

Chapter III

CHAPTER-III

BAROQUE POETRY

The Renaissance elements were present to some extent in all the Baroque writers of the period. This was basically true of all Baroque forms, as they strove to unite somehow the formal perfection of the age that had gone before with the sense of the unearthly and uncanny powers that operated within and beyond man. The baroque writers and poets were profoundly metaphysical in their outlook, and exerted all their powers of imagination and art to communicate the sense of these impelling forces. Hence, they delighted in colourful contrasts, and movement, and tried to convey them by means of piling up descriptive adjectives and exclamatory nouns. These epics, dramas and great chorales display intense imaginative power. It was period of tension and struggle: an age of great dramatic contrasts. Secular and religious passions vied with one another. The Revival of Catholicism, devout passionate and astute, fought stolid Protestantism, assured, moral, fanatical and self-righteous in a long drawn out conflict, to an eventual deadlock. Likewise monarchical absolutism and representative constitutionalism scored sometimes a victory here, or a loss there, now defensive and conservative, now radical and aggressive, now reasonable and staid, now passionate and intensely emotional. Poets and writers, too, depicted these extremes in their works.¹

The best approach to understand the development of seventeenth century poetry is by way of the earlier poetry. Milton's Comus distinctly reveals the influence of Shakespeare and has definite affinities with The Tempest. Comus occupies a half way position between Shakespeare's drama on the enchanted island and Ben Jonson's court masques. Although it has less action than Shakespeare's plays, and more poetry than Jonson's masques it is, like them allegorical in method, reflective in its tone and spectacular in its pageantry. All his life, Milton had a great fascination for the stage. It has been said that had Milton lived in an earlier generation, or even in a later generation, his contribution

to drama and dramatic literature would have been more extensive. By the time Milton made his debut on the literary scene, the theatres were closed. During the Restoration years there was no place for the public performance of a play by so eminent and revolutionary a poet as Milton. Moreover, the Restoration audience was not ready for the serious type of play that he cared to write and stage.²

Drama did, however, feature in his literary destiny. The fascination for the theatre grew steadily till it culminated in his greatest dramatic work Samson Agonistes.

Milton was attracted to the masque at a fairly early point in his writing career. Firstly, it had definite lyrical and musical qualities which he recognised as a prospective literary form. All properties inherent in these qualities were perfectly suited to his genius - his love for mythology and classical allusions, his fondness for learned poetry and an elevated style. Besides this, he was hopeful of attracting royal patronage. In 1634, Milton's masque Comus was presented at Ludlow Castle, just before the young poet left for Italy. It is the most celebrated English contribution to the fashion of pastoral dramatics. Comus records the conflict in his mind between poetry and drama. It lacks the dramatic expertise and psychological impact of drama. It contains polished sophisticated and poetic language. Milton was of course developing a tradition that had already been established by Elizabethans like Spenser and Sir Philip Sydney. By then English was highly developed and well established as the poetic medium of a civilized and courtly minority.

The origins of Comus lie in Spenserian poetry and in the Italian poetic tradition. In its imagery, the masque comes closer to the odes of Tasso than to the pastoral dramas of many Italian writers. Most of the work consists of songs and set speeches, more in the tradition of the recitative than of the true interchange which constituted dramatic dialogue. There are hardly any passages of sustained animated action.³ The elements present are neither entertaining nor enthralling. The plot is artificial, the actions lack spontaneity and the theme of the sacredness of virginity is almost static. The moral element is uninspiring

