

712^c

AVISON AND THE METAPHYSICALS

AVISON AND THE METAPHYSICALS

By

JEANNETTE ST. PIERRE, B.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

September, 1982

MASTER OF ARTS (1982)
(English)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Avison and the Metaphysicals

AUTHOR: Jeannette St.Pierre, B.A. (University of Quebec)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. W.G. Roebuck

NUMBER OF PAGES: v, 117

ABSTRACT

This study seeks to prove that Margaret Avison can justifiably be considered a metaphysical poet. An analysis is made of the historical, socio-cultural and political conditions that formed Herbert, Vaughan, and Hopkins. The intention is to show that Avison has been subjected to similar stresses during her lifetime as were the metaphysical poets, and that one finds in her work as in theirs evidence revealing a metaphysical tendency of mind. It is shown that Herbert, Hopkins and Avison all perceive the universe as being Christocentric and that all four poets are particularly concerned with the God-Christ-man relationship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to Margaret Avison who took the time to answer my questions and by so doing contributed immeasurably to my comprehension of her work, to Dr. G. Roebuck without whose guidance I might have never finished this study, and to my friends and teachers at U.Q.A.C. without whose encouragement I might never have begun it. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my parents who instilled in me their great respect for learning and to my husband and children for their patience and support during the writing of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE:	INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO:	BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY	20
CHAPTER THREE:	A METAPHYSICAL STATE OF MIND	42
CHAPTER FOUR:	CONCLUSION	74
APPENDIX		91
FOOTNOTES		94

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to establish whether or not one can be justified in considering Margaret Avison a modern metaphysical poet. I propose to compare her work and spiritual development as revealed by her poetry and writings with that of two seventeenth century metaphysical poets, Herbert and Vaughan as well as with that of a more modern metaphysical, Gerard Manley Hopkins. I have chosen to compare these poets and their work with that of Avison for a number of reasons. First of all, each has written poetry that can be said to have metaphysical qualities. Each reveals in his poems an all-encompassing desire to understand man's role in the created world and what his own relationship is to God-Christ. All three have wrestled with the problem of the relationship of religion to art. All have finished by devoting their poetry to the service of religion. Moreover, one finds in their religious poems an eloquence which has a special appeal to those readers who themselves seek to know reality but who feel lost or astray.

I feel that the writings of Margaret Avison reflect many of these same preoccupations. She is intensely concerned with the God-Christ-man relationship. Her confession of "how grievously I cut off his way by honouring the artist"¹ speaks eloquently of the struggle between art and religion in her life. The poetry contained in The Dumbfounding and the years she has spent working with the destitute testifies to her dedication to the service of religion. Moreover, one finds in her poems as in those of Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins that haunting eloquence that not

only suggests but demands a moral response from the reader. Necessarily, not all readers will feel this response, but those who are themselves seekers after the light, will feel it most strongly.

Present in the religious works of all four poets, one finds a power, conviction and direction that seemed only to be developing in their earlier works. It is as if, as they wrote their earlier poems, they were groping intellectually for something which they feel they have now found and this once found has made all the difference. Their earlier work had indicated a potent intellectual and emotional strength, a sensitivity, or perhaps put more precisely, a sensibility. In later works these elements appear to have undergone a transformation, perhaps a ~~sort of~~ purging in the "rivering fire"² of their individual spiritual experience. As a result one could say in comparing the earlier secular poems to their later religious work that "one spoke from his mind and reached our mind, but the message faded" but "the other spoke from his being and reached our being and we were changed."³

The work of each of these four poets bears unequivocal testimony to the importance of a spiritual element in their lives. In fact, some sort of spiritual experience seems to have acted as a sort of catalyst transforming their lives and work. It seems essential that we learn something of this experience in order to understand their work more thoroughly because I feel that a direct link exists between religious metaphysical poetry and a poet's spiritual life. However, before beginning an analysis of this most intriguing and complex of relationships, I feel that we should first consider how metaphysics, first defined by Aristotle as "the science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to it in virtue of its nature,"⁴

came to be identified with a certain kind of seventeenth-century poetry. A quick look at the dictionary definition for the term helps us to trace the pattern of its application from the days of Aristotle to the present.

(From metaphysic, n., after ML.metaphysics, neut. pl., fr. Gr. meta ta physika after those things which relate to external nature, after physics, fr. meta beyond, after physikos relating to external nature, natural, physical, fr. physis nature... The term was first used, it is believed by Andronicus of Rhodes, the editor of Aristotle's works, as a name for that part of his writings which came after the Physics)... The primary meaning of metaphysics is derived from those discussions by Aristotle which he himself called the First Philosophy or Theology, and which deal with the nature of being, with cause or genesis, and with the existence of the supersensible. By Albertus Magnus it was called the transphysical science; and Aquinas considered it to be concerned with the cognition of being itself... In England, Bacon defined it as the quest or study of formal and final causes, contrasting with it natural philosophy as treating efficient and material causes... In England, owing to the prevalence of psychological problems, it became practically identified with the analytical psychology of the time.... Schopenhauer and later writers have insisted that metaphysics is concerned with analysis of experience, in the broad sense, and this empirical view is largely held by modern writers.⁵

Obviously, the term has had very different interpretations over the centuries. The scholastics understood metaphysics to be the "science of being in itself."⁶ Just as they had done with much other classical material they accepted that part which could be assimilated into christian tradition and disregarded or denied the rest. Apparently, the christian view was that the role of metaphysics was the investigation of the relationship of man to God and the world. For the Christian, "being" refers to individual life and that "being" is but a reflection and a sharing in the existence of the All-Being who is God. This

Christian whether he lives in the seventeenth century, the nineteenth, or the twentieth, lives in a fallen world in the shadow of original sin. His knowledge of God is limited by his human frailties or, if you prefer, by the material side of his nature.⁷ In the seventeenth century all creation was felt to shadow the Creator, and men felt that they could glean through deductive and inductive reasoning some comprehension of the All-Being.⁸ In fact, **Summers** states that in the seventeenth century people believed that "God's creation was second only to his Word as a source of truth and enlightenment."⁹ This tradition of seeing God's grandeur in his universe has been carried on by certain individuals up to the present day. However men, then as now, have not been satisfied with this imperfect or blurred image and have sought through various methods to transcend their human limitations in order to achieve a more perfect conception of absolute reality. The art of language has long been considered a valid tool for effecting such a task and in the seventeenth century one of poetry's greatest potential values was seen to be that God could employ it as a means through which man might perceive the relationship between Nature and God's word. A poem creates a logical order out of the chaos of personal experience and language. Metaphysical poets attempt through their poems to relegate their personal sense impressions and experience to a logical place in that greater order of existence that is God. These poems are a visible record of their strivings toward a vision of the ultimate reality.

Before delving into the complexities of the relationship between this sort of world perspective and metaphysical poetry, it might be well to first consider the historical background for the use of the term

metaphysical. The name was first employed by Dryden and, at the time, carried no "implication of a metaphysical philosophy or system."¹⁰ These implications are actually of fairly recent origin. The first critical application of the term was Johnson's when while writing his Life of Cowley he noted that at "about the beginning of the seventeenth century there appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets."¹¹ As Helen Gardner points out in her introduction to The Metaphysical Poets, the poetry written by the so-called metaphysical poets was referred to in their own time as 'strong lines'.¹² The term 'strong lines' like 'metaphysical poets' is one of disapprobation.¹³ Quarles, for one, manifestly disapproved of this new order of strong lines in poetry and prose. In the preface to Argalus and Parthenia in 1629, he declared:

I have not affected to set thy understanding on the Rack by the tyranny of strong lines, which (as they fabulously report of China dishes) are made for the third Generation to make use of, and are the meere itch of wit; under the colour of which, many have ventured (trusting to the Oedipean conceit of their ingenious Reader) to write non-sense, and felloniously father the created expositions of other men; not unlike some painter who first make the picture, then, from the opinions of better judgements, conclude whom it resembles.¹⁴

He was not alone in holding a negative opinion of this kind of writing.

This style, Gardner informs us "had its origins in this general desire at the close of Elizabeth's reign for concise expression, achieved by an elliptical syntax, and accompanied by a staccato rhythm in prose and a certain roughness in versification in poetry. Along with this went admiration for difficulty of thought."¹⁵ In such writings scientific and philosophical ideas were used in unusual contexts.¹⁶ Concentration

characterized it and presentation was generally fairly brief and closely woven.¹⁷ Subtle and complex, 'strong lines' presented a challenge to the reader.¹⁸

The metaphysical conceit was an integral part of this delicately balanced construction. It has also been an often misunderstood one. Some critics have relegated it to the status of mere rhetorical device, "a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness."¹⁹ Others, while admitting that the conceit is a literary device, indicate that it may be something more as well. For these critics, "the metaphysical conceit is a metaphor that connects logically subjects not obviously analogous and often link different levels in the great chain of being."²⁰ This definition intimates that the conceit may reflect a certain philosophical way of perceiving reality. Actually when viewed in this manner, the conceit appears to be closely related to the emblem which may well have been its immediate ancestor. Many conceits can be considered emblematic in nature. ^{Freeman} Rosemary Freeman informs us in her book, English Emblem Books that the essence of the term emblematic "lies in such a detailed pictorial and allegorical presentation of ideas, and the pleasure of ideas, and the pleasure of the reader lay in identifying the significant details and correlating them with moral doctrines taught in the accompanying poem".²¹ One could say much the same for the conceit which formed such an essential part of metaphysical poetry. In the emblem, "The picture and the word or poem were to be very closely interrelated---", they were to be "so strictly united together, that being considered apart they cannot explicate themselves distinctly the one without the other."²² The relationship between the metaphysical poem and

the conceit is an equally close one. So much so, that John Crowe Ransom expressed the opinion that the one defining characteristic of metaphysical poetry was "the extended conceit that became identical with the poem itself."²³ This accords an extremely central position to the conceit and one that I agree with.²³

To sum up what has been said, the use of the conceit in religious metaphysical poetry seems intricately related to the traditional use of "the paradoxes and twistings of Scripture to yield symbolic meanings."²⁴ The conceit is a descendant or near kin to the emblem and its use is rooted in a view of the world as a series of correspondences. In all of these qualities one finds evidence of the influence of the scholastic doctrine of analogy.²⁵ Basically the conceit is a stylistic device in metaphysical poetry and as Joan Bennett indicates in her introduction to Four Metaphysical Poets "the term metaphysical refers to style, not to subject matter, but style reflects an attitude to experience."²⁶ I concur with Miss Bennett. I feel that the technical structure of the conceit and its use in poetry reflects not only the philosophy, attitudes, and state of mind of the poet but also tells us much of the traditions and world that produced him.

These religious traditions are also reflected in the structure of certain metaphysical poems. Martz examines these poems as well as Ignatian and Salesian methods of meditation in his book Poetry of Meditation. He concludes from this study that one finds in metaphysical poetry parts that correspond to the acts of memory, understanding and will that one would expect to find in formal meditation.²⁷ His position is all the more unassailable because he makes it quite clear that his point "is not that the meditative method created the tendency for the

human mind to move from concrete place to 'question', to emotional resolution,²⁸ but rather that "meditative discipline cultivated this tendency of the mind" and thus affected the structural quality of poetry written under its influence.

Martz emphasizes the fact that such meditations encourage fusion of the intellect and sense and gives us by way of example the "application of the senses" of St. Ignatius to the meditation on the life of Christ. He describes the method in the following manner:

The first point is to see the persons with the eyes of the imagination, meditating and contemplating in particular their circumstances, and deriving some fruit from the sight. The second is to hear what they are saying, or might say; and by reflecting on oneself, to take some fruit from this. The third is to smell and taste the infinite sweetness and delight of the Divinity, of the soul, and of its virtues, and all else, according to the character of the person contemplated, reflecting one oneself and deriving some fruit from this. The fourth is to feel with the touch; as, for example, to kiss and embrace the spots where such persons tread and sit, always endeavouring to draw fruits from this.²⁹

As Martz points out, it staggers the mind "to ponder the effect such a complex sequence would have upon a poet--meaning by the poet any man of imagination."³⁰ In his concluding chapter he observes that "fundamentally, one can define the qualities of meditative style only in terms of some such principal as 'the union of the powers of the soul.'³¹ Moreover, that "one must see, first of all, deep within the poetry an ideal vision of man's proper place and purpose in the universe: a 'radiant gist' that germinates the qualities of meditative style."³² In the opinion of Martz, it is "toward that vision, by disciplined effort, the meditative poet makes his way, while creation of the poetry plays its part in the struggle."³³ Thus he concludes that a meditative style records the

creation of a self that is, ideally "one with itself, with other human beings, with created nature, and with the supernatural."³⁴ The purpose of meditation would appear to be the recreation of self in the image of the creator and religious metaphysical poetry, as we have already noted earlier, records the efforts of the poet to achieve just this ideal. Therefore, one is forced to admit that Martz's conclusion that metaphysical poetry might better be called "poetry of meditation" appears to be well founded.

While I feel that Martz presents a valid point and defends it well I find that the term "poetry of meditation" causes me a few problems. While Martz had little difficulty in showing that Vaughan, Herbert, and even Hopkins had access to methods of meditation and that, in all probability, this exerted an influence on their poems, it would be exceedingly difficult to do the same for Miss Avison's work. Perhaps, though, the question of whether her work has been influenced by such methods of meditation is best left to another time and another study.

For the moment I would prefer to discuss the second problem which the term "poetry of meditation" occasions me. I find that its use makes no allowance for the distinctions that exist between poetry and prayer. In fact one seems to find a merging of the two terms and this in itself raises a number of troubling questions. Are poetry and prayer really that much alike? What is the impetus, the driving force, that pushes one man to prayer and another to poetry? Do poetry and prayer seek to achieve the same end? Can poetry be prayer and prayer, poetry?

Father Noon in his volume Poetry and Prayer examines many of these questions. He states quite explicitly that as far as poetry and

prayer are concerned "the two experiences are not of the same order." He agrees, however, that a number of similarities do exist and lists a few of them. He informs us that:

Each is an art. Each requires a special gift of temperament or grace; each makes many demands and calls for many exercises.³⁶

Both provide grounds for meditation on the nature and destiny of man, both voice a concern about the patterns and values of human existence and try to express these.³⁷

He admits that poetry can be prayer and prayer can be poetry. None-the-less, he maintains that important differences do exist, but that the essential difference is extremely difficult, if not impossible to isolate.³⁸ This question of essential difference is an extremely intriguing one and one which I feel may be of paramount importance to us as we attempt a little later in this chapter to define the essence of religious metaphysical poetry.

In my opinion Father Noon is very close to the heart of the matter when, toward the end of his book, he discusses moments of perception when "we see our life for a moment in its true perspective in relation to eternity."³⁹ As he so astutely points out:

All human beings at one time or another, if they pay attention, know moments in which God speaks to them. Few claim mystical rapture for such moments. Some do not pay attention, some do, and a few record these moments in writing.⁴⁰

I think that this statement is worth considering carefully. First of all, Noon specifies that all human beings "know such moments" if they pay attention.⁴¹ This implies that a certain attitude is required, perhaps that attitude of contemplation common to both the poet and to the man of prayer. Helen White in The Metaphysical Poets discusses

this attitude and states that before the flood of life's experiences "the contemplative does not remain helpless."⁴² She tells us that the individual "receives it, with a thousand tentacles of awareness taking possession of what cannot be possessed in any other way."⁴³ She goes on to remark that "in a certain sense, perhaps, he surrenders to the fullness of the moment."⁴⁴ She intimates that such a surrender results in "a sudden inrush of sense and feeling."⁴⁵ The implications seem to be that the sense stimulation and intense single-minded attention to the experience has unlocked the gates of memory and in some unconscious manner called forth an associative pattern which links this experience with that of experiences past.

White provides a beautiful and extremely personal example of the individual contemplating a beautiful sunset, suddenly released from the mundane everyday anxieties and irritations and now awash in a sea of sensation and memory. She confides to us:

But I am there still, in a thousand suggestions and recollections of other sunsets seen, far perhaps from this inland prairie, at sea, or from foreign hill-tops, or behind dimly glimpsed and still alien mountains. There are memories of paintings which have hinted of things to look for in stratification of the clouds. There are the words of poets -- it was Coleridge who first in "This Lime Tree Bower" opened to me the cool delight of that greenish yellow that comes only when the first glory of the sunset is spent. There are fantasies of childhood when the eyes of unspoiled wonder beheld the souls of the day's dead go riding joyously through the light -- foaming gates of heaven, or in the remoter swirls of orchid and topaz saw the Valkyries of the singers and the Aurora of the sculptors urging unimagined steeds and chariots through the melting distance. Then there are those deeper thoughts of light fading here to shine on other worlds -- and with these delight and release pass into awe and that simple lifting of the heart that is perhaps the most universal and the most basic of the forms of worship of the race.⁴⁶

Father Noon, Kathleen Morgan, and Helen White all point out that the reaction to such an experience can vary greatly from individual to individual.⁴⁷ White notes that "Past experiences, taste, ignorance even, play their part in the choice of impressions to be received and still more to be registered."⁴⁸ She points out that "in the very act of selection experience is shaped by the patterning habits of the mind that receives it."⁴⁹ This would seem to indicate that for individuals lacking in or indifferent to Christian traditions the experience would be recognized as being of a supra-natural but not necessarily religious nature. This experience could be equated with what is sometimes called a sense of the numinous, and it should come as no surprise that White suggests that this sense of the numinous lies at the roots of many primitive religions, including animism and pantheism.⁵⁰ White suggests that such moments of truth unlock, in all individuals, the gates of memory. Father Noon concurs and reports that "From innumerable such accounts, it would appear safe to assign to memory the principal role in conducting one back to Christ."⁵¹ "Through memory" he adds "the note is sounded that brings down the walls between present time and past time, between this world and that other world."⁵²

It would appear that both Christians and non-Christians have shared this kind of experience where "there is light from eternity shining through a rent in the fabric of time."⁵³ The effect of it on their own lives, however, differs because of the manner in which it was received and interpreted. One could compare these moments of illumination to the "star shine of seed" in Avison's poem "A Story".⁵⁴ This poem is obviously a calque on that in the New Testament of the sower who went forth to sow his seed. In both Scripture and in Avison's

poem the seed refers to the word of God. I would like to suggest that like the word of God some moments of perception fall "on the roadway, ~~out~~ out on the baldest stone, on the tussocky waste and in pockets of loam."⁵⁵ Those persons who are granted this experience and do not pay attention are the stone. Those that pay attention but neglect or are unable to search out its true meaning would be the seed fallen on tussocky waste. Whereas, that seed fallen into pockets of loam would be those whose experience "conducts them back to Christ."⁵⁶

To those whose state of mind is ready to receive the word, however, these moments of illumination, "these rents in the fabric of time,"⁵⁷ act as a directing force that pushes the person towards a life of renewed Christianity. Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins are glowing examples of people whose lives have been touched by the hand of God in this manner. There is much evidence to indicate that Avison, too, should be counted among their number in this matter. One has the impression in reading their poetry, and of their life and work, that these "moments" were for them an invitation to seek a greater participation in the existence of the all-Being.

