, involving much thought and ingenuity, which marks him off from his imitators.

The metaphysical conceit, may in Johnson's words,

"be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of "discordia concors"; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together."

The essence of a conceit of this kind is that the two things compared should bear no external resemblance, and the "nexus" between them is only discovered after a metaphysical analysis which reveals qualities in a more or less degree similar.

The idea of Death as a voyage has been familiar to poets from the earliest times. It is a crossing of the river Styx

"scilicet omnibus
Quicunque terrae munere nescimur
Enaviganda, sive reges
Sive inopes erimus coloni."

In the sixth book of the "Aeneid", the voyage is described amid a wealth of poetical imagery, a product of the imagination, which renders the poem most realistic, and serves to weave the idea of death as a voyage into the whole artistic fabric of the poem.

Death is also a journey through the "valley of the shadow."

1. "Life of Rowley."
2. Ibid.
3. Horace's Odes, II. 14. 9.

prace.

"ibimus, ibimus
Utcunque praecedes, supremum
Carpere iter comites parati."

What endows these descriptions with all their charm is the simplicity and directness of the metaphor and poetical imagery. The soul is regarded as a living person, and though there is a certain distance and remoteness in the presentation, the justness and beauty of the metaphor gives us pleasure without unnecessarily obtruding the genius of the poet. If "art is nature seen through a temperament" it is nowhere more beautifully and majestically expressed than here. In the production of the metaphor the individual temperament of the poet serves merely as a crystal, through which we get a just view of the scene, though enhanced by the medium of expression. As when we view the eclipse of the sun through a smoked glass, the two bodies are sharply defined, so by his metaphor the poet would point out clearly what before was dimly understood.

me.

Turning to Donne's metaphors we are immediately arrested by their novelty and by the ingenuity and subtlety of the poet. The poet's workmanship is more in the mind than the subject of his work.

"Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

As an example take his description of death as a voyage.

"No family
E'er rigg'd a soul for heaven's discovery
With whom more ventures more boldly dare
Venture their states with him in joy to share."

1. Horace's Odes, II. 17. 10.
2. "Life of Cowley."
3. Emerson, I. 287.

from reason
and from
imagination.

It will easily be perceived that the metaphor springs less from the imagination than from the reason. The soul is no longer a voyager over the Styx^x, nor a wanderer through "the valley of the shadow of death", but by a^a conscious intellectual process, Donne has sought a likeness between the soul and a ship setting out on a trading venture. The idea is certainly novel, but it is impossible to discover any external or readily distinguishable qualities which are common to both the things compared.

Donne's met-
aphor analytic-

Donne's method is analytic and it is here where he brings to his assistance all that he had learned from the schoolmen. After a deliberate analysis of the two ideas which he wishes to compare, he arrives at some abstract quality which is common, though not discernable to the ordinary reader. Although we cannot identify L.C., the subject of their elegy quoted above, it is certain that "rigging the soul for heaven's discovery" refers to a careful training received in his family. As the soul which has received a scrupulous preparation has a greater chance of reaching the porch on its great voyage of discovery, and as the ship upon whose construction the greatest care has been bestowed, has, "omnibus paribus", the best prospect of a successful voyage, Donne thinks it fitting to compare the two.

failure
the meta-
physical con-
cept in poetry.

The distinction between the metaphor and the conventional conceit, is that, while the former comes with the freshness of natural suggestion, the latter is the offspring of a deliberate plagiarism. The metaphysical conceit, in contradistinction

ingenious.

ring
ments in
e compari-
a.

to the above, is dug out of the storehouse of the memory by some ingenious process. In its very ingenuity lies its weakness. On reading a beautiful simile or metaphor, the reader's mind passes smoothly and involuntarily from the one part of the comparison to the other, without any feeling of incongruity in the juxta-position of the two ideas. The metaphysical conceit sounds certain discordant notes, which bring displeasure to the reader, and re-echo in his mind after he has passed on to another part of the poem. Unharmonious as they are at their first suggestion, they become even more so when the reader endeavours to find the "nexus" of the comparison. Of the disparity in Donne's comparisons, Dr. Johnson has spoken at length in his "Life of Cowley", and has illustrated freely. It is sufficient in this connection to merely quote the central point of his criticism.

"As they sought only for novelty, they did not much enquire whether their allusions were to things high or low, elegant or gross; whether they compared the little to the great, or the great to the little."

The following, chosen chiefly from his lyrics, indicate the scope of Donne's comparisons:-

mples of
a dis-
ity.

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| (a) Love is a spider. | (Grierson. 1. 38.) |
| (b) Love is a mine, | (" " 1. 39.) |
| (c) Love is tyrant pike. | (" " 1. 48.) |
| (d) Love is a devil. | (" " 1. 34.) |
| (e) Lovers are flies and tapers. | (" " 1. 18.) |
| (f) Lovers are compasses. | (" " 1. 50.) |
| (g) Lovers are swans. | (" " 1.138.) |
| (h) His mistress's face is a mint
and coins tears. | (" " 1..38.) |
| (j) His mistress is the world's soul. | (" " 1. 21.) |

- (k) Tears are worlds. (Grierson l. 38.)
- (l) His bones are the rafters of
his body. (" " l. 25.)
- (m) A good man is a telescope. (" " l. 272.)
- (n) A flea is itself and two lovers
as well. (" " l. 40.)
- (o) Hours, days and months are the
rags of time. (" " l. 11.)

It will be readily seen from the above, that however far-fetched and subtle Donne can be, he often strikes out unexpected truths and pleases us with the discovery. In (o) he has delved in the mine of his invention, and drawn out with little effort comparisons which give us pleasure. In the others we follow him through the mazes of his workings, and at the end feel our knowledge already bought. Thus it is, that in the presence of the vigorous and fickle intellect of Donne, we often feel that we have left the realm of poetry and entered into that of pure philosophy; a change which astounds us with its suddenness, and displeases the modern taste by the very transition. It is interesting to find that although Sidney devotes a considerable portion of his "Apologie" to a ^{crip} destruction of the different spheres of poets and philosophers, his contemporary, Nash, endeavours to effect a union between them.

"I account of Poetry as of a more hidden and divine kind of Philosophy, enwrapped in blind fables and dark stories, wherein the principles of more excellent arts and moral precepts of manners, illustrated with divers examples of other kingdoms and countries are contained."

falsity
the meta-
r too
arent.