and hardly qualifies the poem as a didactic elegy. Characterization is virtually non-existent. Although there are some theatrical potentialities, as the animal masks worn by the dancers in Comus's rout, yet the symbols are realized in the pictorial than in the dramatic manner. The artistic qualities of the entire work bear a closer resemblance to Venetian paintings than to the mature theatre of Shakespeare. However, this pastoral poem does possess dramatic feeling, which lies more in operatic structures than in the poetic language. In his next poem Lycidas Milton is revealed as an original poet, breaking away from well-established conventions and using an irregular stanzaic form of verse, and broken rhythms. Above all, he is seen experimenting with dramatic contrasts of emotion thereby heightening the poetic tension. This makes his poetry dramatic and theatrical. His elegy may be said to fall into five acts. His pastoralism in Acts I, III, and V is in the decorous and calm Arethusian mode after the manner of Virgil and Theocritus.⁴ There are sharp digressions in Acts II and IV which are characterised by a solemn language of moral idealism and the didactic tone. Milton eulogizes the hard won fame that belongs more properly to heaven than to earth. He then decries ecclesiastical and political corruption and warns that the forces of evil will confront annihilation. Throughout Milton is aware of the audacities of these shifts of mood. He clearly understood the distinction between the "Sicilian Muse" and the expression of puritannical earnestness in a time of national crisis. This artful combination gave his poetry a wholly new tone. Nothing in English literature can be found to be remotely comparable to the personal and dramatic feeling in this masterpiece of Milton's. An Elegiac ode, it almost resembles a theatrical oratorio.

In the domain of literature, the Baroque age produced achievements of unquestionable lasting value in drama and in the shorter lyric. There were also occasional rare accomplishments when intense dramatic qualities unite with a love of language to express a sequence of memorable actions in illustration of a lofty and universal theme. Of these, Milton's Paradise Lost is the best example. This epic poem can claim to be the supreme literary product of the European imagination at the height of the Baroque age. Yet the fact that Milton is England's major seventeenth century poet, tends to obscure his European connections and affinities. His works seem to be closely related to the religious and political

affairs that were peculiarly English. This is not wholly true. The tensions he experienced were also largely felt by any Protestant writer or artist confronted with the old traditions of Europe and the new achievements of the Catholic countries, like Vondel and Gryphius, the closest to him in spirit, or like the composers Heinrich Schütz, and later Handel. Italy and Rome meant much to him. Although writers like Vondel had to imagine Italy, Milton actually visited it in 1638. Italy was the country to which many writers and artists went in search of art and learning. Milton soon discovered that he was quite at home in Baroque Europe, as he was familiar with the classical authors and skilful in writing the Italian sonnet in the Petrarchan manner. Milton and all the other Europeans shared a common background and similar outlook on the world and age. For them the revival of the Roman heritage and spirit was no mean dream. It was a glorious reality that affected every sphere of cultural life.⁵

Milton's epic, both in theme and manner, spoke for that age and for all thinking people. The particular appropriateness of its language enhanced rather than limited its relevance and range. He took great trouble to avoid any specific reference to limiting and sectarian issues in order to concentrate on topics of universal interest. Topics such as rebellion, pride and fall, and the dangers of love and wisdom are themes and interests common to all the contemporary literatures of Europe. Moreover, they were also essential elements of Milton's cosmic vision which depicts the ideal state of Man at the Creation and goes on to describe man's subsequent Fall to the condition called "reality". As Adam and Eve walk out into the unknown and lonely future,

"The world was all before them, where to choose
There place of rest, and Providence their guide."

(Paradise Lost Bk XII)

The theme of Paradise Lost is rendered in the finest descriptive poetry after the manner of Italian pastoral painting. After describing the landscape elaborately and exquisitely he proceeds to introduce the relatively, small figures of its inhabitants. This is also done pictorially. They are "seen" long before they are "heard". They seem to belong more to the realm of the paintings of Titian

and Durer than to the realm of drama or poetry. The dramatic element comes into Paradise Lost only after two thirds of the story has been told. The fall of man, the quarrel between Adam and Eve, their reconciliation and expulsion from Heaven bring the poem into dramatic focus. The descriptive element almost entirely disappears and true dramatic dialogue with conflict and movement takes its place. The last four books form an ideal drama of extraordinary power. The reader is transformed into the spectator, not only hearing the poignantly realistic rhythm and emphasis of the words, but also hearing the sighs of Adam and Eve and witnessing, with Milton, their expressions of pain, their tear-stained faces, their gestures of despair and finally their tragic departure from Paradise :

“They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitarie way”.