The invitation to "sit and eat" that Herbert speaks of in Love III["] and Avison refers to in a poem from Winter Sun entitled "Intra-Political" is really a call to a life lived in the service of others for the love of Christ.⁵⁸ Such a life is in reality one lived in imitation of Christ and all four hesitated at first to take up such a burden. Herbert delayed his ordination long after he knew that the ministry was to be his life. Hopkins waited at least a year before officially converting to Catholicism even after he had already acknowledged many of

its doctrines in his heart. Vaughan became a doctor whose life is necessarily one of service to others, but only after circumstances put an end to other ambitions and he underwent an experience of "conversion". Many of the poems in Winter Sun testify to the difficulty that Avison had to make the decision to accept Christ's invitation. As she says in "Watershed", "you know what you know in your heart/ But there is no traffic in that direction."⁵⁹ The decision to dedicate one's life and work to God is not made lightly. It demands a total forsaking of self or as Avison describes it in "The Word", to "make it head over heels yielding, all the way."⁶⁰ It demands a total submission to God's will. It is not surprising that all four found this a difficult choice to make.

We find in the experience of each of the four poets herein discussed an image of Christ as pursuer. It appears that only in giving up their human free will were they able to participate in the existence of God. Hopkins said of beauty that the only way to keep it was to return it to God.⁶¹ Perhaps the only way to retain freedom is to choose God who is all freedom. In an early poem entitled "Snow" Avison suggests that the "optic heart" can occasion "a jail-break and re-creation." This image of the "optic heart" has become subject to a variety of interpretations and has quite caught the imagination of critics. It has often been suggested that the "optic heart" represents the imagination. Others feel that the image represents a fusion of the faculties of the inquiring mind and the loving heart -- perhaps such as occurs in certain forms of meditation. My own observation is that in the seventeenth-century emblematic tradition the heart embossed with an open eye on it was but one manner of representing God. We find something similar in Vaughan's Silex Scintillans on the frontispiece where one finds an emblem of a

stony heart struck by the hand of God and flashing fire. In fact, it also resembles the image in Herbert's Temple of the "Altar" raised by the force of God in the heart of man. Each of these images appears to refer to the power of God. Now whether for Avison the "optic heart" itself represents God or whether it refers to a condition within the individual wrought by the power of God, the intimations are that even much before her experience of "Conversion" Avison was aware of Christ's invitation, albeit in an unclear and muddled fashion. In "Searching and Sounding," Avison could easily be speaking for any or even all of the others when she speaks of God saying:

I run from you to
 the blinding blue of the
 loveliness of this wasting
 morning, and know
 it is only with you
 I can find the fields of brilliance

 And as I run I cry
 "But I need something human
 somebody now, here, with me."⁶³

This poem mirrors a soul trembling at the realization that what it really has been seeking is a share in infinity and that the way to that sharing lies only through Christ. It records the anguish of struggling to love that which cannot be perceived with our human senses.

One would expect that this type of soul-shattering experience would result in a great deal of poetry and yet really very few do record, as Father Noon points out, these experiences in writing. Perhaps few possess the verbal skills and creative mind necessary to translate what seems to be a psychological state to paper. Perhaps some possessing these aptitudes will be moved to prayer and, since prayer need not be verbal nor concrete, these moments may be lost to the rest of humanity.

Another possessing the same aptitudes, but not the tradition, will proceed to describe the experience, analyze it and express his affective evaluation of it much in the manner of the Christian poet. But he will not see the 'truth' of his experience as part of an ultimate plan or reality, and, if he does, he will see it as through a veil - something distant and indistinct. The result will probably be poetry of haunting perceptions and strikingly luminous insights. Some may be tempted to call it mystical or even metaphysical. Generally, however, it will not demand a moral or religious response from the reader. It may be excellent poetry, but it will be only poetry. It will lack the qualities that make religious metaphysical poetry both poetry and prayer.

True metaphysical poetry appears to result from the resolution of an interior struggle between what E.I. Watkin in Poets and Mystics calls the "two intuitions -- the artistic-aesthetic of significant form and this mystical intuition of a union with a reality formless because exceeding all forms."⁶⁴ These two, according to Watkin "are wholly distinct in nature" and "cannot co-exist in the same subject that he is fully conscious of both at the same time."⁶⁵ Watkin suggests that the mystic state precludes "the aesthetic-artistic consciousness of significant form."⁶⁶ I question this conclusion. A state of infused contemplation should logically encompass both forms of consciousness since it represents union with God who is all consciousness. It should not result in a limiting of consciousness as Watkin seems to suggest. In fact, why should one form of consciousness necessarily preclude the other? Why could one form not be but an extension of the other or, in the seventeenth-century manner of thinking, just a mirror reflection of

God's grandeur. We could also look at it from yet another angle. Our discussion of moments of perception has suggested to me that these "two intuitions" suggested by Watkin might in reality be but one. They might represent two sides of the same coin -- a coin minted in the realm of the imagination, will and memory. This coin can be used to buy passage to the ultimate reality or to create an artifact of aesthetic-artistic beauty in the world of men. It can create either poetry or an act of prayer.

Some individuals appear to be capable of both. These individuals have, within their psyche, an awareness of both "intuitions." Often the struggle resulting from the attractions of both "intuitions" is horrendous. It is difficult to serve two masters. The demands on the individual can be shattering. Most certainly, this situation accounts for part of the problem which our four poets had in accepting Christ's invitation. Some individuals are unable to reconcile themselves to this state of seige and must learn to ignore or deny either the attraction of art or religion. Others, like Herbert, Hopkins, Avison, and Vaughan throughout their life walk a tightrope between art and religion. Their poetry reflects the paradoxical nature of their existence. Their poems are artifacts that transcend both worlds and, for want of a more precise name, they have come to be known as metaphysical.

Metaphysical poetry has now troubled the minds of men for centuries and the bulk of criticism of metaphysical poetry is probably greater than the bulk of the entire original work. Each critic has tried to define what constitutes the essence of this kind of poetry and reading their definitions one cannot help but think of the blind men who

sees

went to "see" the elephant. Each of them indeed ^ truly, but only part of the whole. The result is a variety of statements each attempting to elucidate the enigma. Metaphysical poetry has elicited a wide variety of responses from critics over the years. Hazlitt positively disliked it and described it as a poetry of definitions that "proceeded in mode and figure, by genus and specific reference" and was in general "the logic of the school."⁶⁷ He felt it was "an oblique and forced construction of dry, matter-of-fact, decked out in a robe of glittering conceits, and clogged with the halting shackles of verse."⁶⁸ Johnson, in his critical review of metaphysical poetry in his Life of Cowley was scarcely complimentary. He remarks with considerable asperity that "the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood."⁶⁹ Brooks and a number of modern critics would agree heartily with him on this point. They feel, in fact, that one of the most characteristic qualities of such poetry is its ambiguity. Johnson, however, bends a little and concedes that "if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truths."⁷⁰ Moreover, he grants that "To work on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think."⁷¹ This seems to suggest a certain, grudging respect, if not admiration, for the work of these poets.

Other critics have been fascinated by the paradoxical qualities of these poems. One saw in them "a resolution of conflict through wit."⁷² In the same vein, Brooks came to define metaphysical poetry as a "poetry in which the opposition of the impulses which are united is extreme, or, to base oneself directly on Coleridge: it is a poetry in which the poet attempts the reconciliation of qualities which are opposite or discordant

in the extreme."⁷³ Mr. Duncan, in his volume The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, from which many of the above definitions were taken, tries to circumscribe metaphysical poetry with his own definition.

Metaphysical poetry is poetry in which the emotional or intuitive element is subjected to a highly intellectualized consideration that usually emphasizes rational relationships through the use of logical modes of organization, wit, and tenuously logical metaphors that are frequently extended.⁷⁴

However, for the purposes of this thesis, Professor Grierson's brief, but most satisfactory definition seems to go to the heart of the matter.

Metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is poetry which, like that of the Divine Commedia, the *Natura Rerum*, perhaps Goethe's *Faust*, has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and of the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence.⁷⁵

The following chapters will endeavor to show that the work of Margaret Avison like that of Vaughan, Hopkins and Herbert was indeed inspired by just such a philosophical conception and that as a result one can be justified in classifying certain of her poems, particularly her religious poems, with those of the above metaphysical poets.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

Grierson defines metaphysical poetry as poetry that has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe.¹ His definition does not tell us that this conception must necessarily be a Christian one. He tells us only that this conception is such that it delineates the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence.² Men, since the dawn of time, have pondered the wherefores and the whys of their own "being." Prophet and teacher, priest and poet, all have, to some extent, been "the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration"³ and have felt themselves inspired to interpret "the open secret of the universe for men."⁴ They have been moved to share the 'truth' as they saw it revealed to them. These individuals have sprung from every conceivable race, creed and station. They are multitude. It would be an impossible task to analyze or even attempt to circumscribe their visions of ultimate reality.

However, for the purposes of this thesis, it will be necessary to analyze and even circumscribe, if at all possible, that vision of absolute reality revealed in the poems of Herbert, Vaughan, Hopkins and Avison. All four are poets writing in a distinctly Christian tradition, albeit born in different centuries, from different religious, social, educational and economic backgrounds. During their lifetimes they adhered to different churches and, as a result, were subjected to very different pressures and influences. How then can we account for

the remarkable similarities that exist between the stages in their personal development and in the vision of 'ultimate reality' revealed in their work? Perhaps if we contrast and compare the personal lives and backgrounds of each of these four individuals we may find clues which will help us to a better understanding of their poetry. Such a study will give us a better understanding of the periods that produced these poets and the forces that shaped their destinies. It will also provide insights that should prove useful as we examine and analyze their poems in search of that elusive metaphysical element. We will begin with Herbert and Vaughan and then move on to Hopkins and Avison.

Before beginning my "potted" history of each of these poets. I would like to first explain that in each case I have attempted to produce a general outline of the period -- not a precise pencil sketch. I do not intend to present a black and white photograph of each era but rather a soft focus impression of the problems and stresses facing the individual in each period. My material has been drawn from a variety of sources and I realize that my selection may appear somewhat arbitrary and one sided to some readers. In my "impression" of each of these periods I have provided only those details which I felt were needed to place the work of each poet squarely in the metaphysical camp. My objective is not historical argument ^{but} literary discussion.

George Herbert was born in 1593, the fifth son of Richard and Magdalen Herbert.⁵ George's father died when he was only three and a half and his mother,⁶ according to Donne "proposed to herself, as her principal care, the education of her children."⁷ A gifted and devoted woman, her influence on her children, especially George, was considerable.

The children had a tutor until George was about 12 years old when according to Walton, he was sent to Westminster School.⁸ He was matriculated from Trinity College in December of 1609.⁹ Hutchinson informs us that "he was elected a minor fellow of Trinity on October 3, 1614, major fellow on March 15, 1615/1616 and then proceeded to the master's degree."¹⁰

As a younger son of a well connected and affluent Border family he sought to distinguish himself in the world.¹¹ Gifted and well educated, he refused to accept the limitations of poor health.¹² Hutchinson reports that Herbert was "appointed to his first university office as Praelector or Reader in Rhetoric on the foundation of Sir Robert Rede in 1618".¹³ Orator was the next step in his plan. As early as 1618 "he guessed, or perhaps knew for certain, that Nethersole intended soon to relinquish the office altogether, and he began at once to make interest for the succession."¹⁴ Hutchinson points out that "Herbert used every influence to secure the post of vantage" and "on Friday 21 January 1619/20 he was duly elected in the Senate House, put on the Orator's habit, received the orator's book and lamp, and took his place next to the Doctors."¹⁵ His prospects seemed excellent. He had the favour of a number of men including the Duke of Richmond, the Duke of Lennox, the King, the Marquis of Hamilton, Bacon and Bishop Andrews. Then suddenly between 1623 and 1626 all of these men died. Some critics suggest that with them died Herbert's hope for worldly advancement.¹⁶ For a man with Herbert's ability and determination these setbacks were serious, but should not have proved insurmountable if he still really wanted a career in the world. The fact is that even while striving for recognition in school

and in the world, Herbert seems to have known that his vocation lay in the service of God.¹⁷ As early as New Year's, 1609 he had sent his mother two sonnets and indicated his firm intention to consecrate himself to the writing of sacred verse, and by and large that is all that he wrote.¹⁸ Nonetheless, he delayed taking holy orders for some time. He was ordained deacon and instituted by proxy at Lincoln on July 5, 1626 into the Canonry and prebend of Leighton Ecclesia.¹⁹ He was married in 1628 to a kinswoman, Jane Danvers,²⁰ and after a period of time troubled by ill-health, soul searching and indecision he was "instituted at Salisbury on 26 April, 1630 by Bishop Davenant---and he was inducted the same day at Bemerton St. Andrew."²¹ Less than three years later he died leaving a reputation for sanctity and a monument in poetic form, The Temple, to the care of a friend.

This bare biography tells us much of Herbert's education and a little of his family influence and ambitions, but it tells us nearly nothing of the powerful political, social and religious upheavals of his time. Actually he was born as the reign of Elizabeth drew to a close and at this time England was rich, had a great cloth-making industry, was developing its sea power, and looking for markets in the New World as well as in Europe. ~~Many~~ people had the money and leisure to take an interest in the arts. Architecture was flourishing. It was an exciting and flamboyant era. Then Elizabeth died leaving orders that James VI of Scotland should be crowned King of England. England, Wales and Scotland now had the same ruler but not the same religion and this would lie at the root of much later discord. James I and his son Charles I disagreed with the Commons over financial matters as well as over religion. The

king wished to control the church through bishops chosen by himself but growing numbers of Puritans wanted simpler services and a greater say in the making of church law.²² As Sona Raiziss indicates in Metaphysical

Passion:

Politics was then (in the seventeenth-century) as intricately involved with religion as it is today with socio-economics. The social or class problem became a factor in the tug of war between Parliament and King. The major issue was not class privilege so much as the divine right of Kings in a last stand against political liberty. Simultaneously, the Anglican Church and Puritans were in deadly combat, both meanwhile relentlessly persecuting the Catholics. When religion was concerned, science entered the lists. It is thus scarcely possible to examine seventeenth century politics without touching theology, science, philosophy - all threading through social and military events.²³

In order to understand why these matters came to be so interrelated it becomes necessary to examine the state of European science during the middle ages. During this period scholars such as Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas and others organized all knowledge into an Aristotelean world view that accorded with the major principals of Christianity. Accepted by the Church, this manner of viewing the universe came to hold with the general public much the same status as church dogma. It was difficult and even dangerous to express views that openly disagreed with this system of knowledge. Matters had remained in this somewhat static position until the middle of the sixteenth century. Suddenly, a new spirit of questioning, exploring, and experimenting overwhelmed Europe and, more particularly, England. Navigators sailed round the world and proved it round. Copernicus advanced the theory that the earth moves around the sun and not the reverse. Bacon, in his writings outlined in detail how theory and practical methods should be put together in the

study of science. He felt that the real purpose of knowledge was to provide a way to control and use nature rather than just to understand it. This differs considerably from Aristotle's study of being whose goal was the understanding of nature. Soon Galileo's use of the telescope and the invention of the microscope changed the interpretation of the words macrocosm and microcosm for all time.²⁴ During this same turbulent period Johannes Kepler formulated laws of planetary motion, William Harvey discovered the manner in which blood circulates in the body and Newton's laws were born.²⁵ The old unified view of the universe and man's proper place in it was shattered. Renaissance man stood facing the dawn of a new era surrounded by the fragments of the old. This was the world into which George Herbert was born; it was also that of Henry Vaughan.

Henry Vaughan and his twin brother Thomas were born in 1621 or early 1622 to Thomas and Denise Vaughan of Trenwydd or Newton.²⁶ The boys' early formal education was provided by "a neighbouring clergyman, Mathew Herbert---and both, it seems, went to Jesus College, Oxford."²⁷ Henry did not stay to take a degree there but went on to London to study law. There his studies were interrupted by the civil war.²⁸ He spent most of his life in his native village except for the four years in Oxford and London, and possibly a short period fo military service.²⁹ He was married to Catherine Wise, of Coleshill, and settled at Newton in or around 1646.³⁰

Poems, With the Tenth Satyre of Juvenal Englished was his first book and it is dated 1646. He wrote another volume by the end of 1647 but withdrew it before publication, presumably because it contained material of a specifically political nature. In 1650 Silex Scintillans as published. It is mostly with this work and the subsequent enlarged

version of it that we will be dealing in the course of our discussion of Vaughan's religious metaphysical poems. Other books of his to be published were Olor Iscanus and Thalia Rediviva, two translations from Hermetic Philosophy and several other works. In 1655 the enlarged version of Silex Scintillans was published.³¹

He was born neither to affluence nor position and this may have guided his decision to become a doctor. It has not been possible to ascertain when and where Vaughan obtained his medical training or degree, yet the records indicate that he had an extensive and satisfactory practice.³² In or around 1653 his wife died and he married her sister Elizabeth. Four children were born into each marriage and family quarrels and legal disputes tarnished his later years.³³ He died on April 23, 1695.³⁴

Henry Vaughan had been born towards the end of the reign of James I and his life was greatly perturbed by the religious and political events of his day. As a young man he had been passionately outspoken in his politics and it should come as no surprise to us to find these attitudes surfacing in certain of his poems. One excellent example of this militancy can be seen in the poem "The British Church" where he speaks of the church divided in these words:

That seamlesse coat
The Jews touch'd not
These dare divide, and stain³⁵

One feels his anger and frustration when he speaks of the "Slain flock, and pillag'd fleeces."³⁶ With the close of the first civil war in 1646, the Puritan regime was firmly established in South Wales and Royalist families like the Vaughans suffered as a result. With the Royalist defeat and the execution of the King, the Church in Wales was suppressed.³⁷ Although Henry lived to later see both King and Church back in what he considered

their rightful positions, this period was one of great personal crisis.

Vaughan's life was fragmented and he was alienated. It is not surprising that Vaughan attributed his conversion to Herbert's example and poetry. There was much in Herbert's work that Vaughan as a Christian could identify with. His previous awareness of God had been blurred and nebulous--a blend of the numinous and the traditional. Urged to a new intensity by "affliction" his Christianity took on a new energy and his poetry a new direction. Thus his sacred poetry was the direct result of the turmoil of the period in which he lived.