It is obvious, that a metaphor can only be a false comparison, since, if the two terms of the figure resemble each other in all their aspects, we should have identity. When a metaphor is

used in poetry generally, an unknown thing is explained with reference to certain definite and well-known aspects or qualities of another thing; and upon the presence already in the mind of well defined ideas of the standard of the comparison, rests the judgment whether the metaphor is good or poor. The mind must not be attracted by the differences in the objects or the metaphor loses its force. In the case of Many of Donne's comparisons, our attention is not drawn at first to the resemblance but to the seemingly total difference. As Johnson puts it:-

"It may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim."

(c) The History of the Metaphysical Conceit in England.

In tracing the metaphysical conceit to its source, we are surprised to find ourselves involved in a study of the classics. Indeed so long has it been regarded as the peculiar property of the seventeenth century writers, that it is seldom mentioned outside that period. From the preceding sections of this thesis, it is plain, that whenever there is a conscious effort at the time of writing to dazzle the reader by a display of "style", then there is a danger of the metaphysical conceit or fantasticality being introduced. In a recent article on "Style in Literature", Dr. Tyrrell writes:-

"A recoil from such meagreness of diction, a loyal devotion to "The grand manner", has led poets, especially ancient Greek poets, into conceits and extravagances; as when Aeschylus calls Salonydessas with its treacherous harbourages "stepmother of ships" and Pindar describes a thick cloak as "warm physic 'gainst the winds of heaven." ²

1. "Life of Cowley".

2. "Fortnightly Review" - January 1913.

The fact of being a classical scholar, has probably led Mr. Tyrrell to insert the phrase, "especially ancient Greek Poets", but usages, which were comparatively rare in ancient Greece, became one of the dominant features of European literature after the Renaissance.

The influence of these conceits on the Italian poets of the Renaissance entails too wide an investigation to be introduced here. It is sufficient, in treating of the English metaphysical conceit, to commence with the verse of Petrarch.

WYATT. With Wyatt's translations from Petrarch and from the "Strambotti" of Serafino dell'Aquila, there were planted in English poetry those seeds of decay, which take^{ing} root in the miscellanies, came to their full heritage of weeds in the lyrics of Donne. Though critics have confined their attention chiefly to the harvest, the seed-time is worthy of detailed notice too. When at his best, as in the two lyrics which Palgrave quotes in the "Golden Treasury", there is no trace of artificiality in Wyatt's work, and this criticism is applicable equally well to the verse of Petrarch. It was the inferior sonnets of Petrarch and the extravagant and conceited "Strambotti" of Serafino that engaged Wyatt's attention, and begat in him a desire for translation.

is life
s like
he Alps. his life is like the Alps:-

Among a host of subordinate conceits, Wyatt informs us that

¹ For grotesque conceits in Dante, see Symonds' "Dante", 224-230.

"Like to these unmeasurable mountains
 Is my painful life, the burden of ire;
 For of great height be they, and high is my desire;
 And I of tears, and they be full of fountains.
 Under craggy rocks they have barren plains;
 Hard thoughts in me my woeful mind doth tire.
 Small fruit and many leaves their tops do attire;
 Small effects with great trust in me remains.
 The boisterous winds aft their high boughs do blast;
 Hot sighs from me continually be shed.
 Cattle in them, and in me love is fed:
 Immovable am I, and they are full steadfast.
 Of restless birds, they have the tone and note;
 And I always plaints that pass through my throat."

Love is like a burnt coal;-

"Sometimes I fled the fire that me burnt,
 By sea, by land, by water, and by wind;
 And now I follow the coals that be quent,
 From Dover to Calais, against my mind."

Gray's "summer friend, the flattering foe" is described by Wyatt.

"Like lice, away from dead bodies they crawl
 Lo, what a proof in light adversity."

Johnson exclaimed "who but Donne would have thought that a good man is a telescope?", and we can only conjecture his surprise had he read in Wyatt that a lover's heart is like an overcharged gun.

"The furious gun, in his raging ire,
 When that the bowl is rammed in too sore,
 And that the flame cannot part from the fire,
 Cracketh in sunder, and in the air doth roar
 The shivered pieces, right so doth my desire,
 Whose flame increaseth from more to more,
 Which is to let out, I dare not look or speak;
 So inward force my heart doth all-to-break."

Dr. Johnson's criticism of Donne's fantasticalities might, with equal justice, be urged against the above quotations from Wyatt, but the "metaphysical conceit", which is the very essence of Donne's style, is merely an occasional affectation in the hands of Wyatt.

1. *Wyatt*, II. 13.

2. *Ibid.*, II. 69.

3. *Ibid.*, II. 88.

4. *Ibid.*, II. 70.

Another difference exists between the two users of this "conceit" in the hands of these poets. It will be seen from the examples quoted from Wyatt, that he usually surrounds his main themes with a host of subordinate conceits, which serve the useful purpose of explanation. Donne's conceits, besides possessing a stronger and more intense intellectual fibre, are often given without any explanation whatever, and even in his own day, could only be understood after a close reasoning on the reader's part, which was the reverse of the process undertaken by the writer. In short, without alleging too much of a conscious dialectical enquiry against Donne, it is obvious that he takes the first term of his figure, abstracts some quality to which he desires to draw attention, and from this abstraction he manufactures the second term of the figure -- a process of reasoning which became almost a second nature to him, after his acquaintance with his scholastic subtleties. In a lesser degree, the process is similar with Wyatt and Petrarch, but these earlier poets, anticipating a difficulty in the reader's interpretation of their works, elaborated the primary conceit and disclosed the chain of their reasonings. In most cases, if any explanation whatever is vouchsafed by Donne, it takes the form of an entirely different conceit.

"Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
Call her one, me another fly,
We're tapers two, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find the eagle and the dove.
The phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it."

The opinion of Ben Jonson was "that Donne for not being understood would perish", but the judgment of posterity has been otherwise,

and critics have exerted themselves to provide an elaborate commentary, to serve for the explanation which Donne omitted in the poems themselves.

Conflict
passion
reason. The conflict between passion in the lyric and a cold prosaic reason, is admirably illustrated in the following two parallel translations, from the 109th. sonnet of Petrarch. This is translated by Wyatt:-

"The long love that in my thought doth harbour,
And in my heart doth keep his residence,
Into my face presseth with bold pretence,
And therein campeth, spreading his banner.
She that me learns to love and suffer,
And wills that my trust, and love's negligence
Be reined by reason, shame, and reverence,
With his handiness takes displeasure.
Wherewithal into the heart's forest he fleeth,
Leaving his enterprise with pain and cry,
And there him hideth, and not appeareth.
What may I do when my master feareth?
But in the field with him to live and die:
For good is the life ending faithfully." ¹

REY.