(Paradise Lost Bk XII)

Milton's greatest achievement in the field of poetic drama is Samson Agonistes. Some critics feel that this work cannot be considered to belong to the category of the Baroque. They feel that in this work Milton's outlook is puritanical in its culture and doctrinaire in its artistic expression; above all it is regarded as too egocentric to be truly poetic or to be effectively dramatic. Others are of the opinion that it is the highest achievement in theatrical art and poetry. They feel that the language is not only a faithful recreation of human experience but that the style is perfectly suited for the stage. There are hardly any abstract passages. The choruses enhance both the dramatic and the lyrical elements of the play. As is usual in Greek drama, the main character sometimes rises to express himself in the most passionate and lyrical language which is in harmony with the chorus. There is descriptive poetry, but no pastoralism and no metaphysical subtlety. In his victorious death Samson is compared to three winged symbolical creatures - the dragon, who attacks the village fowls, the divine eagle falling like lightning from a clear Sky, and the phoenix rising again from its ashes. These passages are comparable to some of the elaborate passages in Comus.

The most "Baroque" in mode of the school of poets who came under the so called "Metaphysical" school, is Richard Crashaw. One group of scholars relates the "Metaphysical" style to the Baroque, but variously, sometimes completely identifying it with the Baroque and sometimes distinguishing the two. The term "Baroque" itself, like the term "Renaissance" and "Romantic" is variable in reference. The "Emblem" theory is perhaps the most widespread theory of the "metaphysical" style. Mario Praz, after his study of the actual works of this literary movement, comes to the conclusion that the conceit and the emblem might be called the "game" theory. He says, "they are of the nature of the charade or the riddle - the by products of an amusing lighthearted verbal and pictorial game."⁶ Richard Crashaw's poems tend to arouse among his critics either extremes of revulsion or well debated admiration. Those who read his poems without considering devotional conventions soon find his images of mouths, blood and wounds revolting. They feel that something is amiss with a sensibility that borders on perverse eroticism. Crashaw's admirers, on the other hand, while acknowledging the lurid and sensuous traits, go on to say that the sensuality must be understood not literally, but as emblematic of certain spiritual states. The images should be considered without attaching any bodily significance to them. In doing this the reader will find that Crashaw is indeed a careful and intellectual handler of conventional materials.

Richard Crashaw is the one conspicuous English incarnation of the "Baroque sensibility". Douglas Bush says : "The religio-aesthetic creed and the culture of the Counter-Reformation affected all the arts, and indeed aimed at mixing and transcending them, in its effort to make the five senses portals to heaven. The elements of the revival, most stimulating to the artistic imagination were the clash and fusion of extremes in the human and divine, the pictorial and the abstract, in the joys and agonies, the spiritual splendour and the mean estate, of Christ, the Virgin, and the pantheon of saints and martyrs. Poetry took on a new and bizzare intricacy of sensuous decoration and symbolic metaphor, a kind of formlessness - which sought a unity deeper and higher than the classical through emotional and impressionistic multiplicity. German exponents of Geistesgeschichte have pursued the ramifications of "barock" as

Browne pursued the quincunx, with a heavier foot and with equally apacious and elliptical logic, but for us the definition is 'poetry like Crashaw's. 'Its motto might be' Over ripeness is all'."

Crashaw, who was sensuous by temperament, wrote poetry that was flowing, musical and imagist. At first, poetry seems to be like the song of the nightingale, "bathing in streams of liquid melody", later it seems like the passage work of a deliberate virtuoso, indulging in cadenzas and "glissandi". Yet he was an ascetic in real life, denying his senses except when he was paying homage to his God. In turning to religion and religious poetry, he "changed his object not his passion", as St. Augustine said of the Magdalene. His sacred poetry has recurrent images that are found in his secular poetry.

As Crashaw was neither a prophet nor a preacher he has no message to give to the world. Although he had suffered and had indulged in his suffering, his experience did not prompt him to formulate a philosophy of life. His was to be a poetry in which the rhythms and the images would tell their own story.

His symbolism follows traditional Christian lines. He drew on the Bible, ecclesiastical learning and the books of mystics like St. Bernard and St. Teresa.⁷ Crashaw was ingenuous and free from self consciousness. Although his images are "private", they often reappear in similar contexts. He did not always, therefore, formulate a systematic symbolism. This is probably so because he himself was unaware of why certain images had particular significance for him.