Herbert's life by comparison seems singularly tranquil. Although his ambitions were destroyed by an unfortunate series of deaths, his world was not torn by the civil war, the Interregnum nor the restoration as was that of Vaughan. Religious controversy was rampant during his lifetime, but he, himself, was reported to be a singular model of tolerance with regards to such matters.³⁹ Born into the Anglican Church he seems, ~~seldom if ever, to have~~ questioned or even doubted his allegiance to it. As an educated man he could hardly be unaware of the clash between the old and new orders of metaphysics and science but on the surface, one finds little evidence to indicate that it troubled him unduly. Yet one finds in Herbert's poems a fragmented and alienated view of life ~~germane~~ to this most troubled era.⁴⁰ It was not easy for Herbert to renounce the world and abandon himself to God. For a man of his position and ability to become a simple person was considered to be a waste of ability. As Grierson points out Herbert's central theme is "the psychology of his religious experience" and The Temple not only "breathes the spirit of the Anglican Church at its best---"but also" of one troubled and delicate soul seeking and finding peace."⁴¹

This sense of seeking is present in the work of both Vaughan and Herbert. It almost takes the form of a quest - a quest for freedom from doubt. In her book, Metaphysical Passion, Sona Raiziss examines the literature produced during a variety of historical periods and she concludes that "Metaphysical poetry is a sign of such times as know acute changes in belief, science, psychology and artistic expression."⁴² She probes the implications of political, religious, scientific and social pressures on seventeenth century man and concludes that "when new ideas are so rapidly engendered as to appear superficial and corruptible, doubt permeates every thought."⁴³ Doubt leads to anxiety and anxiety to spiritual and intellectual inquiry."⁴⁴ This type of introspection brings the poet to relate "himself to his age and his age to history and history to time."⁴⁵ Not infrequently, this line of inquiry draws the individual inward and then upward towards a particular understanding of the God-man relationship. This pattern of intellectual and spiritual exploration is present in the work of Herbert and Vaughan. I believe that it is also present in the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Margaret Avison.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born July 28, 1844 at Statford, Essex to Manley Hopkins, marine insurance adjustor, author, and sometimes poet and to Catherine Smith. His parents were moderate High Church Anglicans. He was the eldest of nine children. The family was exceptionally accomplished. He attended Cholmeley's Grammar School at Highgate. In 1863 he won an exhibition scholarship and attended Balliol College at Oxford. Between 1864 and 1865, he wrote most of his early poems. In 1866 he decided to become a Roman Catholic, a decision which occasioned him much soul searching and one that caused a rift between himself and

his family. He was received by Newman into the Catholic church in the month of October.

He graduated in 1867 with honours, and from September to Easter taught classics at Newman's oratory. In 1868 he decided to become a priest and ^{burned} all his finished poetry. He did not write again until 1875. Ordained as a Jesuit priest, he served in a variety of positions: tutor, curate, select preacher, assistant, teacher of classics, lecturer and examiner at University College in Dublin. In 1888 his health began to fail and in 1889 he died. His friend Bridges assumed custody of his poetry and in 1918 he published The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins.⁴⁶

This bare bones outline tells us the facts of Hopkins life but really tells us little about the man and it tells us even less about the period that produced him. We can turn to the history books for information about the Victorian era and many comprehensive studies have been made of the period, but for knowledge of the man, himself, we must turn to his poetry, letters and journals.

But first let us turn our attention to our general and, as I mentioned before, perhaps one-sided description of the period. History tells us that Hopkins was born during the reign of Victoria. England, at this time, was powerful and had a colonial empire. Her population was on the increase and the industrial revolution was underway. Roads, canals, and railways were being developed. Coal was being used increasingly for fuel with the result that cities were becoming smoky and grimy. People and goods were becoming more mobile. Machinery was being used in the factories. Towns and cities were mushrooming and the working people often lived lives of misery, overworked and in insanity towns.⁴⁷ For the

thoughtful and concerned, it was a period of confusion. They saw the ill-effects of a "cash-nexus"⁴⁸ society, a society that had the support of organized religion, and found themselves exceedingly troubled. Hopkins was one of these. Gardner notes that "he was extremely sensitive to environment and was horrified when he saw the squalor of our great industrial towns and the social conditions which, in his view, oppressed the working classes."⁴⁹

The middle classes were seeking and gradually obtaining a greater share in government. It was a period of great social unrest set in a period of relative political stability. This atmosphere of unrest is reflected in the literature of the period where, as Ford points out, one finds "a good deal of discussion of democracy and individualism, of nationalism and liberalism, of the growth of education, of the growth of population and the need for controls or emigration."⁵⁰ Men of this era like those of the Renaissance, were intensely concerned with their place in society, the world and history. It was a period of great national fervour and Hopkins was one of those who felt its glow. However, Hopkins in his work for the Jesuits travelled considerably within England and spent some time in Ireland as well. As a result he was given the opportunity to observe the problems and even hatred that various British policies aroused in the local populations.⁵¹ Sometimes they were even inconsistent with the public well being. It is not surprising that he felt himself "the stranger"⁵² and "at a third Remove"⁵³ particularly from England "whose honour"⁵⁴ he tells us "all my heart woos."⁵⁵ Ford tells us that the Victorian era was an age of religion.⁵⁶ There was an "emphasis on personal salvation and the conviction that poverty was

ordained"⁵⁷ permitted many to defend their own attitude of laissez-faire. Religion had become an institution representing class and group solidarity rather than true Christian values. Ford speaks of "the distress of Anglicans in a history-conscious age" and concludes that this distress was social rather than spiritual in origin.⁵⁸

The Victorian era was rife with political, social and religious tensions. Ideas were becoming obsolete almost as they were being formulated. The pressure on the individual was terrible. It was difficult to know one's own mind. In such circumstances it is easy to imagine a person progressing from doubt to anxiety, from anxiety to spiritual and intellectual searching and from the search to the development of a formula or pattern into which one could logically fit all these new ideas. Men, in this period, as in many others in history were casting about in search of something stable to which they could consecrate their entire faith and energy. Then, as now, some men hoped that science would hold the answer.

As in the seventeenth century one can lay much of the responsibility for this condition of unrest at the door of science. Advances in hygiene resulted in a population explosion. The invention of machinery and new energy forms brought on the industrial revolution with all its ramifications on the socio-economic and political scene. From its beginnings in the seventeenth century modern science had made great advances. In fact as the morning dawned on the 19th century, biology was, as yet, the only science that had not undergone a radical change in ideas. However, the development of the cell theory and the work of Pasteur in the 1850s had **changed** all that and set science on a controversial course. Science and religion now disputed the right to interpret new information concerning

the origins of life, and the work of Lemarck, Wallace, and Darwin added fuel to the flames--the theory of evolution.⁶¹ Men did not know what to think.

In this as in most things Hopkins was a child of his age. One poem in particular, "Nondum" seems to epitomize the state of confusion and anxiety present in the Victorian soul. In this poem one finds a speaker calling out to a God who is both silent and distant.

To Thee the trembling sinner prays
 But no forgiving voice replies;
 Our prayer seems lost in desert ways,
 Our hymn in the vast silence dies.⁶²

He expresses his frustration at seeing "the glories of the earth. But not the hand that wrought them all."⁶³ He complains at the unfairness of being forced to "guess" at the reality of God without ever being sure that one is guessing correctly. We sense a terrible awareness of the silence of God while the world around the speaker, the world that God created, "contends about its many creeds."⁶⁴ The theme of the poem is that of spiritual and intellectual searching, a quest that eventually will lead the speaker inward and upward. The speaker prays to God begging "To behold Thee as Thou art."⁶⁵ Like Herbert and Vaughan, what Hopkins seeks is freedom from doubt. Such freedom can lie only in a perfect trust in God. This kind of trust is born of a personal relationship with God and a particular understanding of the God-man relationship.

To sum up what has been said thus far in this chapter, metaphysical poetry is poetry that has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe. This is Grierson's definition. A little later in this study we will consider yet other aspects of metaphysical poetry. Although metaphysical poetry is sometimes considered common only to the

seventeenth century, it is a fact that poetry with metaphysical characteristics has been written by individuals throughout history. Herbert and Vaughan were products of the seventeenth century and the political, social, religious and scientific changes that shook their eras. These influences shaped their lives and way of thinking. They wrote metaphysical poetry. Hopkins was a product of the Victorian era and its own political, socio-economic, religious and scientific storms. He, too, wrote poems with metaphysical qualities. At first glance the backgrounds of these three men might seem to provide little room for comparison. However, a closer examination of the facts shows that all three men lived during periods of abrupt and rapid change, periods when men were confused and troubled. All three wrote poetry that reveals a philosophical conception of the universe and the work of all three suggests a very similar progression: doubt -- anxiety -- intellectual and spiritual search -- leading to personal vision or philosophy of life. Raiziss has suggested that this sort of progression is a reaction to the stresses engendered by periods of transition or conflict.⁶⁶ She insists that this is the type of period that is most likely to produce metaphysical poets.⁶⁷

The avowed purpose of this thesis is to prove Margaret Avison a metaphysical poet. If one accepts Raiziss' proposal that certain periods are more likely to produce metaphysical poets than others, then it seems necessary at this time to examine the historical aspects of the period that produced the poet. Margaret Avison was born in Galt, Ontario in 1918, but lived her childhood years in Western Canada. She received a conventional Protestant upbringing. She attended Victoria College from 1936 to 1940, and later returned to the University of Toronto for graduate

work.⁶⁸ Her first collection of poems to be published, Winter Sun, was made up of poems selected from work written during her schooling and various jobs. Published in 1960 it won the Governor-General's Award, Canada's highest literary honour. Her second book, The Dumbfounding was published in 1966 three years after she became a committed Christian.⁶⁹ In this collection Avison can be likened to Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins in the intense personal quality of her vision of faith transposed to paper. She is an active member of the evangelical Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto and her jobs have included inner-city social work and secretarial work in the Canadian office of a Southeast Asia mission.⁷⁰ A third collection of poetry Sun Blue was published in 1978. The poems contained in it continue to reflect Avison's almost sacramental vision of everyday life. In this aspect of her spiritual development and literary work one may once again compare her to the above mentioned poets, but more particularly to Herbert and Hopkins. Avison is still writing poetry and a certain accumulation of unpublished poems now exists perhaps to be published at some future date.⁷¹ Avison's poems have been acclaimed ever since she was a teenager and examples may be found in at least eight anthologies as well as in a number of literary publications.

Avison was born into the early years of the twentieth century.⁷² It was an era of rapid and radical change in every area of human existence and one which saw the breakdown of old familiar authoritarian patterns.⁷³ Freud, Darwin, Einstein, and Marx all contributed to the development of a modern conception of man that was extremely fragmented and totally different from the traditional view of him. It became impossible to arrive at one "commonly acceptable metaphysical picture of man."⁷⁴ In fact "tendencies in philosophy and ethics" were more or less anti-metaphysical.⁷⁵

The two wars and the great depression had left their mark on the consciousness of men. There was a sense of disillusionment, disappointment and skepticism especially among the intellectuals. Raiziss' remarks concerning this period that "less than fifty years ago vistas were wide and hopeful. But very soon after, the artistic mood altered to a profound discontent."⁷⁶ The two basic themes in modern literature became those of "isolation" and of "relationship" within what had come to be considered a decaying moral order.⁷⁷ This post-war period was a time of insecurity and bomb shelters. A situation of declared war was exchanged for a war of nerves -- the so-called "cold war". The generation that grew up in its shadow was escapist and idealistic. This period saw the beginnings of the "hippy" movement and the popularity of coffee shops where the young gathered. There was a concern with one's identity and beginnings which is reflected in the soulful, romantic and private poetry of the period. But as Canada approached her centennial year life was becoming more and more complex. People were at once idealistic and cynical and the poetry of the sixties reflected this. This public poetry was generally loud, brassy and democratic.⁷⁸ A fairly accurate assessment of the period is provided by Leighton Ford in an article entitled "The Centennial Crisis" published in Christianity Today in March of 1967.

The military situation is fairly stable, but political and economic crisis loom before the nation. There is deep and complex tension between French Canadians and those of English descent. Canada faces economic re-adjustment if Britain joins the Common Market. Will it be forced into economic union with the United States.

The vast social upheavals that have helped to bring about the national crisis have contributed to a moral and personal crisis as well. Canada is no longer a

nation of farmers and shopkeepers. Most Canadians now live in big cities and work for large companies. Traditional ethical codes are being challenged. Marijuana and barbiturate addiction is on the increase. The growth in population, alcoholism and suicide are increasing also.

The exploding student generation dramatically reflects personal emptiness. While many idealistic students have joined social-action groups, far too many are aimless. Radio and TV personality, ^{Gordon Sinclair} a self-professed skeptic, has said, "I disagree with Billy Graham on almost everything. But on one thing we agree. The basic trouble with our young people is that they have no sense of purpose."

Some Canadians are concerned that for ^{one} of the world's most affluent countries, Canada's record of social justice is inadequate. For example, most Indians in Canada die before they are thirty-five, and only forty-four of every one hundred Indian homes have electricity. Only a tiny percentage (1.05 per cent) of Canada's total budget this year will go for foreign aid. And while many Canadian students have demonstrated against the racial trouble of the United States, Negro families have been refused apartments in cities from British Columbia to Nova Scotia.

The Canadian religious community is not exempt from crisis. Of 120 Ottawa high school students interviewed not long ago, more than half said that institutional religion had little or no place in their lives. The Premier of Newfoundland, Joseph E. Smallwood, bluntly lays partial blame for his province's increase in juvenile delinquency at the doors of the churches. "The Church," he says, "doesn't seize hold of people anymore - it doesn't possess their lives."⁷⁹

As Leighton Ford points out in his article, for many people the sense of crisis during this period was of a distinctly spiritual character.⁸⁰ He cites Robert Fulford as saying that "the plainest fact of our national life is that Canada suffers from a profound sickness of the spirit."⁸¹

It was into this alienated, materialistic and troubled world that Avison released The Dumbfounding and with the record of her own search ^{^ it} for God.

Avison lived and matured in this world. It could not help but colour her impressions and shape her ideas. Of course, the same could be said of anyone of us, products of the same generation. But most of us are not poets for all that. Influence plays its part but Avison had, from the beginning, something more. She has "a mind that," as Emerson writes in "The Poet", has "never ceased to explore the double meaning, or shall I say the quadruple or centuple or much more manifold meaning, of every sensuous fact."⁸² Add to this a gift of perspective that permits her to observe with equal clarity things both near and far and an imagination that continually attempts to "express the paradoxical nature of life."⁸³ What you have is a person predisposed towards intellectual and spiritual searching.

Moreover, this searching is both expressed through and part of the writing of poetry for Avison. In speaking of the poems contained in The Dumbfounding, she tells us that they were written over a certain period of time "in odd moments, at a familiar nudging to explore this edge-of-field-of vision glide of meaning" and she adds "to get rid of the distraction of it too."⁸⁴ Like Eliot, whose influence she admits quite candidly, she seems to feel that man has "had the experience but missed the meaning:"⁸⁵ and that "the approach to the meaning restores the experience."⁸⁵ As a result Avison's poetry is a permanent record of her efforts to explore this meaning.

The Dumbfounding was not intended primarily as a public profession of faith although it is inherently such.⁸⁶ For Avison, the book The Dumbfounding is a tangible expression of her soul's imaginative and spiritual search. "The self created in this poetry" as Louis Martz once

said of the poems of Hopkins "is one that tries to speak with full awareness of a supernatural presence, one that feels the hand of the supernatural upon himself and all created things."⁸⁷ The very air in Avison's world like that of Hopkins is "charged with the grandeur of God."⁸⁸ This is particularly true of the poems written after her experience of "conversion" but an awareness and sense of awe in the presence of nature is already to be seen in her earlier poems and with it that sense of searching.

This sense of searching leads her in a number of directions. In "Butterfly Bones or Sonnet Against Sonnets", she considers the use of language and decides that it can only suggest "the reality behind appearances" and that a sonnet is not reality any more than a museum specimen is a living thing. In Poems of the Mid-Century she examines the use of linear perspective and argues that it limits by its very nature man's ability to imagine the infinite. In "Snow"^{in the volume winter sun} she explores the role of the imagination insisting that growth happens in freedom through choice and writes:

Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes
The optic heart must venture
a jail-break 89
and re-creation

She concludes that man must actively seek to see the world around ~~him~~ through the efforts of the optic heart. She feels that just as the optic nerve connects the retina with the cerebral centers, the optic heart connects the searching soul of man with those same cerebral centers.

The perceptions of the optic heart or the imagination are extremely important to truly comprehending Avison's poems. Another aid to understanding her work, especially her themes, lies in what she herself

has told us concerning her religious experience. In an article called "I wish I had known---,"⁹⁰ Avison describes the progress of her personal beliefs from the "will to be good" of her early days to the present "getting to be where Christ's suffering goes terribly on,"⁹¹ of the mature religious poet. She also describes the one most important event in this progress of belief, the 4th of January, 1963 when the "Jesus of resurrection power" revealed himself to her.⁹² Concerning this experience she tells us, "I would not want to have missed what he gave then: the astounding delight of his making himself known at last, sovereign, forgiving, forceful of life."⁹³ She adds that under the influence of this experience she looked back on her life and noted "how grievously I cut off his way by honoring the artist" and how her past was a "long willful detour into darkness."⁹⁴

In the light of this revelation it becomes easier to understand the themes of many of the poems contained in the volume of verse The Dumbfounding. It also gives us insights into some of her earlier poems and reveals the difficulty that she had in making up her mind to answer the call of Christ. In a poem called "Apocalyptic" the speaker looks down on a hillside and thinks to herself:

---it would be clumsy walking (after climbing
The new wire fence) to go down there
And why should courage be hailing you to go
Because it is muddy and March⁹⁵

As Redekop points out "The whole passage suggests resistance to some kind of unexplained and mysterious demand for an act of will."⁹⁶ He suggests that a similar kind of feeling perhaps a bit more "menacingly described" is present in the following lines of "Watershed."

You know what you know in your heart
 But there is no traffic in that direction,
 only acres of stained quicksand

That you see as you walk assuming the earth your floor
 Though you know in your heart that the foot-hold really
 is gone.⁹⁷

The speaker seems to be telling herself that she knows what she must do but that it is difficult. To follow Christ in this modern world is indeed to walk against the flow of traffic. But she is certain in her heart that "The simple penetrating force of love/ Redeemed me,"⁹⁸ and that for her to ignore that call would be to walk in the world without foothold.

The problem that she faces in these poems is the same that faced Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins during their lifetimes. The call of the world is very strong, almost as strong as the call of the spirit. As I mentioned earlier in the first chapter, the decision to dedicate one's life and work to God is not one made lightly. It demands total submission of personal will to that of God or as Hopkins would put it "an emptying of self." Avison, like Herbert, Hopkins and Vaughan realized that the object of her searching had always been to share in infinity. The way to that sharing is Christ, the "I Am." One must accept Christ's invitation and that is what the speaker does in "Searching and Sounding" when like a tired child she turns to God, submitting herself to his will and asks to be touched by "the little light I can bear now, to mirror."⁹⁹

In conclusion, as one reads the poetry of Herbert, Vaughan, Hopkins and Avison one becomes aware of a pattern of intellectual and spiritual searching. Doubt and anxiety are also expressed in these poems, perhaps, in part due to the fact that all four lived their lives in periods of cultural, social and political chaos. All four experienced in their

lives the need for something in which they could believe and trust. And all four were certain that Christ had called them in a special way. As a result all found themselves increasingly aware of spiritual values in everyday life. This led them to inquiries concerning the nature of the God-man relationship and more particularly their own relationship to Christ. The progression of this inquiry is revealed in their writings and their poetry is metaphysical not only because it expresses a particular Christian philosophy but also because these poems are the visible record of their attempts to circumscribe their relationship to the ultimate reality that is God.