Less daring and subtle in the use of conceits is Surrey's translation.

"Love that liveth and reigneth in my thought,
That built his nest within my captive breast;
Clad in the arms wherein with me he fought,
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.
She, that me taught to love and suffer pain,
My doubtful hopes and eke my hot desire
With shame~~fac~~'d cloak to shadow and restrain,
His smiling grace converted straight to ire,
And coward love then to the heart apace
Taket~~h~~ his flight; whereas he lurks, and plains
His purpose lost, and dares not show his face.
For my Lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pains,
Yet from my Lord shall not my foot remove:
Sweet ~~his~~ his death that takes his end by love." ²

In his "Epitaph on Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder", Surrey adapting the style of his contemporary, speaks of him thus:-

1. *Anth.*, II. 1.

2. *Ibid.*, I. 16.

"A head where wisdom's mysteries did frame;
Whose hammers still beat in that lively brain,
As on a stithy (anvil)."

tel's Mis-
lany.

The poems of Wyatt and Surrey were first published in Tottel's "Miscellany" (1557), along with those of Grimald and others by "uncertain authors."

MALD.

The following conceited description of two lovers is worthy to rank with Donne's metaphor of the "stiff twin compasses", in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning."

"What boots it then to flee, sith in night-tide
And day-time too, my Day is at my side?
A shade thou may'st be called by night:
But shadows dark, thou, Day, art ever bright,
Nay, rather worldly name is not for thee,
Since thou at once can in two places be."

In subtlety of thought and paradoxical reasoning, the above quotation from Grimald is quite in the manner of Donne, and recalls his "Lecture upon the Shadow". Of Donne's habit of fashioning metaphors from art and not from nature, Grimald's verse also provides examples. Man's life is iron:-

s life
e iron.

"For of long time, we put this iron in use,
Following each day his work, with busy cure:
With daily use, he may his metal wear,
And both the strength, and hardness eke impair.
Again, in case his iron be cast aside,
And careless, long let it untouch'd abide:
Sith, canker'd rust invades the metal sore,
And her foul teeth there fasteneth more and more.
So man, in case his corpse he tire, and faint
With labours long."

His mother is "his most loving dam" and the Thames receives the epithet "swanfeeder". The publication of this Miscellany marks the beginning of a definite public taste, and to this Grimald panders with his "allurements of conceits, of words the pleasurable tastes." On the death of his friend, Chambers, he writes

1. *Ibid.*, II. CXI.

2. *Collier's Seven English Poetical Miscellanies*, I. 136

3. *Ibid.*, I. 132.

"To me more pleasant Plautus never was,
Than those conceits, that from your mouth did pass."

Grimald's
conceit chief-
ly convention-
al.

However the conceits of Grimald with the exception of those quoted are chiefly of the conventional type. In the two following Miscellanies, "The Paradise of Dainty Devices" (1576) and "The Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions" (1578), the "metaphysical" conceit appears often enough to indicate that the spark was still smouldering, which was to burst out into a blaze with Donne. On reading the publisher's dedication to the Miscellany of 1576, we again are reminded of Donne's "Lecture upon the Shadow."

Paradise of
Dainty De-
vices"

conceits of the
miscellany
others.

"for like as the shadow followeth the body, so praise followeth virtue: and as the shadow goeth sometimes before, and sometimes behind, so doth praise also to virtue; but the later it cometh, the greater it is, and to be the better esteemed." ²

The following quotations are characteristic in their originality and quaintness:-

examples of
their conceits.

"As Spider draws her line all day,
I watch the net, and others have the prey." ³

"And as by proof the greedy dog doth gnaw,
The bared bone all only for the taste:
So to and fro this loathsome life I draw,
With fancies forced and fed with vain repast." ⁴

"That life which yet remains, and in thy breast appears,
Hath sown in thee such seeds, you ought to weed with
tears." ⁵

"Would God my case She understood, which can full soon
relieve my woe:
Which if to her were known, the fruit were surely mine,
She would not let me groan, and browse upon the rind." ⁶

Of course, in comparison with Donne, these conceits are less subtle and ingenious, but they strike the same note of singularity as those of the later poet, and have a like power

1. *Collier*, I. 150
2. " ? III.
3. " ? IV. 26.
4. " ? IV. 26.
5. " ? IV. 44.
6. " ? III. 37.

Gorgeous
Gallery of
Gallant in-
ventions
only in-
spired by
technical
motives.

of arresting the mind.

The "Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions", as the name and the title page indicate, was mainly inspired by technical motives.

"Garnished and decked with divers dainty devices, right delicate and delightful, to recreate each modest mind withal. First framed and fashioned in sundry forms, by divers worthy workmen of late days: and now, joined together and builded up by T.P.(rocter)."

It would appear from the contents of the Miscellany, that the "divers worthy workmen" were so intently engaged in hunting the letter, that almost all other "similitudes" were necessarily common-places. There is extremely little of the "metaphysical" element, and what does appear is merely a shadow of Donne's vigorous style.

"The dice of love are thrown, God speed the doubtful chance."

"feeble is the joy that lightly is begun,
As tender flax can bear no stress, before that it be spun."

The nearest approach to Donne is the following:-

"And fear you not, what form my heart once took
Least any new print shall the same deface:
So deep therein, engraved is your look,
As never may be wiped from that place:
My heart like wax, so lightly did not brook,
More than one stroke, ere Cupid brought to pass,
Or splint of scale, thereof to take away,
The best reserved, your image to portray.

That like as what stone, itself best defendeth,
And hardest is with tool to be grave:
Doth sooner break in pieces, that it bendeth,
To lose the stamp, afore my hand it gave:
Even so the nature, of my heart contendeth,
As hard is this, as any stone you have:
Though force to break it, unto pieces small,
Those pieces somewhat, you remember shall."

1. Collier, III. 12.
2. " " III. 61.
3. " " III. 61.
4. " " III. 79.

avoid-
e of con-
ditionality.

"If I should undertake to write in praise of a gentle-
woman, I would neither praise her crystal eye, nor her
cherry lip, etc. For these things are "trita and obvia"
But I would either find some supernatural cause whereby
my pen might walk in the superlative degree, or else I
would undertake to answer for any imperfection that she
hath, and thereupon raise the praise of her commendation.
Likewise if I should disclose my pretence of intolerable
passion, or find example to plead by the example of some
history, or discover my disquiet in shadows "per allegor-
ism", or use the covertest means that I could to avoid
the uncomely customs of common writers."

is kin-
ship with
Donne.