CHAPTER THREE

A METAPHYSICAL STATE OF MIND

As I began this thesis I tried to define the terms metaphysics and metaphysical as well as provide a historical description of metaphysical poetry. I also discussed the relationships existing between the meditative style and metaphysical poetry as well as that which exists between poetry and prayer. My study of the similarities and differences between these revealed that intense intellectual effort somehow catalyzed by sense-stimulation sometimes results in a "mental leap" or moment of illumination. In such instances the present experience is linked by associative memory to that of experiences past. It was shown that the individual's reaction to this experience could be as varied as the individual himself. Some persons having experienced such a moment of truth would seek to describe, analyze, and express their affective evaluation of it. The result would sometimes be poetry and sometimes, prayer. For a few, very privileged individuals the result would be metaphysical poetry.

Since Herbert, Vaughan, Hopkins and Avison lived in very different periods in history I felt that before investigating their personal philosophies that it might be worth while to examine the historical influences that helped shape their lives. I attempted to provide sufficient background and biographical information on Herbert, Vaughan and Avison to compare and contrast the periods that produced them. In doing so I found that remarkable similarities existed between the periods

in question. Moreover, the results of my study were in accord with the observations of Raiziss that periods of rapid change and social unrest are conducive to the production of metaphysical poetry.¹ The implications were that such periods produced in the minds of men a typical state or tendency of mind. This state of mind was the result of a progression from doubt to anxiety to intellectual and spiritual search. The fruit of this search was often enough a philosophical conception of the God-man relationship. It was this philosophy and the poets' efforts to circumscribe it that inspired metaphysical poetry.

In this chapter we will be examining the poems of Herbert, Vaughan, and Hopkins in an attempt to understand their personal view of man's place in the world and of their own relationship to God. Perhaps in doing so we will come to understand why they write as they do, and the part that they feel their poetry plays in the divine plan. It was originally my intention to discuss the matter of stylistic techniques and theme in a completely separate section of this study. However, I found that it was impossible for me to discuss how a poet's writings reveal his personal philosophy without entering into a discussion of themes and the manner in which those themes are expressed. We will, therefore, begin our study of the personal philosophies of Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins by discussing their religious background and attitudes. We will then examine some of their poems and analyse them in an attempt to develop a fairly accurate picture of how their minds worked and what they believed in.

We already know that George Herbert was a man of singular talent, well born, with friends in high places. His worldly ambitions were dashed by a series of untimely deaths. It was only after a fairly long

period of introspection and re-evaluation that Herbert decided to become an ordained minister. Whatever the reason may have been for Herbert to have delayed taking on the duties of a priest, the record of the last three years of Herbert's life spent at Bemerton after his ordination, as well as the testimony afforded by the poems in The Temple, speak eloquently to us of Herbert's final acceptance to subordinate his own will to that of his Creator and of the great comfort that he derived from doing so. I feel that Herbert's ultimate decision to embrace wholeheartedly the life of a country parson did indeed originate in his desire to submit entirely to that which he believed his Master required of him. To suggest, as some critics do, that Herbert's decision to pursue an entirely spiritual career was due to his lack or loss of opportunities to pursue any other is to somehow lessen the value and importance of his final decision and to suggest that it arose from chance rather than choice.²

To understand the importance of Herbert's choice and the intensity of his emotional involvement, it is not enough to know only the historical facts. One has to also understand the religious attitudes of this period and the importance of its traditions. Essentially Herbert's upbringing had been Calvinist and for the Calvinists "God was infinite, Omnipotent Will, separating the saved from the damned by an absolute fiat, from which there was no appeal."³ This ^{is the God} "Who gives to Man, as He sees fit Salvation."⁴ Yet in Herbert's poetry we find that for the most part he addresses a God of love, not a God of wrath or even justice. In "The Call" he sings the praises of this God in lines such as these:

Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart:
 Such a Joy, as none can move:
 Such a Love, as none can part:
 Such a Heart, as joyes in love.⁵

Renaissance literature was generally expected to mirror nature. In fact Summers indicates that in the seventeenth century many people believed that "God's creation was second only to His word as a source of truth and enlightenment"⁶ and that "the poet's duty was to perceive and to communicate God's form."⁷ Add to this the belief that "one of poetry's greatest potential values was that God could employ it as a means through which man might perceive the relationship between Nature and God's word"⁸ and you have a situation in which the poet is presented as an interpreter of nature for the common man. Needless to say this interpretation will vary with the poet.

Herbert's attention to form in his poetry could arise from such an understanding of his role as a poet. However, it was most certainly influenced by the belief that poetry should attempt to be as perfect in its proportions as nature itself was. Moreover, as Helen White notes in The Metaphysical Poets, Herbert was "basically a churchman in the sense that the regulations, the forms, the accumulations and customs of the Church are a source of inspiration, of spiritual extension and revival for him."⁹ The framework of man's spiritual life was the Church and it did not limit that life but rather encouraged and enhanced the reader's spiritual life. In fact Herbert's attitude, as Summers suggests, was that "the ultimate method of reflecting God's glory was the creation of a work of decency and order, a work of beauty, whether a church, an ordered poem or an ordered life."¹⁰

His poetry reveals a manner of reading life that represents an inheritance of centuries of tradition. For example, Herbert's use of imagery in his poetry reflects the general assumption of many people of

that era that "sensible images 'shadowed' intellectual or divine conceptions, in the present as well as in the past."¹¹ At that time many men believed that not only was God present in nature and his perfection reflected in poetry, but an image such as that of the grape in the wine press or even the flower in nature was believed to be related to a spiritual reality.¹²

Nothing in nature was accidental. Herbert, himself, saw God's immanence in nature somewhat in the character of a semiotic system. All was pre-ordained by God and hence significant. The emblematic quality of Herbert's work with its "insistence on interrelations of spiritual reality, the symbol, the word and the explanation" echoes this mentality.¹³ This is particularly noticeable in poems such as "Easter Wings" where the symbolic representation involves more than one sense and the desired effect was that of a "recognition of the hieroglyphic nature of the universe."¹⁴

To sum up what has already been said, Herbert seems to have believed in an immanent all-powerful God whose power and beauty was not only reflected in nature but also in poetry, liturgical structures and church tradition. His God was one who loved man and who demanded only that man love Him above all other considerations. The purpose of man's existence was to know God and what Herbert sought was "to know God at once here and now in that world of intimacy in which the bounds between here and there, and then and now, disappear."¹⁵ It was the uneven texture of this consciousness of the presence of God that we find mirrored in certain of his poems where the joy and peace seem to have ^{acceded} to anguish, loneliness and alienation.¹⁶ He almost touches the depths of despair but not quite. Always at the end of the poem or in the next one or the one after that, the "straight" line of life is re-established

between Herbert and his Master.

The Temple was completed in the three short years before his death, but many critics believe that most of the poems were written before Bemerton. Actually, it is impossible to date them since he worked on them continually, forever rewriting and improving them. To some the anguish recorded in these poems seems to have the quality of an experience remembered and reacted rather than one that is being recorded as it is experienced. This effect may be due to the effort of rewriting and reworking poems which had been written at an earlier period in his life or it could be the result of a deliberate effort on the part of the author to withdraw his own personality or ego from the work in order that it might more perfectly represent the spiritual quest of any Christian in search of his God.¹⁶

Although Herbert tells us that the poems are intended to be "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master,"¹⁸ some critics place more emphasis on the therapeutic value of his work by claiming that his poetry was his "only refuge from mental anguish and uncertainty, one area in his disordered life where he could impose order."¹⁹ Once again I feel that this attitude downplays what Herbert is telling us about himself. I agree that his poetry must surely have been a solace to this educated man in what amounted to a literary exile in Bemerton, but I disagree that it must indicate desire for control on his part. Moreover, to claim that poetry was his only source of comfort is to deny the pleasure afforded him by music, gardening, and family life. More important, it is to deny him the satisfaction of his "employment" and

his self-acknowledged peace in the service of God.

Vaughan was almost a contemporary of Herbert's and, as we know, produced his sacred verse between the years 1648 to 1655.²⁰ The period was obviously one of crisis for him - intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. There seems to be some evidence to support the belief that he had suffered ill health and possibly even a mental breakdown. Death had touched him personally and he had been profoundly impressed by the example of both Herbert's life and his poetry.²¹ In his preface to Silex Scintillans, he praises Herbert to whom he attributes his "conversion" and addresses his readers personally telling them that his life has been spared by God and that he will now use the life which has been returned to him to glorify God. He expresses the pious hope that his poems will be "as useful now in publick, as it hath been to me in private."²²

It might be useful at this point to try to understand the nature of Vaughan's religious beliefs and how they compared with those of Herbert. Vaughan, like Herbert, was a "determined churchman" and felt that ecclesiastical structures and tradition were important.²³ However, they do not seem to have fired the imagination of Vaughan as they did that of Herbert. Perhaps this was because the church was virtually in ruins at the time that he wrote Silex Scintillans. Vaughan appears to have been a less tolerant man than Herbert who seems a model of tolerance in an age when such attitudes were exceptionally rare.²² He also seems to have been considerably more austere. Blunden tells us that Vaughan is "intolerant of any common gaiety"²⁵ and considers music "lascivious." Herbert, on the other hand, seemed to greatly enjoy music, particularly in the company of friends. Both men believed in predestination of the elect,

but their attitudes towards Christ appear to differ sharply.

Barbara Kiefer Lewalski advances the opinion that Vaughan was a man who saw the role of Christ as that of the mediator through whom he could be restored to a lost knowledge of God. She suggests that Vaughan sees traces of God's light everywhere but that he does not relate to Him as a person. He shows little interest in the human aspect of Christ. She tells us that he "longs for a relationship yet to come."²⁶ Herbert, she feels, has found in Christ a man, a friend ^{^ as well as} a person to meet in a relationship.²⁷ This hypothesis is supported by the fact that The Temple appears to have the form of a quest achieved whereas that of Vaughan, Silex Scintillans, has the form of a pilgrimage.

Strangely enough it is Vaughan and not Herbert who is most often described as having suggested in his poems moments of mystical transcendence.²⁸ I do not think that there is any contradiction inherent in this situation. First of all, critics have difficulty in defining this apparent mysticism. Very often in Vaughan's poems it seems to be related to a type of primitive religious experience that is primarily intellectual and emotional rather than dogmatic. Helen White calls it a sense of the numinous and suggests that it may co-exist with different forms of religious consciousness and colour them.²⁹

There is little to suggest that Herbert ever experienced this sense of the numinous, but much to indicate that Vaughan may have. This primitive emotional state married to his Christian faith could very well have been responsible for those moments of "restless, pure desire and longing" which he describes in "The Starre" and for his vision of dead friends "all gone into the world of light" as portrayed in the poem

"Ascension-Hymn." Very likely this emotional awareness had been his since childhood and perhaps his consuming preoccupation with childhood had its origin in the experience. Indeed, many of us have this innate sense at that impressionable age, but lose it as we mature and become as it were logical and reasoned. The fact that many critics feel that Vaughan's best work is that which appears to proceed by "intuitive association" of a number of often eclectic elements producing the effect of a world of continual and marked contrasts between the near and far, the earthly and the other worldly appears to support the belief that a sense of the numinous was part of the Vaughan experience.³⁰

This in no way lessens the importance of Vaughan's "conversion" or his religious convictions. In fact, it renders them more personal and emotionally charged. Vaughan had probably always led a Christian life but as a result of his "conversion" he concentrated his energies, which up to that time had been diffused on a variety of worldly occupations, onto his poetry. The result was for the most part made up of better poetry than he had ever written before. James D. Simmonds in Masques of God suggests that "the sacred verse and prose treatises which poured from his pen between 1648 and 1655 all had the same pastoral purpose: 'to turn many to righteousness.'³¹ The troubled soul and mind of Vaughan must have derived an immense sense of relief, both moral and spiritual, from writing these poems. His world and church in ruins, he must have suffered intense frustration. His writings permitted him an outlet for this pent-up emotion by allowing him to do something about the situation that so troubled him. His writing helped fill the void left by the suppressed Church in Wales, and this must surely have afforded him a measure of satisfaction.

The first edition of Silex Scintillans appeared in 1650 with the larger second edition containing Part II being published only in 1655. Silex Scintillans Part I presents us with Vaughan's struggle for "assured faith and salvation".³² Vaughan develops his themes in such a manner as to show us the speaker's earlier experiences as a Christian pilgrim. We are shown his awareness of the fallen character of the world, the deliberate blindness and apathy of man, his childhood experience of God's calling him, election, the beginning of his spiritual regeneration, death, the intrinsic value of affliction to spiritual life, and his own shortcomings.³³ Part II deals with the same characteristic themes, but they are treated differently. The mood is calmer and more assured and this is particularly noticeable in his treatment of certain themes. Blunden concludes from this that Vaughan has discovered true joy and a serener, more balanced attitude, and as a result one finds a "slight shift from preoccupation with his own spiritual condition to that of mankind in general." He expresses the opinion that the ~~poems~~ poems in Part II reveal a "more evident spirit of humility and submissiveness."³⁴ Pettet seems to agree with him for she remarks that in Part II one may notice what seems to be a "turning away from thought about religion to a simple even child-like affirmation of faith."³⁵

Vaughan, like Herbert, draws on the same sources for his poetry: biblical models and language, typology, emblems and meditations, but he uses them differently.³⁶ In this section of our study we will be examining influences of each writer. Obviously, one cannot read Silex Scintillans without realizing the extent of Herbert's influence on Vaughan. It is present in the dedication, borrowed titles, words, lines, techniques,

and even themes. "The Wreath" by Vaughan was obviously inspired by "The Wreath" by Herbert. It is in fact only ^{one} of twenty six titles which Vaughan appropriated from The Temple, and this is not to mention many others that tell of Herbert's more subtle influence. Yet when the two poems are placed side by side one is dumbfounded less by the similarities than by the differences between the two works.

Both men raise their voices in prayer. There can be no doubt that both poems are really prayers. But what a difference! Herbert's poem is a carefully plaited circular structure with each end line reaching out through the rhetorical device of repetition of an end phrase to the beginning of the next line. The tightly structured verse asks God to bless and assist the speaker so that he can make of his very life "a crown of praise." This verse mirrors Herbert's concern for appropriate form and structure in all things, whether they be a poem or a man's life. We find again in this poem, as in other Herbert poems, the theme of quest achieved. Although, Herbert asks God to "give me simplicitie, that I may know, thy wayes, know them and practice them," he seems sure of the answer he will receive. There is little indication that he is doubtful or anxious about it. Perhaps this is because this is the third last poem in the collection and it reflects the assurance of the mature Christian.

The relationship of the speaker to his God is typical of Herbert. It is situated in the here-and-now but reaches out to infinity. Perhaps one could even see in the circular shape of the wreath a symbol of eternity. The circle like eternity has no beginning and no end. It appears to describe a relationship between a good master and his servant or a kindly father to his child. The overwhelming emotion is love and the

desire to please. The purpose of the poem appears to be not one of self expression, but of the praise of God.

Herbert, as is characteristic of him, draws his inspiration from the liturgy and church tradition as well as from his own experience. The wreath of "crooked winding wayes" that Herbert wishes to replace represents not only his own life but the crown of thorns which Christ wore on Calvary, and it is the symbol of the sins of man whose guilt He bore for us. Vaughan, on the other hand, not only draws his inspiration from Herbert's poem and church tradition but also from his own personal spiritual crusade to achieve assurance of salvation.

Vaughan's "The Wreath" is a looser structure written in three stanzas. The first two have a simple ab ab cd cd rhyme scheme and consist of alternating eight syllable lines. In these stanzas the speaker tells of how in the past he had not always derived the maximum benefit from "storms" or afflictions and he, therefore, feels that there is really little in his youth worth offering God. Christ wore thorns, symbols of sin and purgation, tribulations and grief, not roses as the Muses were reputed to wear. To draw only on the poetic skills practiced in his youth or on his then unregenerate awareness of God to create a poem to honour Him would be vastly inappropriate.

In the third stanza we find a series of eight syllable lines but the rhyme scheme is a little looser and we find the poet making use of consonantal chime in rhymes such as "bears" and "tears". He makes use of antithesis in this poem as well. One such example would be his use of flowers/thorns in the first part of this poem. In this stanza Vaughan makes use of Herbert's weaving technique, echoing an end phrase at the beginning of the following line, but he does not do it as consistently as

Herbert does. As a result his poem or at least the second part of it is circular, but more loosely woven.

From the plant imagery in the first stanza we are introduced to the dew-tears of Christ, water of life imagery of the second stanza. This type of image cluster-plant/water/face of God or sun is generally associated with the theme of pilgrimage in Vaughan's work and this poem is no exception. In this stanza Vaughan speaks to his God and tells him that he brings not a poem to honour him but a wreath of "grief and praise" a prayer in other words. However, his prayer is really a petition. He begs the "quickenning breath" of God, the Holy Spirit which he first sought at the end of his first poem "Regeneration." However, in "The Wreath" we do not find the anxiety or urgency expressed in many of his poems between the first and this one. The poet speaks of his yearning to achieve a relationship where he with "cloudless Quires" will sing "without tears" and "see thy face." For Vaughan the object of the pilgrimage, this closer relationship with God is yet to come, but the fact that his "twin'd wreath of grief and praise" is "Shining with joy" suggests that he too has achieved the plateau of the mature Christian assurance.

In our examination of "The Wreath" by Herbert and "The Wreath" by Vaughan, we have observed that Herbert's poem was a perfect hieroglyph. Vaughan's is looser and only the second part can be called circular in form. The images in Herbert's poem are all developed in such a manner as to construct one central emblem. The images in Vaughan's flow before the mind's eye dredging up memories and associations teasing the intellect to seek comprehension. The key to understanding the difference in the techniques of these two men seems to lie in their individual personalities

as formed by their background, upbringing, and cultural heritage. However, the key to understanding how Vaughan inspired by Herbert's "The Wreath" could have produced so different a poem of his own lies perhaps in their conception of God and their own relationships to Him. We find these attitudes crystallized in each of these poems. Herbert speaks to God as if he were his intimate friend and good master, confidently, the way a child speaks to his father. In the other, Vaughan addresses Christ, the mediator from his knees as a penitent and supplicant.

This manner of viewing the relationship of these two men vis-a-vis their God is psychologically sound. Freud tells us that:

The distinction between identification of the ego with an object and the replacement of the ego with an object finds an interesting illustration in the Christian Church. The Christian takes his superior Christ as his ideal while he identifies with his equals---. However, he is further required to identify himself with Christ and love all other Christians as Christ loved them. One can be a good Christian and yet be far from the idea of putting oneself in Christ's place of having like him an all-embracing love for mankind. One need not think oneself capable, weak mortal that one is --of the Saviours largeness of soul and strength of love.³⁷

I am inclined to think that the latter describes the situation of Vaughan, while Herbert's work and life suggest that his own struggle was to achieve that higher ethical level resulting from an identification with his Master. Vaughan took Christ as his ideal and identified with his fellow Christians, but he does not seem to have even considered attempting an identification with his Saviour.

In this aspect of his religious development Hopkins resembles Herbert more than he does Vaughan. Both Herbert and Hopkins, it seems, heard the call of Christ to "Come follow me" and ultimately both did. For each the journey was fraught with difficulty and the struggle basically

lay with their own human frailties. Both men found themselves torn between the attractions of the world and the spirit. Herbert found it difficult to deny his ambitions in the world and Hopkins found that "the higher and more attractive parts of the art put a strain upon passions which I should think it unsafe to encounter."³⁸ He therefore felt it wise to deny his first ambition toward a career in art and poetry. The poem "The Habit of Perfection" written in 1866 tells of Hopkins' desire to become a priest but tells it in such a manner that one finds exposed in its lines the twice-torn soul of Hopkins—a man who was both poet and ascetic. It is noteworthy that during his Oxford period Hopkins' "religious consciousness restrained him from composition"³⁹ and yet his religious pieces are his best works. As McKenzie points out "His new devotion to God brought to a climax the old conflict between his desire for the austere way of a saint and his natural immersion in beauty and poetry. His asceticism was not something imposed by his vows of obedience as a Jesuit."⁴⁰ Hopkins felt the attractions of poetry to be so strong that he believed that "they could interfere with my state and vocation."⁴¹ Though poetry was not inherently bad in itself he felt its attractions to be potentially dangerous since it could distract him from his primary task in the service of God and so "waste time."

As Mariani points out in his introduction to A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins that for "Hopkins life was a continuous substantial progress toward perfection. He believed this, he lived this, this what he wrote."⁴² Hopkins felt that Christ through the incarnation emptied or exhausted himself of godhead and humbled himself to death. He saw in Christ's "holding of himself back, and not snatching at the trust and highest good, the good that was his right" an example for

all men.⁴³ He thus chose to imitate Christ as much as possible in this and as Mariani points out "It is this holding back on Hopkins' part, this attempt to forcefully empty himself of himself, in imitation of Christ, this constant struggle to become more like Christ, that explains Hopkins' actions, including the creation of his poetry."⁴⁴ In this he greatly resembles Herbert whose influence on Hopkins is undeniable in a poem such as "Barn Floor and Wine Press" and whose influence was one of Hopkins' strongest ties to the Anglican Church.

While it is possible to a certain extent to trace Herbert's spiritual development through his writings, it is impossible to do the same for Hopkins since the very source of his inspiration in the beginning prevented him from writing. What's more, he was a perfectionist, a man who would pursue detail to the exclusion of the whole.⁴⁵ This was as true in the writing of his sermons as it was in the creation of his pencil sketches. Moreover, he was crippled by an overpowering desire for completeness.⁴⁶ These qualities rendered sterile his efforts to write books and hampered his general usefulness in everyday life.⁴⁷ When it came to poetry, he preferred to leave ^{poems} unfinished rather than produce work that he considered Parnassian, the uninspired competent second best of a true poet.⁴⁸ All of the above contributed to a literary effort that Hopkins could describe with some element of truth as "all scaffolding."⁴⁹ Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish in Hopkins' poems certain qualities or differences depending on the period in which they are written. In fact, Mariani points out that Hopkins' poems reveal at least three essential rhythms. The first is found in his juvenalia. Mariani describes these as "a conventional strain which often captures the wavelike

tensions of Hopkins' conversion."⁵⁰ The second rhythm pattern predominates in the period from 1876 to 1883. These are excited rhythms and ecstatic climaxes. It is "a poetry of double vision of the spiritual inhering in the physical."⁵¹ Finally, one finds the "often harsh, weary, or quiet rhythms of the poems of 1885-1889, poems which for the most part turn on the struggle within and the activity of Christ in the self."⁵² Among these are the so-called Sonnets of Desolation and they sprang from the period he spent in Ireland. Five years later he would speak of this period in the following despondent manner:

I do not waver in my allegiance, I never have since my conversion to the Church. The question is how I advance the side I serve on. This may be inwardly or outwardly. Outwardly I often think I am employed to do what is of little or no use... The Catholic Church in Ireland and the Irish Province in it and our College in that are greatly given over to a partly unlawful cause, promoted by partly unlawful cause, promoted by partly unlawful means, and against my will my pains, laborious and distasteful, like prisoners made to serve the enemies' gunners, go to help this cause.... I was continuing this train of thought this evening when I began to enter on that course of loathing and hopelessness which I have so often felt before, which made me fear madness and led me to give up the practice of meditation except, as now, in retreat and here it is again. I could therefore do no more than repeat Justus es, Domine, et rectum judicium tuum and the like, and then being tired I nodded and woke with a start. What is my wretched life? Five wasted years almost have passed in Ireland. I am ashamed of the little I have done, of my waste of time, although my helplessness and weakness is such that I could hardly do otherwise. And yet the Wise Man warns us against excusing ourselves in that fashion. I cannot then be excused; but what is life without aim, without spur, without help? All my undertakings miscarry: I am like a straining eunuch, I wish then for death: yet if I died now I should die imperfect, no master of myself, and that is the worst failure of all. O my God, look down on me.⁵³

Father Devlin remarks of Hopkins that, despite physical, mental and spiritual deterioration, his will, "always turned him towards his high goal, the pursuit of perfection, and he trod the path of duty with determination."⁵⁴ This was a man's intent on living his life in imitation of his saviour. He would be faithful despite all hardships. "Religion for him" as Gardner points out "was the total reaction of the whole man to the whole of life."⁵⁵

Hopkins burned all the finished verse that he had written when he became a Jesuit and decided not to write any more unless asked to by his superiors. Then in December of 1875 five Franciscan nuns were drowned while sailing in the Deutschland into exile. They left ~~Germany~~ to escape a generalized persecution of religious orders there. This incident left Hopkins much moved. When he spoke to his superior about it, his superior expressed the wish that "someone would write a poem on the subject."⁵⁶ Hopkins informs us that "on this hint I set to work and though my hand was out at first, produced one. I had long had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm which now realised on paper."⁵⁷ The result of this effort was "The Wreck of the Deutschland."

In A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Mariani provides us with a structural and descriptive analysis of the poem far more detailed and accurate than any that I could produce. It is, however, quite long. I have, therefore, decided to include herein only his general structural description of the work. However, I will provide a paraphrased version of his stanza-by-stanza analysis along with comments of my own a little later in this study.

Hopkins called the Deutschland an ode and also suggested its affinities with Pindar, but it does not have the strophe-antistrophe-epode stanzaic movement of the Pindaric ode. It is like the later odes of Keats in employing a fixed stanzaic pattern throughout, a pattern which Hopkins apparently developed himself. The stanzas are eight lines long and use the rhyme scheme ababcbca, a pattern which returns on itself. The lines are in sprung rhythm; the stress pattern in Part the First is 2-3-4-3-5-5-4-6. There is an extra stress in the first line of each stanza in Part the Second. The stresses, properly read, emphasize the meaning. In a note to the poem Hopkins asks his readers to "let the stress be made to fetch out both the strength of the syllables and the meaning and feeling of the words.

The Deutschland is divided into two unequal parts: the first ~~part~~ has ten stanzas, the second twenty-five, so that the poem has a neat ratio of 2 to 5. Part the First is autobiographical. It recalls an actual time when the speaker himself was pushed under the great stress of God to acknowledge His mastery. Part the Second moves outward from the self to the objective world of the moment of the shipwreck, when the nun was also confronted with God's awesome power and likewise acknowledged His mastery. The conclusion turns to England itself with the prayer that she too may acknowledge God. We have a general movement, then, from the self to another to a community, but the larger framework is God Himself, the first word ("Thou") and the last word ("Lord") of the poem, the alpha and the omega.⁵⁸

Northrop Frye once remarked that every good lyrical poet has a certain structure as typical of him as his handwriting held together by certain recurring metaphors, and that sooner or later he will produce one or more poems that seem to be at the center of that structure.⁵⁹ In the context of Hopkins' work "The Wreck of the Deutschland" seems to be just such a poem. As I mentioned before the description of this poem which I am providing at present is heavily indebted to that provided by Mariani in his A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins. It is essentially a summary of his stanza by stanza analysis of the poem somewhat coloured by my own reading of it. As the first stanza begins the

speaker addresses God as master of all creation and sees his presence here in the events of the shipwreck. The speaker likens himself to the ship and the sea to God. The speaker's heart is both sustained and buffeted by God as the ship is by the sea. He recalls that it was only when he felt completely helpless and frightened -- like a child -- that he acknowledged God's mastery of himself. He tells of how he fled the justice of God to escape to the love of God and that in doing so he "had grown, spiraled upward from the prescient grace of an awareness of the need for God to the grace of fully accepting Him, of wanting Him."⁶¹

The speaker then presents an image of himself as sand in an hourglass constantly drifting towards death and darkness -- away from God. He then speaks of himself sustained and kept constant by the water of life -- Christ's gift -- grace. The poet reiterates, in the fifth stanza, his acknowledgement of God's presence "under the world's splendor and wonder."⁶²

He points out that the Christ-centered nature of history is understood by only a few indicating that "the faithless misinterpret it altogether, and even the faithful waver in accepting the full implications of the Incarnation."⁶³ One reason that they misinterpret it is because the fact of the Incarnation is in itself overwhelming. As Mariani points out "men do not understand this unless they are driven to it by some powerful religious crisis of the heart"⁶⁴ or as he adds "unless the hart (heart) is hounded by the hunter Christ/Orion. Thus Hopkins suggests that men do not understand unless Christ pursues them and even then they tend to struggle against "the dawning of the light."

In summary, in the first part of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" Hopkins presents us with a number of very important ideas. The first is

that God is present - immanent - in nature and that one can find therein reflected, intellectual or divine conceptions, that are themselves, both in and beyond time. The second idea deals with the poet's paradoxical image of God who is both "winter and warm" to him. The third is related to the first two. God is really present in nature. All is foreordained. Therefore, everything that happens has meaning. God's will is revealed in all events - be they heart raising or heart rending. Events like the shipwreck in the poem or political and socio-economic crisis in society force man to lift his mind from everyday matters to thoughts of death and eternity. Vaughan called these storms or afflictions and felt like Hopkins that they were all part of the Divine plan.

Related to this idea that afflictions are but tools used by God to cause man to turn to Him is the image of Orion/Christ presented in "The Wreck of the Deutschland". In this poem, Hopkins alternately presents us with images of Christ as the hunter who harries his quarry, the human heart, (hart) unto himself, the husbandman who threshes the wheat (heart of man) to free him of the chaff and the blacksmith who works and tempers the metal. In all of these images Christ is portrayed as the pursuer or he that applies stress in order to prepare the heart of man to accept that which he offers - a sharing in eternal life. Thus in Hopkins' eyes the storm and wreck of the Deutschland were but tools used by God to drive the hearts of men like ships scudding over the waves to a heaven-haven. God is pursuer and protector - ~~justice~~ and love.

This view of afflictions is not unique to Hopkins. I have already mentioned that Vaughan held similar views. Herbert, too, expresses in his work a comparable vision of the role of Christ. In more than one

poem by Herbert, Christ is presented as a gardener who prunes man's heart that he may grow healthier and stronger. In more recent years, the Canadian poet, Margaret Avison presents in her poems images of Christ that echo those of these metaphysical poets to a remarkable degree. It seems that all four poets are of the opinion that Christ through the Incarnation does not stop at offering man to share in his life, but in fact pursues man to prepare his heart to accept that gift. Thus the stress experienced by these four poets during their everyday lives is seen by them as part of God's plan for their spiritual well-being. Actually, their interpretation of the facts can be considered a valid one. All lived in periods of turbulence and confusion. Periods of political, social and economic crisis, as Raiziss indicates in The Metaphysical Passion, challenge "the security of man's self-material and spiritual" and "the poet is repeatedly forced to remember death."⁶⁶ As he relates himself to his age and his age to history and history to time he finds himself face to face with infinity. In such an instant the question of the relationship between God and man and more particularly the role of Christ in all this looms large on the horizon and the soul goes in search of answers. As Mariani points out in his study of Hopkins' poems "It is only under great mental and physical stress that we are raised from our diurnal affairs to answer not only with our reasoning or esthetic faculties but with the whole man."⁶⁷ This would seem to indicate that Christ deliberately "stresses" us in order that we might turn to him and hear his invitation. That invitation is to live our lives in imitation of Christ, to give our all as He did for love, and this demands the efforts of the whole man.

It is interesting to note that "The Wreck of the Deutschland" echoes in its structure a very similar progression to that described by Raiziss in The Metaphysical Passion. Raiziss speaks of the poet in an era of unrest relating himself to his age, his age to history, history to time and finally coming face to face with infinity.⁶⁸ In Hopkins' masterpiece, the poem's structure seems to reveal these steps in the poet's own journey toward God. We find that the movement goes from the subjective and self in the first part of the poem to another in a larger community and finally to the infinitely larger framework that is God in the second part. Having, albeit briefly, considered the cardinal ideas presented in the first part of "The Wreck of the Deutschland", we will now turn our attention to the second part of the poem.

As before, the description that follows is basically a resumé of Mariani's work with a few liberties taken as a result of my own understanding of the poem.⁶⁹ The second part begins with death's song and the message that all are subject to him. The mood is thus set and the poet tells of the ship's sailing from Bremen with two hundred souls on board. He draws a parallel between the German state's isolation as a result of her rejection of religion and that of the ship as she sweeps into hostile waters. The ship goes aground in "a smother of sand" and like the speaker in the first part of the poem finds itself "helpless and at the mercy of other forces."⁷⁰ The atmosphere is wrenched with hopelessness and futile activity. A man tries to save some women on the decks but is killed. It is, Mariani points out, "a terrifying glimpse of what happens to those who rely on their own strength...even for good."⁷¹ Those on board struggle in the cold and lament. Then, suddenly we become aware of a woman calling out. The speaker tells us that "a

prophetess towered in the tumult"⁷² and he reveals his surprise that he knows what she said. Overwhelmed by emotion, he weeps. Focusing on the nun as she speaks, he provides a summary of her history. He associates the German state once again with the ship, The Deutschland, and is moved to ponder the fact that the city of Eisleben should have produced such different children as Martin Luther and St. ^{Gertrude.} This thought seems at first to be an aside and entirely ^{irrelevant}, but in reality it is entirely to the point, and reiterates the message of the sixth stanza. This stanza speaks of Christ's act of love riding time like "riding a river." This act of love is the Incarnation and Hopkins writes that the fact of the incarnation is hard to understand. He tells us that even "the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss."⁷³ He sees Luther as an example of the faithful who waver and finally fable and miss. He sees in St. Gertrude an example of faith and devotion.

Returning to his story, the speaker points out that these nuns were driven from their land because of their devotion and love. Mariani suggests that Hopkins is telling us that in their final extremity Christ/Orion is "weighing the true mettle of these souls simultaneously -- posing and steadying them."⁷⁴ The speaker's thoughts now turn to the sacred number five and St. Francis of Assisi who had a "Lovescape crucified in flesh" -- the stigmata. He describes the nuns as a "five leaved favour" for St. Francis to wear. The poet recalls that he was asleep as the nuns died calling on the name of Christ, and he asks the Holy Spirit to help him understand the nun's last words. A burst of praise is followed by the thought that men do not ask for greater suffering when faced with death. We find him now struggling to express his insight that "It is the

Master, Christ, IPSE, King, Head. It is Christ who had cast the nun into her extremity, this farthest reach, and it is Christ who comes to cure, to save her."⁷⁵ He goes so far as to say that what the nun actually saw that night was Christ coming to her physically walking the waves.

The twenty ninth and thirtieth stanzas speak of the nun and her final words, praising her for her single-minded devotion and understanding. He knows within himself that she understood, stood fast and became, as a result, a beacon showing others the way. Meditating on the fact that the nun's vision and death both took place on the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, he parallels Mary's giving birth to the Word - Incarnate to the nun's "heart throe" when, as Mariani indicates, "the word was conceived, nurtured and "uttered --- outright."⁷⁶ Christ, Hopkins observes, is reborn constantly in those who believe, love and are faithful.

As for the others lost that fateful day, he concludes that God's mercy and love is such that it was probably part of the divine plan that the nun act as a bell to "startle the poor sheep back" or as a "blown beacon" to guide them into a heaven-haven. God's mercy is born of love and goes beyond death and darkness to seek out "the lingerer". After his passion and death Christ harrowed hell for love of man and this is the "uttermost mark". Beyond this he cannot go. It is up to man to give the final yes or no. Men have a free will and can accept or refuse Love's invitation to sit and eat.

The second last stanza is a hymn of praise for Christ, the word incarnate, and the last begs the German nun to remember and intercede for us in heaven. The speaker then addresses Christ directly pleading that

he return "upon English souls" in "rare-dear Britain." As Mariani indicates in his analysis of the poem "the ode ends where it began focusing on God, but with fuller joy and praise at having understood ⁷⁸ the event."

My brief resumé of this poem has revealed to me that for Hopkins "the central fact of the World is the mystery of the Incarnation --- operative in time and space, in Hopkins' time as in Christ's, in Wales as in Galilee."⁷⁹ He believed that evidence of God's workings are to be found everywhere all around us. Sometimes it is fairly obvious and easy to see, other times less so. Sometimes we must work to "glean" Christ and no guarantee exists that we will succeed. As Mariani points out "it is finally Christ who must reveal himself, and we who should "bless" when we "understand."⁸⁰ For Hopkins, Christ is in and under the beauty of nature. This thought is central to his work. For Hopkins believes that the real presence of God exists in nature and is there for the person who searches.⁸¹ When this presence and the human heart meet, there is in that instant a moment of illumination, for a moment that soul has an inkling of infinity.

For Hopkins, however, these moments were ones of revelation. In nature he read philosophical, or more specifically, metaphysical concepts. He saw in the glories of nature "being" that was a reflection and sharing in the All-Being who is God. He believed that to fulfill one's distinctive nature was to give glory back to God who is its source.⁸² Birds, leaves and stones all praised God according to their nature. Man, however, is capable of actions having a super-natural dimension. Like the rest of creation he was put on this earth to offer praise and honour to God, but unlike the rest of creation he has an additional task that is related to the first one. Man must save his soul through his efforts to

glorify God. In seeking perfection, the highest good, the fulfillment of his own individuality, Hopkins believed that the person became a living temple of God. He became another Christ. In fact he felt that man was most perfect as an individual when he was "in all things conformed to Christ."⁸³ Believing this, Hopkins was overwhelmed by man's blindness in refusing to acknowledge his dependence on God. He saw man expending his God-given energies in futile endeavours to profit and glorify himself. He saw man "heir to his own selfbent so bound"⁸⁴ that could not see that he was destroying God's creation and limiting his own possibilities. In fact he believed that man had become so caught up ^{^ in} his small, grimy work-a-day world that his very range of vision had become "selfbent" and "bound" so that it took the stress of God to make him look up and realize his own limitations.

This poem, "The Wreck of the Deutschland" presents us with a fairly accurate picture of what Hopkins understood to be the individual roles of Christ and man in the God-Man relationship. Earlier in this study when Vaughan was discussed, it was remarked that he understood the role of Christ in the God-man relationship to be that of mediator. Vaughan saw traces, as was mentioned before, of God's light in all creation but he does not seem to have tried to relate to Christ as a person. He seemed to have little interest in the human aspect of Christ and he longed for a relationship yet to come. This attitude was reflected in the Vaughan poem which we examined earlier, "The Wreath". Herbert, on the other hand, seemed to have found in Christ, a man, a friend and a person to meet in a relationship. Once again it was an examination of the poet's work, in this case Herbert's "The Wreath", that revealed to us the poet's under-

standing of this great mystery. A comparison of the two poems in question also revealed to us the fact that although one was apparently inspired by the other and there existed certain stylistic and thematic similarities; there remained a very important difference between the two works. This essential difference was found to be one of attitude more than technique. The ideas that Vaughan ^{appears} to borrow are really only those that echo his own sensibility and these are "transmuted" into something rich and strange, and totally different from Herbert's by the quality of his own personal vision of the God-man relationship.