As his is only a "pretence of intolerable passion", he is quite
free to seek his "fine invention" and his "supernatural cause",
and to express himself in shadows "per allegoriam". Here lies
the very essence of Donne's method, and the anticipation is
almost complete when Gascoigne later urges deep study to pro-
vide the substance of conceits."

"I would have you stand most upon the excellency of your
invention, and stick not to study deeply for some fine
device."

ation to
huism.

The title page of his works is interesting as an indication
of the source of his conceits—original and by translation— and
the Euphuistic manner, here used by Gascoigne, reveals his kin-
ship with Lyly, and also points to the poetical origin of prose
Euphuism.

"A hundred sundry Flowers bound up in one small Posy.
Gathered partly by Translation in the fine outlandish Ga-
dens of Euripedes, Ovid, Petrarch, Ariosto and others:
and partly by invention, out of our own fruitful orchard
in England. Yielding sundry sweet savours of Tragical,
Comical and Moral Discoveries, both pleasant and profit-
able to the well smelling noses of learned Readers."

Dr. Cunliffe in the "Cambridge History of English Literature"
gives the following as an instance of Gascoigne's early Euphuis-
tic style.

-
1. Gregory Smith — "Elizabethan Critical Essays", I. 48.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Chalmers' "English Poets", II. 458.

"I had alleged of late by a right reverend father, that although indeed out of every flower the industrious Bee may gather honey, yet by proof, the Spider thereout also sucks mischievous poison."

If this is an anticipation of Lyly, then so is the same passage in poetical form as found in Wyatt.

allel
m Wyatt.

"Nature that gave the Bee so feat a grace,
To find honey of so wonderous fashion:
Hath taught the Spider out of the same place
To fetch poison by strange alteration."²
Sufficient has been said to show that Gascoigne

atomy"

undertook poetical composition with the definite in view. In his work we find the first instance of that philosophical enquiry, which he has named in an "anatomy", a name which succeeding writers did not hesitate to appropriate: Gascoigne living in an age, when the love lyric was the most fruitful form of verse, quite fittingly sets the fashion with his "Anatomy" of a Lover".

"These sides enclose the forge, where sorrow plays the smith:
And hot desire, hath kindled fire, to work this metal with
The anvil is my heart, my thoughts they strike the stroke.
My lights and lungs like bellows blow, and sighs ascend
for smoke."

name
ted.

Following the "Anatomy of a Lover" of 1575, came "Euphues: the Anatomy of wit" in 1578, the title indicating another link between Gascoigne and Lyly. The idea of an "anatomy" was also used in the following:-

- (a) Stubbes' "Anatomie of Abuses" (1583)
- (b) Nash's "Anatomie of Absurditie" (1589)
- (c) Donne's "Anatomy of the World" (1611)
- (d) Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" (1621).

1. *Op. cit.*, III. 204.

2. *Collins*, I. 85.

3. *Chalmers*, II. 481.

In the above quotation in the "Anatomy of a Lover", it is absolutely obvious that Gascoigne is striving to break away from the conventionalities of his contemporaries — Turberville, Churchyard, Googe and the miscellany writers — and his simile of the body and a blacksmith's shop, if displeasing on account of its subtlety, yet strikes the note of originality in an age of common-places. After Gascoigne, the way was clear for a Donne. The method was already formulated; what was necessary in addition was a profound intellect, which of all the succeeding so-called "Metaphysical School" is only found in Donne. The grimness and despondency of the following verse from Gascoigne suggest a like characteristic phase of Donne's temperament.

"My bed itself is like the grave, my sheets the winding
sheet,
My clothes the mould which I must have, to cover me
most meet;
The hungry fleas which frisk so fresh, to worms I can
compare,
Which greedily shall gnaw my flesh, and leave the bones
full bare;
The waking cock that early crows to wear the night away
Puts in my mind the trump that blows before the latter
day."

Like Donne, his metaphors are at times particularly vivid and striking, as when he writes of the oak tottering to its fall "with edgetools of decay."²

The period intervening between the publication of Gascoigne's work and the appearance of Donne's verse in M.S. is noticeable as a period of philosophical enquiry. After the Reformation, and its consequences during the succeeding reigns of Edward the Sixth, Mary and Elizabeth, England enjoyed a measure of internal peace, and men's thoughts ceased to be confined

1. Chalmers, II. 488.

2. Ibid., II. 490.

to home affairs, but turned to a wider outlook in life. The results of this became evident in the political philosophy of Hooker and the more important work of Bacon. In poetry, the change is chiefly noticeable in the works of Fulke Greville (Lord Brooke) and Sir John Davies, whom Mr. Stopford Brooke characterises as the "philosophical poets."

ILLE.

Fulke Greville's great work comprises long and obscure poems "On Human Learning", "On Wars", "On Monarchy", and "On Religion". The very obscurity of these poems is an indication of their intensely intellectual fibre. Lines of a purely didactic character whose ingenious subtlety renders a just comprehension difficult, are followed by others devoted to tropes, and similes in explanation of the central theme of the stanza. The following quotation illustrates the peculiar style of Greville's work, and the parallel passages added as notes indicate the kinship between him and Donne, in thought as well as style.

"The mind of man is this world's true dimension:
And knowledge is the measure of the Mind:
And as the Mind, in her vast comprehension
Contains more worlds than all the World can find;
So knowledge doth itself far more extend
Than all the minds of men can comprehend."

-
1. "If men be worlds, there is in every one
Something to answer in some proportion
All the world's riches" — Grierson. l. 210_
 2. "The twilight of her memory doth stay;
Which from the carcase of the old world free,
Creates a new world, and new creatures be produced." Ibid., l. 23
 3. "Thou knowest thyself so little, as thou know'st not
How thou did'st die, nor how thou wast begot"—Ibid., l. 258.

"A climbing height it is without a head;
 Depth without bottom, way without an end,
 A circle with no line environed;
 Not comprehended, all it comprehends;
 Worth infinite, yet satisfies no Mind,
 Till it that infinite of the God-head find."⁵

4. "Thou art too narrow, wretch, to comprehend even thyself."
 Ibid. 1.258.

5. In heaven thou straight know'st all concerning it,
 And what concerns it not, shalt straight forget.
 Ibid. 1.260.

"What is fortune but a watery glass,
 Whose crystal forehead wants a steely back?,
 Where rain and storm bear all away that was wrack."