Hopkins, like Vaughan, saw traces of God's presence everywhere in nature. His world seems to have been more than a little touched by a sense of the numinous. However, unlike Vaughan, Hopkins saw the "real presence" of God in the world. In fact, this thought is central to the poem "The Wreck of the Deutschland". Like Vaughan, he seems to have viewed himself in the role of penitent and supplicant. On the other hand, he seems to have seen the relationship between God and man as that which exists between a good master and his servant. In this he echoes Herbert. Both see in Christ a man and the fact of the Incarnation is central to their lives. Both seek a relationship in the here and now that reaches out into infinity. In consequence it is worth noting that these three poems: Herbert's "The Wreath", Vaughan's "The Wreath" and Hopkins' "The Wreck of the Deutschland" all reveal a generally circular structure that begins and ends in God. This seems singularly appropriate since the circle is a symbol of infinity, and these poems find their inspiration in the poet's struggles to circumscribe the nature of the God-man relationship.

"The Wreck of the Deutschland", like Herbert's "The Wreath" and Vaughan's "The Wreath" is a metaphysical poem. These poems satisfy Grierson's definition for such poems not only because they find their source or inspiration in a particular philosophy of life, but also because they are a visible record of the poet's attempt to circumscribe that reality. They reveal a sort of "synthesis of past and present, the universal and the regional" all so arranged so that the "dissonant notes of experience" suddenly come together in a hauntingly unique manner. These poems permit the reader a brief glimpse of the experience or truth that first set the poet's heart to singing. The truth that was first revealed to these poets and in consequence that is related to us in their poems is the fact, in history and beyond, of the Incarnation. The melody they echo in their poems is that of Christ's ultimate song of love.

However, some critics feel that for a poem to appear to originate in even such a philosophy does not in itself mean that that poem is metaphysical. Joan Bennett in her "Introductory" to Four Metaphysical Poets insists that the word "'metaphysical' refers to style not subject matter."⁸⁵ However, she then adds "but style reflects an attitude to experience."⁸⁶ Raiziss expresses a similar but not identical view when she contends that "the metaphysical poet, whether prevailingly a romantic or a classicist, is distinguished by his methods rather than by his materials or attitudes to his materials."⁸⁷ Moreover, she contends that "Metaphysical poetry is not so much a category as a technique of expression applicable to special qualities of experience."⁸⁸

These remarks suggest that critics agree that a specific metaphysical style exists and that some critics feel that this style alone

characterizes the metaphysical poem. While this may be true to a certain extent, there exists a rather serious problem when it comes to delineating this elusive metaphysical style. Critics cannot seem to agree on what constitutes the metaphysical element. There are nonetheless a number of points upon which a majority can be found to agree.

The first is that metaphysical poetry attempts to reconcile opposing or discordant qualities.⁸⁹ This quality is sometimes referred to as "discordia concors". The resulting poetry is generally to some degree ambiguous. It often reveals a "vivid consciousness of contending simultaneous meanings".⁹⁰ It is characterized stylistically by the use of puns, certain types of metaphors, disjointed syntax whose meaning depends on punctuation, synesthesia and conflicts of meaning.⁹¹ Such poems, as I pointed out at the very beginning of this study, are often elusive, complicated and extremely intellectual. Oddly enough, they often have the power to move the reader deeply. Perhaps this is because in creating such poetry "the poet strives to conceptualize his sensations and materialize his concepts."⁹² As Raiziss indicates in The Metaphysical Passion "the arduousness of the task exercises the synesthetic faculty, the transmuting efficiency of metaphor and vocabulary, and the skill of fusing sensation with meaning."⁹³ The result is poetry that relates emotionally charged psychological experiences in concrete terms that themselves simulate in the reader a like reaction. It should come as no surprise that such poetry often has a dramatic effect on the reader and results in a lasting influence on that person's manner of perceiving reality. A study of literary history indicates that this can be especially true of poets.

It is a fact that Herbert's poetry influenced that of Vaughan and that many feel that Donne's influenced that of Herbert. The works of both Herbert and Vaughan were not unknown to Hopkins, whose work in turn was to influence many others. Not the least of those touched by the poetry of Hopkins was Margaret Avison who confides that "The Wreck of the Deutschland" moved me so the poem stayed in the headbone and reverberated there."⁹⁴ It seems almost as if a certain something in the poem struck a responsive chord in her being and she was able to "hear another's music." When one reads the poem "The Dumbfounding" from her collection The Dumbfounding one realizes immediately, if one is familiar with "The Wreck of the Deutschland", that her song has something of Hopkins' refrain in it. One might be inclined at first to shout influence or even imitation, but matters are not always as simple as they seem.

Influence is something very difficult to define. One can be aware of the influence of others on one's thought and style without ever believing that one "writes like" someone. While Avison admits influence on her work and thought from sources as diverse as E.E. Cummings, The Pearl Poet, Piers Plowman, Bunyan, Lampman, Donne, Border ballads and, more particularly, Eliot, she insists on the fact that "What is read stays in here and affects what one says oneself, but not by deliberation."⁹⁵ The logical conclusion to this, remark would be to observe that the so-called influence of Herbert, Vaughan, Hopkins and Eliot on the work of Avison is not a conscious mirroring of stylistic techniques but rather of a similar conception of reality.

In summary, it is my opinion that Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins all possessed a unique blend of sensibility and sensitivity that made them

more susceptible than most to the stresses of their particular environment. As a result they all experienced doubt, anxiety and a deep-rooted need for something stable in which they could believe and trust. This state of mind led them to intellectual and spiritual inquiry which ultimately brought them to God and to a Christ-centered vision of reality.

This metaphysical state of mind is revealed in their poetry through the use of certain more or less typical stylistic devices. These devices are used by these poets in such a manner as to re-create in the reader not only the psychological, emotional and spiritual impressions of the poet, but also the state of intellectual and spiritual inquiry that preceded the moment of inspiration that occasioned the poem. As a result such poetry can have a considerable effect on the reader particularly if the reader is a poet and already in possession of a similar sensibility and sensitivity. The reader may be unaware of the manner in which the influence of such poetry operates upon their consciousness, but cannot be unaware of its impact. We have already spoken of the impact that "The Wreck of Deutschland" had on Avison. I should like to add that Eliot, also well known for the metaphysical qualities of his work, had a similar effect on Avison. She tells us "T.S. Eliot was the first modern I found apart from school or courses ~~and~~ he hit me hard."⁹⁶ The fact that the work of another author can have that kind of effect on another seems to indicate in their reader a similar tendency of mind or at the very least a pre-disposition to it.

In consequence, when I link the works of Avison to those of the metaphysicals ~~and~~ Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins I am not trying to prove a direct and conscious influence of these poets upon the work of Avison.

Nor am I really interested in only proving that she uses techniques and themes similar to theirs. What I am really trying to do is show that her work reveals a tendency of mind similar to theirs. As I mentioned earlier, it is really this particular tendency of mind that is reflected in metaphysical poetry. Since the purpose of this thesis is to prove that Avison is a metaphysical poet and that her work does reveal this distinctive turn of mind, we will consecrate the entire next chapter to an examination of selected poems from her collection, The Dumbfounding.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

In an article entitled "The Poetry of Margaret Avison" published in Canadian Literature in Autumn of 1959, Milton Wilson stated that the idea of Avison as a "metaphysical poet, passionately concerned with contemporary science and theology and assimilating difficult chunks of them into her poems, has only a little to be said for it."¹ I first read the article some three years ago while working on a term paper and found that I most decidedly disagreed with Wilson. Immediately, in busy undergraduate fashion I set out to try and prove the critic wrong. My first step was obviously to try and define to my own satisfaction, at least, the terms metaphysical and metaphysical poetry. The task proved larger than I had first anticipated and my initial investigation grew and grew until it became the basis for my graduate thesis.

The results of that first stage of the investigation are contained in chapter one of Avison and the Metaphysicals. In that chapter I discussed the meaning of metaphysics—traditionally and historically. I also attempted to circumscribe the term metaphysical poetry. I considered the structure, stylistic techniques, and thought of metaphysical poetry and concluded that it reflects not only the philosophy, attitudes and state of mind of the poet but also tells much of the traditions and world that produced him. The metaphysical poet I found to be a full citizen of two worlds—the spiritual and the temporal, and his work, I felt, was on a plane somewhere between poetry and prayer.

In discussing the similarities and differences between the above, a question arose concerning the nature of what are sometimes called "moments of perception". My conclusion was that such moments are the result of sense stimulation and intense single-minded attention to an experience that unlocks the gates of memory and calls forth an associative pattern which links this experience with that of experiences past. The interpretation given this experience by the individual depended a great deal on **his** character, particular background and state of mind.

In the second stage of my investigation I consider the periods that produced the three metaphysical poets whose life and work I was to compare with that of Avison as well as that of Avison herself. My conclusion was that the periods in question were comparable in the sort of stresses that they placed on the individual and that, in fact, such periods of stress were and are likely to produce metaphysical poetry.

The third stage in my little endeavour presented me with a different sort of problem. In reality what I was trying to do here was to circumscribe what might well be called "a metaphysical state of mind." I began with a brief review, similar to this one, of what had gone before. I then discussed the religious background and poetry of Herbert and Vaughan before completing a detailed comparison of Herbert's "The Wreath" with Vaughan's "The Wreath". My observation was that the basic similarities in their work were due less to a conscious influence, although such influence is present, than they were a reflection of a similar mental state. The inherent differences, on the other hand, I felt were due to the difference in the manner each views the God-Christ-man relationship. A study of Hopkins' religious background and of his masterpiece, "The

Deutschland" revealed to me that his tendency of mind appeared to resemble that of the other two metaphysicals in a remarkable fashion. Moreover, even his view of the God-Christ-man relationship resembled that of Herbert and Vaughan although the resemblance was closer to that of the former than to that of the latter. I concluded that the three poems examined herein found their inspiration in the poet's struggle to circumscribe the nature of the God-Christ-man relationship. All were inspired by a traditional Christian philosophy of life and, according to Grierson's definition, can be considered metaphysical.

However, I was here confronted with a paradoxical situation. While I, myself, adhere to the school of thought that claims metaphysical poetry to be that which is inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe, I felt that there was more than a trace of truth in Bennett's remark that "metaphysical refers to style not subject matter"² and its corollary that "style reflects an attitude to experience."³ In consequence, I tried once more to analyze the characteristic qualities of metaphysical poetry more closely, and discovered that, more often than not, these qualities were the result of the poet's use of certain stylistic techniques. Metaphysical poetry is said to be poetry which attempts to reconcile opposing or discordant qualities, is by its nature ambiguous and which is, as Eliot described it, "the direct sensuous apprehension of thought."⁴ In such poetry the linking of discordant qualities is usually accomplished through the use of remote analogies such as one finds used in the metaphysical conceit. Ambiguity results directly from the use of intellectual wit or, if you prefer, urbanity that reveals itself in various forms of wordplay. These techniques used together with other devices

such as the ellipse, qualifying parenthetical remark, as well as natural diction and rhythm all work to suggest the natural thinking process. Moreover, their use tends to guide the reader along the same psychological pathways as the poet himself has already explored. I was led to agree with Duncan's observation that there was "no evidence that the metaphysicals attempted to give an exact poetic expression of a particular personal experience"⁵ but rather that "there was a growing interest in the kind of intimate personal statement that was written to communicate a deep universal meaning in a form that would move the reader to ~~adopt~~ the writer's point of view."⁶ This observation will play an important part in my analysis of Avison's work and in my defence of her as a metaphysical poet.

“ //

Now in this the last stage of Avison and the Metaphysicals I would like to examine certain Avison poems rather carefully in an attempt to decide whether it is possible to justify my own impression that Avison's work does find its inspiration in a traditional Christian philosophy of life such as that of Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins, does reveal the use of certain characteristic "metaphysical" techniques, and above all that the unique qualities of her work indicate that she does possess that elusive metaphysical tendency of mind.

Avison has already spoken to us of her moment of revelation and the manner in which it changed her life. We know that she reports that on January 4, 1963 the "Jesus of resurrection power"⁷ revealed himself to her and that as a result she suffered intense regret for the manner in which she felt she had, if not precisely dissipated, then misdirected her use of God's gifts. It was for her a most liberating experience. The liberation was one from doubt and anxiety. The poem "Person" can be seen

Avison

as the poetic record of this experience. In the first two lines of this poem we can recognize the "blurry, but adequate" portrait of God which Avison mentioned in her article "I wish I had known _____" ⁸ The next few lines tell how limitations born of the author's very humanity seem to bar her way. We are aware of a sense of claustrophobia and confusion as the Bible becomes increasingly opaque to her. We then find her blind - - spiritually lost in a dark night of the soul. Finally comes the glorious understanding of Christ, the Morning Star as Savior and "the captive in blindness finds the way - - passes through so drenched with Being - - draws near the Morning Star." ⁹

"The Swimmer's Moment", another Avison poem contained in the same collection of verse could be seen as yet another variation of this theme of search and salvation. The "Whirlpool" described in this poem can be seen to represent once more the dark night of the soul. It would coincide with the poet's struggle towards revelation, towards recognition of self and God. The "silver reaches of the estuary" ¹⁰ would refer to the understanding born of this experience of renewal. It appears that these two poems are variations on or different aspects of one central theme, the soul's search for truth the same search that Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins experienced. Moreover, one can little doubt Avison's sincerity. She "knows what she knows in her heart". ¹¹ The poems contained in The Dumbfounding bear eloquent testimony to this fact.

Even the briefest examination of the poem "The Dumbfounding" indicates to us that it is, inherently, a prayer, a credo. The subject matter it deals with lies safely within the metaphysical tradition. Avison writes about a subject which has troubled man since the dawn of

Christianity, namely the relationship between God-Christ and man. The speaker, representing all mankind, reveals the character of this relationship. The overall effect of the language is that of a dramatic monologue. In simple, almost biblical language and tone, the speaker addresses God-Christ who is somewhere beyond our range of vision. There is faith and fervent emotion expressed as the story of Christ's life and death is told. Then in the seventh stanza, although the speaker and person being addressed have not changed, we are suddenly transported from the shores of Galilee and the Crucifixion to a busy modern city. We are made poignantly aware of the cry from within present in our modern society. We search for new forms of self-discovery from Krishna to transcendental meditation and yet reject orthodoxy. We are brought to ponder the horror of humanity divorced from God and dying. In these lines of poetry Avison has portrayed quite accurately something that Raiziss has termed "a two-way reaction"¹² toward religion which she tells us occurs during periods of cultural and material chaos. The speaker then goes on to tell us how Jesus has come to cure us of our human weakness which is the source of our blindness and how he can give us the power to help others. The last two stanzas find the speaker following Christ through time and space to the edges of infinity. We have the impression of sharing in the omniscience of God and of viewing time and all of history as through God's eyes.

Attention next wanders to the title of the poem "The Dumbfounding" and how one might interpret it. My dictionary provided the following definition for the verb to dumbfound: to strike dumb, to confuse or confound. It can also mean to strike with amazement or to abash. It is, a most ambiguous title. That so many interpretations could be assigned

to it drew my attention to the fact that each word in the poem had obviously been selected with great care. Most words have many possible meanings, denotative and connotative. For example, let us examine some of the words in the very last stanza of the poem. The word "garden" evokes images of growth and metamorphosis. The sun's light becomes plant life just as God's light becomes spiritual life for man. The word garden suggests the "enclosed garden" from the "Song of Solomon" and a very important Christian treatment of the longing and redeemed soul. The term can also denote the garden of Eden with its suggestions of lost innocence and the promise of a Redeemer. It can also denote Gethsemene -- the agony in the garden -- the death of Christ and the prelude to our salvation. "Trash" can mean garbage, or then again it can refer to a worthless person. It makes one think of waste. "Rubble" is debris reduced by violent action. The image brought to mind is that of the passage of time and the rise and fall of civilizations. The "hill" appears to be Golgatha, the place of the skull, where Christ died for us. The 'outcast's outcast' is, of course, Christ. Many definitions were possible for "sounding". They were, giving forth a full sound, the act of testing depth, or even of discovering. The impression I first had on reading the poem was of Christ the fisherman sounding the darkness of infinity and the hearts of man. The words in this poem ^{have} the effect of creating a tapestry of images in continual transformation.

The stylistic techniques used by the poet next caught my attention. As I have already mentioned this poem seemed to have some the elements of the dramatic monologue, but it also had some of the characteristics of the ode. It had a lyrical, almost hymn-like quality. The subject was

serious and the style, if not precisely formal, was very dignified. Stanzas were irregular and there was no definite rhyme ^{scheme} although many words terminated on the same or similar consonants. The stanzas consisted of 4, 5 or 6 lines of uneven length. Sentences were open. The author made use of compound words; often they were joined by hyphens. Especially noticeable were "all-lovely" and "all-men's way". There was a feeling of gradual but continual forward movement. It was like watching the waves of the ocean, as they wash toward far distant shore. This effect lent itself well to the image of Christ sounding the depths which we mentioned earlier.

Avison's poems, in my opinion, have a decidedly metaphysical style. Like metaphysical poetry they make demands upon the reader and challenge him to make them out. They do not attempt to attract the lazy and those who succeed in deciphering them have a certain sense of being a privileged class. Margaret Avison has been accused of writing "cold-bloodedly complicated lines." Perhaps part of the reason for this is that Avison is a person such as Emerson described in *The Poet*. "She has a mind that has never ceased to explore the double meanings of every sensuous fact."¹³ She carries out this exploration, in part, through her poems. To achieve this end she uses words, but these words are often symbolic and intended to sound the depths of the reader's mind, dredging up fragments of half-knowledge, or perhaps even, as Avison would express it, images born of the "bone myths of civilization." Perhaps the best way to explore this avenue of thought would be to examine the other Avison poem, "In Epophyrial Harness" in detail. Since it is fairly short I have reproduced it below.

Hill-hoe
 till the liberal varnish, the
 daze-sun go
 down and the pin-
 flare-
 finish
 star-bright
 become alltoday, furnish
 us sun (eyes) (ice)¹⁴

The very title is enigmatic. The word "Eporphyrial" I was unable to find in any encyclopedia or dictionary. The word is thus a creation of Avison's. It appears to be derived from epopt and phyre. An epopt is one to whom all the secrets of any body of mysteries have been revealed. The word "epopt" itself finds its origin in the word "epi" meaning upon, and "op" which is a stem of "horaein" meaning see or look. Phyre refers to a combining form such as porphyritic rock. After careful consideration of the definitions, one immediately thinks of Christ to whom all mysteries were revealed and who was by his very nature both God and man - a combined form. The poet, too, as a human being created body and soul, is a combined form. The poet feels that Christ has revealed Himself to her in a particular way and that she now has a special understanding of the relationship between Christ and man. As an artist she may even see the world through different eyes than many other people. The word "Harness" in the title appears easier to define. A harness is a routine or obligation of business. Therefore, from the title I feel that one can reasonably conclude that this poem is about the task of the Christian and poet in this world.

One cannot help but be struck by the importance that the poet has given to each word or particle thereof. After having read a few of Avison's poems, I think that one is inclined to agree with Keith Harrison

when he says that Avison has "the sense of the word as an object and the concern that when making a poem or sentence, the right word matters overwhelmingly."¹⁵ I feel that I should add that this "sense of the word" is not necessarily a conscious procedure. Avison, in speaking of her work confided that "My part of getting a poem done is more by feel & smell than by conscious awareness of why things feel right."¹⁶ Keeping this and the previously mentioned points concerning Avison's use of language in mind, let us go on to examine the poem itself line by line.

The first line consists of one compounded word joined by a hyphen, Hill-hoe. This line gives the impression of forward movement and makes one think of a gardener tilling the soil to nurture young plants. This image of the gardener is found in yet another Avison poem "A Story" where the gardener is said to cast about a "star shine of seed." There is a feeling of climbing up a hill. One thinks of Golgotha - Christ's death - the Redemption. The word "till" in the next line reinforces the gardener image of the first line. The word "varnish" brings to mind the outward show or appearances of our life. One also thinks of furniture in this context. The third line is interesting. Daze can mean to stupefy or bewilder as by a gleam of light. It can be a pun on the word "days" and linked as it is with sun makes us think of Christ. The lines of this poem linked together as they are give an impression of the passage of time divided yet unbroken. The words get longer with each passing line. A pin is a small piercing instrument. To flare is to blaze with brilliant wavering light or to break with sudden and violent emotion. It can also mean to open and spread outward or even to signal information. To finish is to complete or to bring to the end. It is also the process of

perfecting something. The word "star bright" makes us think of light and Christ, the morning star such as referred to in the poem "Person". It also reiterates the image from "A Story" of the star shine of seed.

In the next line we find the word "alltoday". This is an example of something Bowering comments on in his "Avison's Imitation of Christ." He tells us that her favourite word or combining word is all, precisely as in alltoday.¹⁷ He suggests that her use of this stylistic device may result from her refusal to see a distance of the past with regards to the presence of Christ. The use of this compound does produce the impression of timelessness. Furnish makes one think of furniture again as did the words "varnish" and "finish". It also brings to mind the last verse of the first poem in the book The Dumbfounding entitled "Old-- Young-- " which reads "The last line is mahogany-rich," a "furnishing" and it refers in this poem to a sunset. The last line of "In Eporphyrial Harness" reads "us sun (eyes) ice." It is extremely cryptic. Sun is God, vision and understanding. Ice is a pun on eyes and is I think somehow related to an earlier poem in the book The Dumbfounding which ends with the following words "make shy our brutish, averted black-drinking, still-ice-splintered eyes" and which appears to refer to the willful blindness of man.

We notice in "In Eporphyrial Harness" as in "The Dumbfounding" that the images provoked by the words generate the rhythm of the poem. Free verse is used and this is appropriate to the reflective quality of the verse. Images flow into one another fleeting, illusory, reflecting the ephemeral quality of life as we know it compared to the "All-being" of Christ. There is synchronicity. Avison's poems seem to find their origin in each other, and images used by the author in one poem tend to reverberate throughout the volume. In "In Eporphyrial Harness" as in "The

"Dumbfounding" there are no rigid stanzas or rhyme schemes. Stanza structure is apparently deliberate somewhat in the manner of Herbert. Words are often compounded or joined with hyphens, a technique also sometimes used by Hopkins. Endings are ^{characteristically} open. Again the general impression is one of forward and upward movement. In both poems we have little sense of the physical landscape such as one finds in other Avison poems such as "The Absorbed" or "July Man". In both poems we find only one speaker, apparently the poet. In "In Eporphyrial Harness" I am a little unsure if one could honestly refer to the poet as the speaker because the whole poem is a lot like the disjointed, loosely-strung musings of the human mind as thoughts and ideas are bounced off the sounding board of individual experience. This quality, is one that many metaphysical poems possess¹⁸ and it has even been suggested that it can be the result of a deliberate effort on the part of the poet to guide the reader's pattern of thought.

In sum, in the poem "In Eporphyrial Harness" as in the poem "The Dumbfounding" I think that Avison is expressing the belief that as Christians here on earth our role is to struggle to see the truth beyond apparent reality until we are able to effect a "jail-break" with God's help and then his light will sift through to the boarded-up chambers of our heart. Man is referred to as "twice-torn" in this poem and so he is. The message is clear. Man does not wish to face the full meaning of the Incarnation. He hides his eyes, sometimes even refusing to admit that the light of Christ is real. He prefers to be blind rather than see his own sinfulness. He is twice torn by his yearning for the light of God and by his refusal to accept it and twice-born through Christ's act of Love.

Of course, I realize that with poetry as complicated and ambiguous as Avison's no interpretation can be considered final or all-inclusive. For example, I have provided my own interpretation for the title "In Eporphyrical Harness!" However, I realize that for a poem this enigmatic and cryptic another equally valid interpretation might well be found. Moreover, I feel that this does not run counter to the poet's intention. Avison has intimated to me that in my analysis of this poem I have explored her words away and beyond what she had "figured out" while writing the poem.¹⁹ She tells me that this kind of analysis is valid because the poet feels that "poetry-reading has to be also creating like this"²⁰ and that "poetry should unite this kind of exploring with credit to the explorer too."²¹ However, it is entirely likely that another reader's exploration might lead him along an entirely different route to a quite different interpretation of both the title and poem than mine. Be that as it may, it is my impression that most interpretations will bring the reader to an understanding of the importance of Christ in Avison's world.

Conrad once wrote that the task of the writer is "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel and before all to make you see."²² Margaret Avison appears to have taken this task for her own. A detailed study of her work reveals Avison as an individual acutely aware of physical stimuli and above all possessing an overwhelming sensibility; perhaps one could even call it a susceptibility. As one critic remarked, Avison is a poet who attempts to describe sensory or imaginative experiences that exist yet are almost impossible to isolate and identify. In Avison one finds a poet who through the use of language attempts to transcend the physical plane or perhaps bridge the spiritual

and physical world. In her poems she strives to conceptualize her sensations and materialize her concepts. In these poems the past and present, the universal and the regional, as well as the temporal and the infinite merge so arranging in a logical and acceptable pattern the dissonant notes of experience. This is apparent in the poem "The Dumbfounding" but remains true for later poems as well. Thus a poem such as "Janitor Working on Threshold" inspired by the sight of a workman repairing some broken stripping, becomes a song of joy for Christ's eternal presence in the world of man recalling as the poet tells us "the less than the least, John and the wings, and healing." She has apparently related herself to her age and her age to history and history to time. Instead of being overwhelmed by the insignificance of her own representative presence on the infinite plan, she is overwhelmed, dumbfounded at the realization that Christ became man, a mere mortal like herself, and died for herself and others. She is preoccupied and overwhelmed by the fact of the Incarnation, the life and death of Christ, and the vision of man in time yet able to transcend time. She expresses her wonder in these lines from "The Word".

The line we drew, you crossed,
and cross our, wholly forget,
at the faintest stirring of what
you know is love, is One
whose name has been, and is
and will be, the
I am.²³

Avison's poetry is thus a technique that she uses to render tangible a quality of experience that is of its nature intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. In this her work is very similar to that of other metaphysicals but especially Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins.

It is not my intention, however, to suggest that Avison forces her own perception of reality on the reader. On the contrary, she wants each and every one of us to realize that the individual imagination is all important. Avison believes that we must actively seek to see the world around us through new eyes. In "First" she declares that there are percentages beyond one hundred in the mathematics of God. It is therefore up to us as human beings to strive to use our sensate aptitudes and imaginative capacities to push beyond what we think ourselves capable of. Avison feels, as did Hopkins, that these limitations are often the result of our own willful blindness -- the efforts of "self-bent" man. Avison believes that it is our duty to strive to see the truth that lies beyond apparent reality. When the imagination acts as a catalyst fusing emotional and intellectual experience as well as memory, the result is the Optic heart and an entirely new perception of reality.

All this is very well, you might say, if this is what Avison believes what does she do about it? How does she see her role in the world as poet and Christian? First of all, Avison does not feel that her role as a poet is to provide a clear impression of reality for us to see, but rather she feels that her work should provide a medium by means of which we are led to seek truth for ourselves. In this she echoes the attitudes of Donne, Herbert and many other metaphysicals. Avison makes use of many of the stylistic devices often associated with metaphysical poetry, especially those that relate to word play and ambiguity. For example, in the poem "The Dumbfounding" the words "twice torn" and "Sound" were found to have multiple levels of meaning and the word "Eporphyrial" from the title "In Eporphyrial Harness" can lead the reader to examine a

number of possible interpretations. The poet also uses a modern form of conceit in which images are developed in such a manner as to project a central image. In "The Dumbfounding" this central image is that of Christ sounding the darkness of death and time for the love of man. The process, however, is very indirect. The images are created such that the reader experiences a bombardment of sense stimuli accompanied by confusion and doubt. The reader is led subtly into an attitude of intellectual and spiritual searching. The effect of the poetic techniques used in the poem is to reproduce in readers a psychological state similar to that which one imagines the poet has, himself, experienced. The result is a poetry that has the power to move the reader deeply.

Herbert, we know wrote such poetry. Vaughan speaks of his "conversion" and the dramatic change wrought in his own life through the influence of Herbert's life and, more particularly, Herbert's poems. Our study of Herbert's "The Wreath" and Vaughan's "The Wreath" suggested to us that this influence was more the result of a similar tendency of mind than the result of an effort at deliberate imitation. Avison we know, admits to having been profoundly moved by Hopkin's "The Wreck of the Deutschland" and of having been "hit hard" by the work of Eliot.²³ It seems almost as if the work of both men provoked in Avison a sort of psychic recognition. If this is true, then perhaps one might be justified in concluding that the very strong reaction experienced by certain readers, for example Avison and Vaughan, to metaphysical poetry is, in fact due to the metaphysical tendencies of their own mind.

In conclusion, Avison is a metaphysical poet because she writes poetry that is inspired by a particular philosophical conception of life -- the Christocentric universe. She makes use of techniques that are

closely associated with the metaphysical mode in her poems and our study has suggested that her poems do have distinctive metaphysical qualities and that, in fact, she does possess that elusive metaphysical tendency of mind. Avison believes that salvation is continual and timeless. It is not a historical event, over and done with, but an ongoing process.

However, the author feels that for Christ's mercy to work in our hearts we must prepare the way. This is part of her role as artist ^{assistant} to the Artist. Through her poetry Avison seeks to encourage in the reader a receptive attitude or tendency. In fact, one could suggest that the "optic heart" so important to Avison is a metaphor for this particular tendency of mind. By extension, one could even suggest that what she seeks to produce in the reader is a "metaphysical state of mind". Beyond this, she cannot and will not attempt to go. Like Christ, she waits for the reader to accept or refuse what she advances. She understands that man can only grow in freedom through choice.

APPENDIX

" "

As I began research for Avison and the Metaphysicals, I prepared a series of questions and sent them along with an enclosing letter to Margaret Avison. She most generously took the time to answer and I have used much of what she told me in the writing of my thesis. My objective in writing Avison and the Metaphysicals was to prove Avison a metaphysical poet and to show that her work reveals a metaphysical tendency of mind. I hope that I have succeeded in doing this. However, in the writing of this study I was obliged to leave out the material that did not "fit" directly in with my central proposition. Since Avison's responses may well be of interest to other students of her work, I feel that I should provide an idea of the general direction of my questions along with a paraphrased resumé of her answers.

I first posed a series of questions intended to gauge her general knowledge of the Renaissance period and, more particularly, of the poetry of Herbert, Vaughan and Hopkins. She replied that she had a fairly extensive knowledge of the Renaissance period and knew the poems of Herbert quite well. She admitted to a moderate knowledge of the poems of Hopkins and to a slight acquaintance with those of Vaughan. She is not conscious of their influence on her work nor could she say whether or not the work of these poets contained areas of similarity to her own. When asked whether her own poetic style might be considered metaphysical she suggested that to ask such a question of her is "like asking how I look when I'm asleep." She indicates that such judgements are best left to the critics and her own definition of metaphysical poetry was "Helen

Gardners's definition² as a conventional term², now in literary criticism." She nonetheless remarks that central to metaphysical poetry is the "symbol-^{force} in noun" rather than "figure-of-speech, metaphor, allegory."³

In answer to my queries concerning early influences on her writing she confides that her family had had a very large influence on her becoming a poet. She explains that at the tender age of four or five she had begun rhyming, even before she could write, and that her parents had encouraged this. Avison remarks that "it became my 'thing' quite early" and that it helped build up preferences that might not be otherwise."⁴

In reply to my question as to whether the mental state which precedes the act of writing poetry is similar to that which precedes prayer, she replied "No, I am thankful if prayer arrows in. But mostly, it takes discipline to get at it and stay at it at my stage of spiritual life."⁵ She went on to say that the actual writing process was itself quite energy consuming. The opening part takes usually one writing, increasingly revised as it goes on. The later parts are often much revised and after a second go, a third, etc. her energy often gives out. Avison further explained that the actual writing of the poem, as I have already mentioned in my thesis, is done "more 'by feel and smell' than by conscious awareness of why things feel right."⁶

She gives us a further insight into why she writes poetry and how The Dumbfounding came to be published in her answer to my query asking her why she had decided to describe to the world her own very personal spiritual experience in The Dumbfounding. She replied:

I didn't decide any such thing! I had the writing done (in odd moments, at a familiar nudging to explore this edge-of-field-of-vision-glide of meaning to get rid of the distraction of it too). And then Denise Levertov wrote me from New York that Norton wanted 6 poets (to use up some advertising money on a 'prestige PR project', so I sent the book along for her to read and they published it. 7

It is fairly obvious that Avison did not deliberately intend that The Dumbfounding stand as a testimony to her faith in Christ, although it does this. Nor was it written to be a sort of sermon in poetic form intended to turn others toward Christ, although it may have this effect on some. She tells us, rather, that The Dumbfounding was the visible record of her efforts to explore and circumscribe reality. Moreover, it was, in fact, happenstance that it came to be published when it did.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

FOOTNOTES

¹Lawrence M. Jones, "A Core of Brilliance", Canadian Literature, (Vancouver, University of British Columbia, Autumn, 1968) No. 38, p. 51.

²Margaret Avison, "The Word", The Dumbfounding, (New York, Norton, 1966) p. 56.

³These lines quoted by Sr. Mary Alban from a film entitled "Meetings with Remarkable Men" in Living with Christ, Sunday Edition, Jan 18 - Feb. 15, 1981, Vol. 46, No. 2, Ottawa, Canada.

⁴This definition quoted from Metaphysica, C,W, 1003a17 in an abstract of a thesis by Sr. Jeanne Joseph Daly entitled The Metaphysical Foundations of Free Will as a Transcendental Aspect of the Act of Existence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press Inc., 1958) p. 1.

⁵Sona Raiziss cites this definition in The Metaphysical Passion, (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1970) Copyright 1952 pp. 3-4.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Sr. Jeanne Joseph Daly, "Since existence is distinct from the essence which limits it in finite beings, whereas in God essence is identical with existence."

⁸Joseph H. Summers, George Herbert, (Toronto, Chatto and Windus, 1954) p. 78.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Sona Raiziss, p. 4.

¹¹Helen Gardner, The Metaphysical Poets, (Markham, Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1957 rpt 1977) p. 15

12. Ibid., p. 15
13. Ibid., p. 15
14. Ibid., p. 16
15. Ibid., p. 17
16. Gardner, p. 15
17. Ibid., p. 18
19. Ibid., p. 19
20. Joseph E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, (New York, Octagon Books, 1969) p. 12
21. Rosemary Freeman, English Emblem Books, (New York, Octagon Books, 1970) p. 19
22. Freeman, p. 18
23. Duncan, p. 174-175
24. Gardner, p. 27
25. Sr. Jeanne Joseph Daly gives a modern explanation of this type of reasoning. "Negative and limited though our knowledge of God and the divine perfections must be, we can nevertheless, by means of analogy, gain some knowledge of the infinite mode of those simple perfections which exist in creatures in a limited and imperfect way." p. 6 and "The doctrine of analogy---stresses the likeness which created effects bear to their uncreated cause." p. 4
26. Cited from Joan Bennett, Four Metaphysical Poets by Sona Raiziss in The Metaphysical Passion, p. 7
27. Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954) Chapters 2 and 3. He presents convincing arguments to show that many of Herbert and Vaughan's poems reflect the structural influence of these exercises of meditation and even extends his discussion to include that of Hopkins. He continues the discussion in the chapter called "Self-Knowledge--the spiritual combat" where he suggests that not only the form but the content and imagery of certain poems echo these meditative exercises in their concern with self-examination.

²⁸ Martz, p. 326

²⁹ Ibid., p. 78

³⁰ Ibid., p. 79

³¹ Ibid., 321

³² Martz, p. 321

³³ Ibid., p. 321

³⁴ Ibid., p. 322

³⁵ William T. Noon, S.J., Poetry and Prayer, (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers University Press, 1967) p. 4

³⁶ Noon, p. 4

³⁷ Noon, p. 7

³⁸ Noon, p. 4

³⁹ Bede Griffiths, O.S.B., The Golden String, (New York, P.J. Kennedy, 1954) pp. 8, 10 cited by Father Noon in Poetry and Prayer, p. 303.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 303

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 303

⁴² Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets: a Study in Religious Experience, (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1936) p. 3.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 4

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 4

⁴⁷ Kathleen E. Morgan, Christian Themes in Contemporary Poets, (London, S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1965) p. 21 and Helen White, The Metaphysical Poets, p. 4 and Father Noon, Poetry and Prayer, p. 304-307

⁴⁸ White, p. 4

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ White, p. 4 and pp. 287-288

⁵¹ Noon, p. 304

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ George Bowering, "Avison's Imitation of Christ the Artist", Canadian Literature, Autumn, 1972) No. 54, p. 59.

⁵⁴ Margaret Avison, "A Story", The Dumbfounding, p. 28.

⁵⁵ Avison, "A Story", The Dumbfounding, p. 26.

⁵⁶ Noon, Poetry and Prayer, p. 304.

⁵⁷ Bowering, p. 59.

⁵⁸ F.E. Hutchinson, Editor, "Love (lll)", The Works of George Herbert, (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1941 rpt. 1945, 1953, 1959) p. 188-189 and Margaret Avison, "Intra-Political", Winter Sun, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960) p. 47.

⁵⁹ Avison, "Watershed", Winter Sun, p. 48.

⁶⁰ Avison, "The Word", The Dumbfounding, p. 56.

⁶¹ W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie. editors, "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo", The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (London, Oxford University Press, 1967) Fourth Edition based on First Edition, 1918 plus all known poems and fragments. pp. 91-92.

⁶² Margaret Avison, "Snow", Winter Sun, p. 17.

⁶³ Avison, "Searching and Sounding", The Dumbfounding, pp. 60-61.

⁶⁴E.I. Watkin, Poets and Mystics, (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1953) pp. 12-13 cited by Father Noon in Poetry and Prayer, p. 26.