"I sigh, I sorrow, I do play the fool,
 Mine eyeslike weather-cocks, on her attend."²

"Thus our delights, like fair shapes in a glass
 Though pleasing to our senses, cannot last;
 The metal breaks, or else the vision pass.
 Only our griefs in constant moulds are cast."³

"The little hearts, where light winged Passion reigns
 Move easily upwards, as all frailties do,
 Like straws to jet."⁴

"the light of human lust
 In socket of his earthly lanthorn burns."⁵

"The spectacles to my life was thy (Love's) blindness

"Hearts' ease and only I, like parallels run on,
 Whose equal length, keeps equal breath and never me
 in one."⁷

1. "Of Human Learning", st. 82.

2. *Caldea* - sonnet 18.

3. " - " 42.

4. " - " 49.

5. " - " 88.

6. " - " 85.

7. *elegy on Sir Philip Sidney.*

Love is a shadow:-

"Apelle saith, Love is relative,
Whose bodies only must in others be;
As bodies do their shadows keep alive.
So ever must with Anteros agree;
They found him out a mate with whom to play,
Love straight enjoy'd, and pin'd no more away."⁴

S.

Of Sir John Davies' works, the "Orchestra" was published in 1596, and the "Noare Tripsum" in 1599, both too late to have any influence on Donne's early style. These poems, divergent as they are in subject matter, are characterised by a similar excess of strained and far-fetched metaphor and subtlety of thought.

The memory is a ledger-book:-

"The ledger-book lies in a brain behind,
Like Janus' eye which in his pall was set:
The lay-man's tables, the store-house of the mind,
Which doth remember much, and much forget."²

"To judge herself (the soul) she must herself transcend,
As greater circles comprehend the less;
But she wants power, her own power to extend
As fettered men can not their strength express."³

The soul is a bee:-

"When of the dew, which the eye and ear do take
From flowers abroad, and bring into the brain,
She doth within both wax and honey make:
This work is hers, this is her proper pain."⁴

By the time that Donne had written his early work "wit" had become the inspiring motive of almost every branch of English literature. In his "History of English Poetry", Professor Court-
hope distinguishes theological, court, and metaphysical wit, a division which is scarcely felicitous, since "metaphysical wit" embraces the other two. It is interesting to note that he applies the term "metaphysical" to Donne's work alone, and since, if

1. *Caelica* — sonnet 70.

2. *Noare Tripsum* (Grosart's ed.), 112.

3. *Ibid.*, 59.

4. *Ibid.*, 62.

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tished
object,
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poets were ranked by mass of intellect, few if any would take precedence of Donne, the term so used is undoubtedly just. But this "wit", which has just been traced from the Renaissance especially, has no sub-divisions. It can be used in treating of almost any subject —love, theology, philosophy—but, change of subject does not specially distinguish it. It merely differs in the intensity of its application. However, as I have shewn in Section 1, the poetry of Donne has a peculiar and sole claim to the epithet, in that it is only here that the weightiness of thought displayed in the formation of metaphor and simile merit philosophical distinction. As we deny the name of philosopher to those who fall short of a great standard of Excellence in their own sphere of work, so in poetry Donne stands so far above his fellows in the use of the "metaphysical conceit" that we are forced to deny the name of "metaphysical" to those who approach him, but fail owing to their shallowness of thought.

The ubiquity of "wit", in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, has received due appreciation from the pen of Mr. Dowden.

"There was no special coterie or School of "metaphysical poets", but this writer or that yielded with more "abandon" than the rest to a tendency of the time."

When Sir Sidney Lee describes Donne's conceits as "stiffer and subtler" than those of Huguenot poetry, he is expressing exactly Donne's relation to such predecessors as Gascoigne and Wyatt, and to those successors who have been usually associated with him.

¹ "New Studies in Literature", 92.

² "The French Renaissance in England", 354.

(d) Contemporary expressions of the same movement in puns, riddles, jingles and alliteration.

It has been shown that the "metaphysical conceit" is the result of a conscious intellectual effort to find some likeness in things apparently unlike. The success of this effort is directly proportional to the thought expended, when this is decreased, the possibility of finding a nexus between two images is similarly decreased, until there remains only the chance of finding a mere word likeness. The comparative scarcity of just and beautiful metaphors is accounted for by the fewness of the poets, who can be placed in the first rank. Punning and genius have nothing in common; a pun is the property of all who care to claim it. When the poets of the Renaissance failed in inspiration and depth of thought, making a pun was the only possible performance open for them. Punning in English poetry owes its popularity to Petrarch's word-play on his mistress's name.

(a) Laura = the laurel.

(b) L'aura = the gentle breeze.

(c) Laureta — Laudare, Reverine, Tacere

In imitation of his master, Wyatt follows with a play upon the name of Anne Boleyn, for when he expressed a secret admiration.

"What word is that, that changeth not,
Though it be turned and made in twain?
It is mine Anna, God it wot."
The only causer of my pain;
My love that medeth with disdain.
Yet is it loved, what will you more?
It is my salve and eke my sore."²

1. Tomlinson — "The Sonnet & its Origin", 41.

2. Chalmers, II. 382.

ly.

When we consider that Lyly's endeavours were chiefly towards producing a peculiar style, and not original thoughts, we are not surprised to find that puns and word-play abound in his work.

"A Violet is better than a Rose, and so she arose."¹

"I should hardly choose a wanton: for if always she want one, when she hath me, I had as lief she should want me too."¹

Gascoigne appears to have rejected the pun as "trita and obvia", but it appeared again with Greville and his friend Sidney.

lle.

"Greiv-ill, paine, forlorn estate, do best decipher me."²

y.

Sidney puns on the name of Lady Rich, the Stella of his sonnets.

"thou dost possess
Him as a slave, and now long needy fame
Doth even grow rich, naming my Stella's name."³

Among a host of punsters of the time, Donne challenges Shakespeare for pride of first place. His name, as a subject for a pun, proved as irresistible to Donne as to his many friends, and Walton records that he wrote, after his clandestine marriage with Anne More.

"John Donne, Anne Donne, Un-done."⁴

A verse letter to Sir Henry Wootton concludes:-

"I thoroughly love; but if myself I've won
To know my rules, I have, and you have DONNE."⁵

LES.

Not far removed from the pun, but of a "stiffer and subtler" texture, is the riddle, another feature of a declining taste in art. Side by side with the earliest "metaphysical" conceits of

1. Bond's "Works of John Lyly", II. 161, 12.

2. Caelica - sonnet 84.

3. Astrophel and Stella, 25 and 24.

4. Walton's "Life of St. Donne". (His name was pronounced as Don)

5. Grierson, I. 182.

Wyatt and the miscellany writers, appear instances of the riddle

tt.