⁶⁵Ibid,

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, p. 38

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Samuel Johnson, "The Metaphysical Poets" reprinted from Abraham Cowley: the Lives of the Poets, 1779 in Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke, editors, Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry, (Toronto, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1929, 1946, 1957, 1963) pp. 1054-1055.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Duncan, p. 176

⁷³Cited from Tate, Reason in Madness, (New York, 1935) pp. 42 in Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, p. 177.

⁷⁴Duncan, p. 26

⁷⁵Herbert J.C. Grierson, editor, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century, (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 1.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND AND BIOGRAPHY

FOOTNOTES

¹Herbert J.C. Grierson, editor, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century, (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1921) p. 1.

²Ibid.

³Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry", Romantic Poetry and Prose, editors Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling, (London, Ont., Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 762.

⁴Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes and Hero Worship, (Oxford University Press, 1841 rpt. 1968) p. 208.

^{5,6,7,8,9,10}All of the foregoing information derived from F.E. Hutchinson, The Works of George Herbert, (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1941 rpt. 1945, 1953, 1959) Introduction pp. xxi - xxvi.

¹¹Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets, (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1936) pp. 151-153.

¹²Ibid,

^{13,14,15}Hutchinson, Introduction, pp. xxvii-xxix

¹⁶White, p. 158

¹⁷White, The Metaphysical Poets, p. 158

¹⁸Hutchinson, The Works of George Herbert, Introduction, p. xxv

¹⁹White, The Metaphysical Poets, p. 159

²⁰White, The Metaphysical Poets, p. 160

²¹Hutchinson, The Works of George Herbert, Introduction, p. xxv.

²²Information taken from an article entitled "History of England" by Dorothy Marshall in The New Book of Knowledge, Vol. 5 (New York, Grolier, 1969) p. 222.

²³Sona Raiziss, The Metaphysical Passion, (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1970) p. 79.

²⁴Raiziss, The Metaphysical Passion, p. 86 and information taken from articles entitled "European Science in the Middle Ages" and "The Scientific Revolution" by Everett Mendelsohn in The New Book of Knowledge Vol. 17 (New York, Grolier, 1969) p. 65-69.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶L.C. Martin, editor, Vaughan's Works, (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1957) Introduction p. xvii

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Martin, Vaughan's Works, Introduction p. xviii

³¹Ibid.

³²Martin, Vaughan's Works, Introduction p. xix.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Martin, Vaughan's Works, Introduction, p. xx.

³⁵Martin, editor, "The British Church", Vaughan's Works, p. 410.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷F.E. Hutchinson, Henry Vaughan (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, rpt. 1962) pp. 94-97.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Margaret Bottrall, George Herbert, (London, Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 954 rpt. 1971 and 1977) p. 140.

- ⁴⁰White, The Metaphysical Poets, p. 187.
- ⁴¹Grierson, Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century, Introduction p. xLiv
- ⁴²Raiziss, p. 60
- ⁴³Raiziss, p. 49
- ⁴⁴Ibid.
- ⁴⁵Ibid.
- ⁴⁶Paul L. Mariani, A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London), 1970, p. xi
- ⁴⁷Information taken from same article "History of England" by Dorothy Marshall in The New Book of Knowledge Volume 5.
- ⁴⁸Boris Ford, editor, From Dickens to Hardy, Vol. 6. The Pelican Guide to English Literature, (Baltimore, Maryland; Penguin Books), 1958 rpt. 1960, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1968.
- ⁴⁹W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie, editors, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1967) p. xxiv. Observation made by Gardner based on "red letter to Bridges, 2 August 1871, and his subsequent explanation, 22 January 1874, also poem No. 70"
- ⁵⁰From Dickens to Hardy, ed. Boris Ford, p. 15.
- ⁵¹Mariani, A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 215.
- ⁵²Gardner and Mackenzie, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 101.
- ⁵³Ibid.
- ⁵⁴Ibid.
- ⁵⁵Ibid.
- ⁵⁶Ford, Dickens to Hardy, p. 46.
- ⁵⁷Ford, Dickens to Hardy, p. 30.

- ⁵⁸ Ford, Dickens to Hardy, p. 48
- ⁵⁹ Raiziss, p. 60.
- ⁶⁰ Ford, From Dickens to Hardy, pp. 48-49
- ⁶¹ Information taken from same article by Everett Mendelsohn, "The Scientific Revolution" in The New Book of Knowledge Volume 17, pp. 72, 73, and 74.
- ⁶² Gardner and Mackenzie, editors, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 32.
- ⁶³ Ibid
- ⁶⁴ Gardner and Mackenzie, p. 33.
- ⁶⁵ Gardner and Mackenzie, p. 34.
- ⁶⁶ Raiziss, p. 60.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid
- ⁶⁸ Ernest Redekop, Margaret Avison, (Toronto, Copp Clark, 1970) p. 4.
- ⁶⁹ Information taken from an article entitled "New Voice in Christian Verse" by Margaret Clarkson in Christianity Today, March 31, 1967 p (653) 21.
- ⁷⁰ Information taken from cover of Avison's collection of poetry Sun Blue. (Toronto: Lancelot Press Limited, 1978)
- ⁷¹ Personal communication from Margaret Avison.
- ⁷² Information drawn from class notes.
- ⁷³ Boris Ford, editor, The Modern Age, Volume 7 of The Pelican Guide to English Literature, (Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex, England, 1961. Third Edition 1973) "The Social and Intellectual Background" by G.H. Bantock p. 17.

⁷⁴Ford, The Modern Age, p. 23.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Raiziss, p. 117.

⁷⁷Ford, The Modern Age, p. 13.

⁷⁸Information concerning the 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's gleaned from old course notes on Modern Poetry.

⁷⁹Leighton Ford, "The Centennial Crisis" published in Christianity Today in March of 1967 p. (645) 13.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Cited by Leighton Ford in "The Centennial Crisis" p. (645) 13.

⁸²Redekop, p. 4.

⁸³Redekop, p. 5.

⁸⁴Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

⁸⁵Rajan Balachandran cites Eliot in The Overwhelming Question, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) 1976, p. 26.

⁸⁶Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

⁸⁷Lawrence M. Jones cites Louis Martz in "A Core of Brilliance" Canadian Literature, No. 38, Autumn, 1968, p. 51.

⁸⁸Redekop, p. 5.

⁸⁹Margaret Avison, "Snow", Winter Sun, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) p. 17.

⁹⁰Jones cites Avison in "A Core of Brilliance", Canadian Literature, No. 38, Autumn, 1968 p. 51.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Margaret Avison, "Apocalyptic", Winter Sun, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) p. 82.

⁹⁶Redekop, p. 60.

⁹⁷Redekop, p. 61.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Margaret Avison, "Searching and Sounding", The Dumbfounding,
p. 60.

CHAPTER THREE

A METAPHYSICAL STATE OF MIND

FOOTNOTES

¹Sona Raiziss, The Metaphysical Passion, (Westport Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1970) p. 54.

²Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets, (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1936), pp. 158-159.

³Marchette Chute, Two Gentlemen, (London, Secker & Warburg, 1960) p. 119.

⁴F.E. Hutchinson, editor, "The Water-course", The Works of George Herbert (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1941, 1941) p. 170.

⁵Hutchinson, "The Call", p. 156.

⁶Joseph M. Summers, George Herbert, (Toronto, Chatto and Windus, 1954) p. 78.

⁷Summers, p. 93.

⁸Summers, p. 78.

⁹White, p. 177.

¹⁰Summers, p. 84.

¹¹Summers, p. 82.

¹²Summers, pp. 82-83.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵White, p. 184.

- ¹⁶ White, p. 187
- ¹⁷ Summers, pp. 84-85 and White, p. 174.
- ¹⁸ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, cites Herbert in Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979) p. 285.
- ¹⁹ Marchette Chute, Two Gentlemen, (London, Secker & Warburg, 1960) p. 109.
- ²⁰ James D. Simmonds, Masques of God, (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972) p. 13.
- ²¹ L.C. Martin, editor, The Works of Henry Vaughan, (Oxford, At the Clarendon Press, 1957) p. 391.
- ²² Martin, p. 392.
- ²³ Edmund Blunden, On the Poems of Henry Vaughan, (New York, Russell & Russell, 1927) p. 31.
- ²⁴ Margaret Bottrall, George Herbert, (London, Wyman and Sons, Ltd. 1954 rpt. 1971 and 1977) p. 140.
- ²⁵ Blunden, pp. 31-32.
- ²⁶ Lewalski, p. 319.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ R.A. Durr, On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962), Preface
and
- ²⁹ Ross Garner, Henry Vaughan, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1959) p. 145.
- ³⁰ E.C. Pettet, Of Paradise and Light, (Cambridge, At the University Press, 1960) p. 9 and p. 28.
- ³¹ Simmonds, p. 13.
- ³² Blunden, p. 201.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Blunden, p. 204.

³⁵ Pettet, p. 21.

³⁶ Lewalski, p. 351.

³⁷ Sigmund Freud, edited by James Strachy, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1959) pp. 66-67.

³⁸ Norman H. Mackenzie, Hopkins, (London, Oliver and Boyd, 1968) p. 9. Mackenzie cites Hopkins in Further Letters, p. 231.

³⁹ Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 12.

⁴¹ Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 13 author cites Hopkins from Letters p. 24.

⁴² Paul L. Mariani, A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1970) from Introduction p. xxi.

⁴³ Mariani, p. xxii

⁴⁴ Mariani, p. xxii

⁴⁵ Mackenzie p. 4 and 6

⁴⁶ Mackenzie, pp 38-39

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie, editors, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (London, Oxford University Press, 1967) p. xix.

⁴⁹ Mackenzie, Hopkins, author cites Hopkins in Letters p. 229.

⁵⁰ Mariani, p xxiv.

⁵¹ Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Blunden, p. 204.

³⁵ Pettet, p. 21.

³⁶ Lewalski, p. 351.

³⁷ Sigmund Freud, edited by James Strachy, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1959) pp. 66-67.

³⁸ Norman H. Mackenzie, Hopkins (London, Oliver and Boyd, 1968) p. 9, Mackenzie cites Hopkins in Further Letters p. 231.

³⁹ Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 10.

⁴⁰ Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 12.

⁴¹ Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 13 author cites Hopkins from Letters, p. 24.

⁴² Paul L. Mariani, A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1970) from Introduction p. xxi.

⁴³ Mariani, p. xxii

⁴⁴ Mariani, p. xxii

⁴⁵ Mackenzie, p. 4 and 6

⁴⁶ Mackenzie, pp 38-39

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie, editors, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, (London, Oxford University Press), 1967, p. xix.

⁴⁹ Mackenzie, Hopkins, author cites Hopkins in Letters p. 229.

⁵⁰ Mariani, p. xxiv.

⁵¹ Ibid.

- ⁵²Ibid.
- ⁵³Mackenzie, Hopkins, pp. 37-38.
- ⁵⁴Ibid.
- ⁵⁵Gardner, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. xxxv.
- ⁵⁶Mackenzie, Hopkins, p. 23.
- ⁵⁷Ibid.
- ⁵⁸Mariani, p. 51.
- ⁵⁹Eli Mandel, cites Northrop Frye in Contexts of Canadian Criticism, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971) p. 196.
- ⁶⁰Mariani, pp. 51-57.
- ⁶¹Mariani, p. 53.
- ⁶²Gardner and Mackenzie, editors, "The Wreck of the Deutschland", Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 53.
- ⁶³Mariani, p. 55.
- ⁶⁴Ibid.
- ⁶⁵Ibid.
- ⁶⁶Raiziss, The Metaphysical Passion, p. 49.
- ⁶⁷Mariani, pp. 55-56.
- ⁶⁸Raiziss, p. 49.
- ⁶⁹Mariani, pp. 57-73.
- ⁷⁰Mariani, p. 59.
- ⁷¹Mariani, p. 60.

⁷²Gardner and Mackenzie, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Wreck of the Deutschland", p. 57.

⁷³Gardner and Mackenzie, p. 53.

⁷⁴Mariani, p. 63.

⁷⁵Mariani, p. 63.

⁷⁶Mariani, pp. 68-69.

⁷⁷Gardner and Mackenzie, Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Wreck of the Deutschland", p. 61.

⁷⁸Mariani, p. 72.

⁷⁹Mariani, p. 91.

⁸⁰Mariani, p. 55.

⁸¹Mariani, p. 117.

⁸²Mariani, p. 179.

⁸³Mariani, cites Hopkins Sermons, p. 122.

⁸⁴Gardner and Mackenzie, The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Ribblesdale", p. 90.

⁸⁵Raiziss, The Metaphysical Passion, p. 7 cites Joan Bennett in her "Introductory" to Four Metaphysical Poets, pp 1 & 3.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Raiziss, p. 5.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Joseph Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, He cites Coleridge p. 33 and Brooks pp. 36, 176-177 among others on the subject.

⁹⁰Raiziss, p. 29.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Raiziss, p. 28.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

⁹⁵Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

⁹⁶Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

FOOTNOTES

¹Milton Wilson, "The Poetry of Margaret Avison," Canadian Literature, No. 2, Autumn, 1959, p. 50.

²Sona Raiziss, The Metaphysical Passion, (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1970) p. 7. She cites Joan Bennett's remark from Bennett's "Introductory" to Four Metaphysical Poets.

³Ibid.

⁴Joseph E. Duncan, The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry, (New York, Octagon Books, 1969) p. 19.

⁵Duncan, p. 18.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Lawrence M. Jones, "A Core of Brilliance," Canadian Literature, No. 38, Autumn, 1968, p. 51.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Margaret Avison, "Person", The Dumbfounding, (New York, Norton, 1966) p. 52.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Margaret Avison, "Watershed", Winter Sun, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), p. 48.

¹²Sona Raiziss, in The Metaphysical Passion discusses the kind of period that produces metaphysical poetry. She states that "In times of cultural and material chaos men experience a two way reaction. They both question religion and make gestures of acceptance toward God and the Church with the hope of sharing the difficult responsibility." p. 152. She adds that "Accompanying a return to established beliefs, dissatisfaction with conventional theology has promoted also strange new sects and

high-minded movements reminiscent, in their multiplicity, of the seventeenth century. The growth of Christian Science, the Ethical Culture Society, the Oxford Movement, spiritualism, cults, ... the revival of black magic and astological systems, all suggest the variety, extravagance and ardour of religious and moral hopes. Defense of religion and qualities derived from simple devotion or from picturesque ritual often intensify the patterns and passions of literature."

¹³Ernest Redekop, Margaret Avison, (Toronto, The Copp Clark, 1970) p. 4.

¹⁴Margaret Avison, "In Eporphrial Harness", The Dumbfounding, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1966), p. 77.

¹⁵Keith Harrison, "The Sense of the Word," Canadian Literature, No. 34, Autumn, 1967, p. 78.

¹⁶Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

¹⁷George Bowering, "Avison's Imitation of Christ the Artist," Canadian Literature, No. 54, Autumn, 1972, p. 59.

¹⁸Refers to page three of this chapter.

¹⁹Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

²⁰Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

²¹Personal communication from Margaret Avison.

²²Redekop, p. 1.

²³Margaret Avison, "The Word," The Dumbfounding, p. 57.

Appendix

Footnotes

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7

Personal communication from
Margaret Avison

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Avison, Margaret. Sunblue. Toronto: Lancelot Press Limited. 1978.
- Avison, Margaret. The Dumbfounding. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1966.
- Avison, Margaret. Winter Sun. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1960.
- Gardner, W.H. and N.H. Mackenzie. eds. The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Fourth Edition based on the First Edition of 1918 and enlarged to incorporate all known poems and fragments. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Hutchinson, F.E. editor. The Works of George Herbert. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1941 reprinted from corrected sheets of the First Edition 1945, 1953, 1959.
- Martin, L.C. editor. The Works of Henry Vaughan. Second Edition. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1957.
- Wilson, Milton. editor. Poetry of Mid-Century 1940-1960. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited. 1964.

SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS

- Balachanda, Rajan. The Overwhelming Question. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1976.
- Bloom, Harold and Lionel Trilling, eds. Romantic Poetry and Prose. London: Oxford University Press. 1973.
- Blunden, Edmund. On the Poems of Henry Vaughan. New York: Russell & Russell. 1927.
- Bottrall, Margaret. George Herbert. London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd. 1954 rpt. 1971 and 1977.
- Carlyle, Thomas. On Heroes and Hero Worship. Oxford University Press, 1841 rpt. 1968.
- Chute, Marchette. Two Gentlemen. London: Secker & Warburg. 1960.
- Daly, Sr. Jeanne Joseph. The Metaphysical Foundations of Free Will as a Transcendental Aspect of the Act of Existence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. Washington: The Catholic University of

- American Press Inc. 1958. This is an abstract for a doctoral thesis and rather complex.
- Duncan, Joseph E. The Revival of Metaphysical Poetry. New York: Octagon Books. 1969.
- Durr, D.A. On the Mystical Poetry of Henry Vaughan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1962.
- Ford, Boris. editor. The Pelican Guide to English Literature. Volume six. Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books. 1958 rpt. 1960, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1968.
- Freeman, Rosemary. English Emblem Books. New York: Octagon Books, 1970.
- Freud, Sigmund. edited and translated by James Strachy. Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1959.
- Gardner, Helen. The Metaphysical Poets. Markham: Penguin Books Canada Ltd. 1957 rpt. 1977.
- Garner, Ross. Henry Vaughan. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1959.
- Grierson, H.J.C. editor. Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1921.
- Lewalski, Barbara Kiefer. Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric. Princeton. Princeton University. 1979.
- Mackenzie, Norman H. Hopkins. Edinburgh. London: Oliver and Boyd. 1968.
- Mandel, Eli. Contexts of Canadian Criticism. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press. 1971.
- Mariani, Paul L. A Commentary on the Complete Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 1970.
- Martz, Louis L. The Poetry of Meditation. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1954.
- Morgan, Kathleen E. Christian Themes in Contemporary Poets. London: S.C.M. Press Ltd. 1965.
- Noon, William T. S.J. Poetry and Prayer. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1967.
- Pettet, E.C. Of Paradise and Light. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1960.

- Raiziss, Sona. The Metaphysical Passion. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1970.
- Redekop, Ernest. Margaret Avison. Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company. 1970.
- Simmonds, James D. Masques of God. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. 1972.
- Summers, Joseph M. George Herbert. Toronto: Chatto and Windus. 1954.
- White, Helen C. The Metaphysical Poets. New York: The MacMillan Company. 1936.
- Witherspoon, Alexander M. and Frank J. Warnke. eds. Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry. Second Edition. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. 1929, 1946, 1957, 1963.

SERIAL PUBLICATIONS

- Alban, Sr. Mary. Living With Christ. Sunday Edition. Jan 18 - Feb 15, 1981. Vol. 46. No. 2.
- Bowering, George. "Avison's Imitation of Christ the Artist". Canadian Literature. March 3, 1967.
- Clarkson, Margaret. "New Voice in Christian Verse". Christianity Today. March 31, 1967.
- Ford, Leighton. "The Centennial Crisis". Christianity Today. March 31, 1967.
- Harrison, Keith. "The Sense of the Word". Canadian Literature. No. 34. Autumn, 1967.
- Jones, Lawrence. "A Core of Brilliance". Canadian Literature. No. 38. Autumn, 1968.
- Wilson, Milton. "The Poetry of Margaret Avison". Canadian Literature, No. 2. Autumn, 1959.