Wyatt:-

"Vulcan begot me, Minerva me taught,
Nature my Mother, craft nourished me year by year.
Three bodies are my food; my strength is in naught.
Anger, wrath, noise and waste are my children.
Guess, friends, what I am, and how I am wrought,
Monster of sea or of land, or of elsewhere:
Know me, and use me, and I may thee defend,
And if be thine enemy I may thy life end." ¹

mald.

Grimald:-

"Within a seed doth poison lurk,
Which only Spiders feed upon,
And yet the Bee can wisely work,
To suck out honey, poison gone:
Which honey, poison, Spider, Bee,
Are hard to guess as you can see." ²

coigne.

Gascoigne:-

"I cast mine eye and saw ten eyes at once,
All seemly set upon one lovely face:
Two gaz'd, two glanc'd, two frowned with forward grace,
Thus every eye was pitched in his place,
And every eye which wrought each other's woe,
Said to itself, alas why looked I so?
And every eye for jealousy did pine.
And sigh'd and said, I would that eye were mine." ³

The above examples shew how the quest of elaborate conceits is liable to degenerate into the riddle. Donne himself felt this when he wrote,

ne.

"Your favours to me are everywhere; I use them and have them. I enjoy them at London, and leave them there, yet find them at Mitcham. Such riddles as these become things inexpressible; and such is your goodness." ⁴

In "Love's Infiniteness", after a "feu de joie" of conceits he continues:-

"Thou canst not every day give me thy heart,
If thou canst give it, then thou never gavest it:" ⁵

"Love's riddles are, that though thy heart depart, ⁶
It stays at home, and thou with losing savest it."

1. Chalmers, II. 385.

2. Colliat, I. 132.

3. Chalmers, II. 484.

4. Goess, I. 167.

5. Grierson, I. 18.

6. Ibid., I. 29.

ITERATION.

tion
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and the

One of the most characteristic features of the Sixteenth century is the persistent determination "to hunt the letter". Owing no doubt a great deal to the republication of Langland's work written in the old English alliterative metre, its popularity at the time was largely the result of its kinship with the great movement in literature, which has been traced in Section VII(a). From similitudes in images and in the world of pure ideas (metaphysical), poets had condescended to the pun, and then the further transition to the quest of letter-likeness was only a natural consequence.

characteristic
the whole
ary.

A characteristic of Wyatt's work, alliteration became the most prominent feature of the later miscellanies — "The Paradise of Dainty Devices", and especially the "Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions". It was consistently employed by Gascoigne and formed one of the dominant qualities of Euphuism. In his "John Lyly's Works", Mr. Bond has minutely analysed the uses of alliteration in "Euphues", and it is abundantly plain, that it is used with the intent merely of finding similarity between things, and not as Tennyson uses it to enhance the musical qualities of his verse.

re-
allit-
tion.

It is pleasing to turn to Donne's verse and find that he rejects this mere trick of style, preferring to find similarities of thought rather than merely of letters.

LES-play
like syll-
s and
s.

However, although alliteration does not conspicuously appear in Donne's work, he persistently occupies himself with a play on like syllables and words. This habit is first manifest

in the verse of Wyatt.

"To my mishap alas I find
That happy hap is dangerous."

"This careful knot needs knit I must."

Grimald continues:-

"Enjoy we then our joys, and in the Lord rejoice
Faith making fast eternal joys, of joys while we
have choice."

"Heaven's joys enjoy, while we die day by day."

An impulse having been given to this movement, it grows in strength, and is particularly noticeable in the prose of Lyly. (See works of John Lyly, ed. Bond, l. 123. 124. 125.)

Sir John Davies was especially fond of displaying this sign of decadence.

"Which being in divers parts diversified
The divers forms of objects apprehends."

"For all things made are either made of nought,
Or made of stuff that ready made doth stand;
Of nought no creature ever formed ought."

Similar usages abound in Donne's works, bestowing upon them an appearance of carelessness in composition.

"Or if then thou gavest me all,
All was but all, which thou had'st then"

"Since I die daily, daily mourn."

"But that I may not this disgrace
Endure, nor yet leave loving, love, let me
Some senseless piece of this place be."

"Let me not know that others know
That she knows my pains."

"Since she to few, yet to too many hath shewn
Her love-song weeds."

1. *Collier*, I. 243.
2. *Ibid.*, I. 76.
3. *Ibid.*, I. 133.
4. *Ibid.*, I. 158.
5. *Rosce Teipsam* (Grosart ed.), 69 - see also 101.
6. *Ibid.*, 84.
7. *Grierson*, I. 17.
8. *Ibid.*, I. 27.
9. *Ibid.*, I. 28.
10. *Ibid.*, I. 35.
11. *Ibid.*, I. 185.

The process involved in drawing a contrast is almost identical with that used in making a comparison; the difference lies in turning the attention more towards the unlike qualities of the two terms of the figure. The contrast, especially with Donne, often exhibits a subtlety and strangeness quite as pronounced as in the "metaphysical" conceit.

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in-
ce.

Again it is with the verse of Wyatt that contrasts appear so prominently in English poetry.

"They eat the honey: I hold the hive:
I sow the seed; they reap the corn.
I waste, they win; I draw, they drive:
Theirs is the thank: mine is the scorn,
I seek, they speed: in waste my wind is worn.
I gape, they get, and greedily I snatch:
Till worse, I speed, the longer I watch.

I fast, they feed: they drink, I thirst,
They laugh, I wail: they joy, I mourn,
They gain, I lose: I have the worst.
They whole, I sick: they cold, I burn,
They leap, I lie: they sleep, I toss and turn,
I would, they may: I crave, they have at will,
That helpeth them, lo, cruelty doth me kill."

It is hardly necessary to trace completely the use of antitheses in the sixteenth century; they are to be found "passim" in the miscellanies, in the verse of Gascoigne, Turberville, Googe, Churchyard, Greville, and Davies, and in the prose of North, Berners, and Lyly.

e.

The antithesis was a favourite instrument in the hands of Donne.

"She gilded us: But you are gold, and she;
Us she inform'd, but transubstantiates you;
Soft dispositions which ductile be,
Elixerlike, she makes not clean, but new."¹

"When bodies to their graves, souls from their graves re-
move."²

"O blessed glorious Trinity
Bones to philosophy, but milk to faith."³

(f)

Comparison and contrast intermingled in paradoxes, and
oxymorons.

In the paradox a truth is conveyed under the form of an apparent absurdity or contradiction. A classical figure of speech, reminding one instantly of the Socratic paradox, "Knowledge is Virtue", it owes its popularity in English poetry to Renaissance influences, first making its appearance in ~~the~~ such verses of Wyatt's as the following:-

"A will, and yet no power to use.
A will, no will by reason just,
Since my will is at other's lust."⁴

However, the comparatively simple though conceited texture of the sixteenth century verse was unsuited to a continuous display of paradox. As has been shown in treating of the rise of the obscure "metaphysical conceit", the thought underlying this verse was not deep enough to give it prominence in that respect, and it was not till the time of Fulke Greville, that the paradox became a dominant feature in English literature.

The antithetical nature of Lyly's prose is a suitable setting for paradoxes, which although less intellectual than those of the master of paradox--Donne, have more to commend

1. Grierson, I. 202.

2. Ibid., I. 24.

3. Ibid., I. 339.

4. Collier, I. 89.

them than those in contemporary verse.

"Things of greatest profit are set forth with least price"

"We commonly see that a black ground doth best lessen a white counterfeit."²

Donne work is notorious for the paradoxical character which distinguishes the whole of it and the following examples, chosen almost at random, indicates the ubiquity of the paradox in his verse.

"Who are a little wise, the best fools be,"³

"Only our love hath no decay;
This, no to-morrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day."⁴

"for O, to some
Not to be martyrs is a martyrdom."⁵

"Better were worse, for no affliction,
No cross is so extreme, as to have none."⁶

"for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me."⁷

It was Donne's avowed intention to be paradoxical as appears from the titles of some of his poems, such as "The Paradox" and the "Paradox of an Old Woman".

Oxymoron, or the association of two words of apparently opposite and conflicting meaning, is found but rarely in the sixteenth century. It approaches too nearly the usages of Donne, which Johnson best describes, using an oxymoron, as "discordia concors", and presupposes too much of the poetical temperament to be conspicuous in the works of the poetical

1. *Poems*, I. 181.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Johnson*, I. 16.

4. *Ibid.*, 24.

5. *Ibid.*, 341.

6. *Ibid.*, 331.

7. *Ibid.*, 328.

Euphuists. The oxymoron, unlike alliteration and parallelism, is no mere trick of style, but is closely allied with the metaphysical conceit. Striving for a juxtaposition of unlike ideas Donne could never be more successful than in the oxymoron where divergent meaning is accompanied by word likeness.

The conceit of love as "bitter-sweet" of the miscellany writers is continued in Donne, referring to the perfume of his mistress, which betray him to her father.

"Only thou bitter-sweet, whom I had laid
Next me, me traitorously hast betrayed"

Also:-

"When thou weep'st unkindly kind,
My life's blood doth decay."²

"like the scum, which, by needs lawless law
Enforced, Sanserra's starved men did draw
From parboil'd shoes and boots."³

God is:-

"All changing unchanged Ancient of days."⁴

Death is:-

"The first last end, now zealously possess'd,
With a strong sober thirst my soul attends."⁵

(g)

Decay of Allegory and "Metaphysical Wit".

For the influence of allegory on metaphysical "wit" I am chiefly indebted to Professor Courthope's "History of English Poetry." In 1590, three years before Donne's earliest works, appeared the first three books of the "Faerie Queene", and so enthusiastically were they received that the Queen granted him a pension of fifty pounds a year. The archaisms of his

1. Emerson, I. 85.

2. Ibid., I. 19.

3. Ibid., I. 91.

4. Ibid., I. 318.

5. Ibid., I. 318.

work are in themselves abundant proof of his sympathy with decaying mediaeval institutions. His imagination lay in those misty regions which inspired the great allegorical writers of the Renaissance.

"Catholic Theology, Mediaeval Romance, the Philosophy of the Renaissance, the Morality of the Reformation, all contributed elements to the formation of his poetical conceptions."

Possessing an irresistible fascination for the modern mind, the allegory also finds a prominent place in the earliest literatures. It may be regarded as an extended metaphor and often makes its appearance under the guise of parables and fables. The first, an allegory from familiar earthly objects intended to convey some moral or spiritual truth, is familiar to us through the Bible; the latter, a short allegory in which animals or inanimate things are frequently made to think and speak like human beings, owes much of its popularity to the genius of Aesop.

The allegory of the middle ages, like the fable and the parable, was chiefly concerned in the elucidation of moral and spiritual truth. It was sanctioned by the authority of the Church and was a favourite instrument in the hands of the schoolmen. From these it was early incorporated by the Renaissance poets as an instrument of poetical composition.

"Whenever Dante is particularly anxious to make clear to his readers the order of Nature in the invisible world, he speaks to their understanding by means of a sensible image; and in order to show the intimate connection between things and their spiritual causes, he is in the habit of describing one object through the medium of another."

1. *Constance's "History of Poetry", II. 234.*

2. *Ibid., III. 110.*

and. In a more homely manner, Langland's is the outstanding name of a similar movement in England. There is little in common between the manner of Langland and that of Donne. It is true that both strive as far as possible to make use of the homeliest comparisons, but the resulting influence upon the reader's mind is vastly different with the two poets. As the "Pilgrim's Progress" of Bunyan, Langland's work possesses interest largely on account of its story, and the didactic part is introduced as an underlying stratum. The narrative running through the whole is interesting in itself, and when the clue has once been found, it is not a difficult matter to unravel the inner meaning of the allegory. Indeed the facility, with which we interpret each successive event, depends largely upon our understanding of the preceding one. The Renaissance and the increasing attention paid to Italian poetry is responsible for a usage of the English miscellany and sonnet writers - the elaboration of a single metaphor. In the sonnet one idea is isolated and presented in its entirety in a short poem of fourteen lines. The most decadent verse of Petrarch are those sonnets, in which a metaphor or simile has been chosen, and then elaborated with subordinate conceits, a practice, which was often followed by Wyatt and Surrey (see section VII C.). From these developed the "wit" of Donne, which lacks all attempt at elaboration or explanation.

ne. Gascoigne, a name which has been prominent in the preceding history of the "metaphysical conceit", provides us with

an excellent example of the "hinterland" which lies between the sphere of the allegory and that of Donne's "wit". "The Steel Glass" was published in 1576, and no doubt owes much to contemporary re-publications of Langland's work. It is a lengthy and prosaic allegory contrasting the old fashioned steel mirrors and the crystal glass of Venice, by which contrast is symbolised the conflict of the plain English manners and morals and the affectations which were being introduced from abroad,

"These interludes, these new Italian sports,
And every gaud that glads the mind of man."⁴

Langland conceived of the world as a field full of people, and from this his allegory develops. The difference between the "conventional" and the "metaphysical" conceit, in drawing similes from nature and art respectively, is here shewn in the different practices of Langland and Gascoigne. While succeeding allegory -writers as Bunyan and Addison, follow in the track of Langland, Donne shews a remarkable kinship with Gascoigne, except that, whereas Gascoigne by his extended metaphor explains his thought, Donne tends to obscurity by his concise style.

Even Spenser felt that his allegory was in harmony with the times, when he wrote, in the prefatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh,

"This booke of mine, which I have entituled "The Faerie Queene", being a continued Allegory, or dark conceit."

What distinguishes the greatest allegories, those of Dante,

Spenser, Bunyan and Addison, is the use made of poetical imagery, without which these works would be little more than metaphysical abstractions, and approach Donne's usages, to a greater or less extent, according to the depth of the thought expressed.

VIII. RELATION OF EUPHUIISM TO THE "METAPHYSICAL" SCHOOL.

Euphuism has little in common with the school of "metaphysical wit" except in regard to their common origin in the poetry of the Renaissance. While Wyatt was introducing into England the conceits of a degraded Petrarchism, a parallel movement was being effected in prose owing much to the "alto estilo" of Guevara, who, in 1529, published at Valladolid his "Libro del emperador Marco aurelio cō relox de principios: auctor del qual es el obispo de Guadix: nueuamente reuisto por su señoria". Of this book, Professor Courthope says;-

"His nominal subject-the life and sayings of Marcus Aurelius-was selected by him for the display of florid conceits and rhetorical artifices, which he employed with great profusion to disguise the poverty of his thought. From the Latin authors he learned the use of an^{ti}thesis; the established practice of allegorical interpretation suggested to him the mechanical capabilities of the metaphor."

From the French translation of 1531, Lord Berners translated his "Golden boke of Marcus Aurelius", published in 1534. In 1557, also through the French follows Lord North's translation, called "The Diall of Princes."

The following elaboration of a single metaphor, closely akin to those which Wyatt translated out of Petrarch, illustrates the parallel use of conceits in the prose and poetry of the time.

"Truly the young man is but a new knife, the which in process of time cankereth in the edge: for on one day he breaketh the point of understanding, another he loseth the edge of cutting, and to-morrow the rust of diseases taketh him, and afterwards by adversity he is

written, and by infirmities he is deceased, by riches he is whetted, by poverty he is dulled again: finally oftentimes it chanceth that the more sharp he is whetted, so much the more the life is put in hazard".'

In short, this style of writing in prose, which shows a gradual development through Pettie's work, resulted in Lyly's "Euphues", which, while owing much to the preceding prose writers mentioned, owes a great debt to contemporary poetry, and especially to Gascoigne. Mr. Bond has mentioned that its title, "The Anatomy of Wit", has been imitated in Stubbe's "Anatomy of Abuses" (1583), and Nash's "Anatomy of Absurdity" (1589), but it is significant that, amongst Gascoigne's poems, is "The Anatomy of a Lover", while Donne later has the "Anatomy of the World" (1611) and Burton the "Anatomy of ^{Melancholy} Melancholy" (1621).

Antithesis, rhetorical questions, alliteration, puns, subtleties were all elements of poetical writing long before Lyly embodied them in his "Euphues". However, if Lyly can have been said to have influenced later poetry, it was by his use of simile. The publicity given by the continual reprinting of "Euphues", and also by the avowed imitation of its style by succeeding authors, could scarcely fail to bring into greater prominence the use of figures of speech. But it cannot be too strongly urged that Euphuism restores to poetical style only what it borrowed, and that in speaking of the "poetical Euphuists", one is liable to overestimate Lyly's influence in this direction, unless Lyly's debt to preceding poetry be always borne in mind. Gascoigne, whose volume was published in 1575, embodied all the principles of Lyly's style even to the extent of giving him a title for his work—anatomy.

¹ North's "Dial of Princes", fol. 269. (quoted by Constance).

IX. THE ORIGINALITY OF DONNE— IN THOUGHT NOT METHOD.

Concerning the question of Donne's originality, the fierce light of literary criticism of nearly three centuries, has presented to us such a mass of contradictory evidence and "so called evidence, that it is difficult indeed to bring it into reconciliation, or account for the seeming perplexity. Professor Saintsbury has undoubtedly done much to explain away the variety of opinions about Donne's claim to originality.

"There is hardly any, perhaps indeed there is not any, English author on whom it is so hard to keep the just mixture of personal appreciation and critical measure as it is on John Donne."

It is from this difficulty - the conflict or otherwise of a just criticism and a personal appreciation - that the variety of opinions have arisen. It is an easy matter for one, who does not like Donne, to summon to his aid those "commonplaces of criticism, "the most mouldy with which criticism has baited her rat-traps", and stigmatise Donne as the veriest adherent to Continental movements. Johnson led the way for this in ascribing the rise of metaphysical poetry to the influence of Merini, and later critics have followed finding Donne's masters in Spain and France respectively. The other extremist view is represented in its most extravagant and exaggerated manner by Mr. Symons.

"There are only two poets in English literature who thus stand out of the tradition, who are without ancestors, Donne and Browning".²

"Lives of Donne" (Muses Library ed.), I. xi.

"Fortnightly Review", 66 (new series). 435.

If criticism has run wild on this subject it must be attributed to the overwhelming power of personal appreciation, or inability to appreciate. Those who have arrived at a just appreciation of Donne's verse will have little difficulty in discriminating between his general treatment and his novel forms of expression.

It is obvious from the preceding section of this thesis, that in the study of Donne's works, there is presented a curious paradox; a blending of the original and the non-original; of servitude to his ancestors and of freedom in an age of a newly discovered liberty of thought; and the limitation, thought to a large extent an unconscious imitation of his contemporaries, and at the same time a wholesale rejection of their conventionalities. Such a paradox consorts in an extraordinary degree with everything connected with the name Donne. Nowhere else in literature is there such a strange mingling of the grossly licentious and the sincerely religious, of pure and tainted love and of the sweetly passionate lyric and the mere exercise of the intellect. He combines in one person the qualities of the gallant, the soldier, the lawyer, the secretary, the scholar and the grave divine. His life, his love, and his verse are singular concomitants to those paradoxical situations on which his mind loved to dwell.

Following in the wake of his ancestors in English poetry since the Renaissance, Donne assimilates their method, and is carried on to a great lawlessness of fancy, which by the aid of his deep study of mediaeval and contemporary learning, produces

that fantasticality, of which succeeding versifiers were so
envious.

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