In his gradual and steady movement from secular to sacred poetry, he abandoned the Renaissance embellishments of classical mythology. While still at school he had written poems on Arion, Pygmalion, Venus, Apollo and Daphne, Aeneas and Anchises; and his Latin epigrams and Music's Duel contain many classical allusions. In his English sacred poems, however, such elements are conspicuously absent.

Crashaw makes no attempt to distinguish his sacred from his secular imagery, Many metaphors and characteristic figures are recurrent. The known

paradox of the Incarnation whereby Christ is at once the son and the father of the Blessed Virgin, is anticipated in the apostrophe to Aeneas carrying Anchises:

“Felix! parentis qui pater dicerie esse tui !
 (“Fortunate man, you who may be said to be the
 father of your parent !”)

The persistent motif of the mystical poems initially appears in the poem called Wishes.

“A well tam’d heart
 For whose more noble smart
 Love may bee long chusing a Dart.”

(Wishes)

Crashaw, unlike Herbert, seldom uses homely images of fireside and market place; and allusions to the politics and economics of the day are rare. “His own legacy” refers to Christ, dying. There are financial images such as the reference to the Blessed Virgin, she has “so deep a share” in Christ’s wounds. There are passages of extravagant lushness which border on the grotesque, when he refers to Mary’s tears which having flowed upwards, at the top of the milky river, become the cream upon which the infant fed, adding, “sweetness to his sweetest lips”.

Crashaw undoubtedly had some feeling for Nature, especially abounding in flowers and the dawn. This is evident in his earlier poems, but they evince no precision or scrutiny or botanical interest. His constant blossoms are the conventional lily and the rose. These flowers which appear in his earliest poems, as external and perceptible creatures, do not disappear from his later verse; they soon change into a symbolical and ceremonial pair, a ritualistic formula, symbolising white and red, purity and love, tears and blood. Already in the eulogy on the Duke of York, lines which begin with a deliberate naturalism, end in the ritualistic liturgical red and white, in anticipation of Crashaw’s final style:

"So have I seene (dress their Mistress May)
 Two silken sister flowers consult, and lay,
 Their bashful cheeks together, newly they
 Peep't from their buds, shew'd like the Garden's eyes
 Scarce wak't : like was the Crimson of their joyes,
 Like were the Pearles they wept ...⁸

(Eulogy on the Duke of York)

If Crashaw's reference to flowers and plant life assume symbolical meaning, his reference to the animal Kingdom owes nothing to the world of nature. His lamb, the fly, the bee, the wolf, the dove, the eagle, the "self-wounding pelican", and the Phoenix all derive their characteristics and significance from Christian tradition and bestiary, and not from observation. Their symbolism is evident. In their lowliness men are "all idolizing worms" ; in their fickleness and vanity, they are foolish wanton flies. On the other hand, he uses the image of the bee as a creator, preserver or supplier of mystic sweetness. The bee, to Crashaw, is the paragon of industry. The Holy Name of Jesus is worshipped by angels that swarm

"Like diligent Bees, and swarm about it.
 O they are wise ;
 And know what sweetes are suck't from out it.
 It is the Hive,
 By which they thrive,
 Where all their Hoard of Hony lyes."⁹

(Poems)

Others symbols which frequently appear in his poems are the dove and the lamb. They symbolize innocence and purity. Sometimes the doves signify chosen souls whose eyes should be "those of turtles, chaste and true"; sometimes the Holy Ghost. Crashaw's favourite symbol for Christ was the white lamb, slain before the foundation of the world.

“By all the Eagle in thee, all the dove”

So, Crashaw invokes the mystic St. Teresa. Her spiritual faith was unflinching and acute :

“Sharp - sighted as the Eagle’s eye, that can
Out - shine the broad - beam’d Dayes Meridian.”¹⁰

(Hymn to St. Teresa)

The Phoenix occurs frequently in his poems. That he was fascinated by it is clearly evident in his Latin poem Genethliacon at Epicedion. The poem depicts the paradox of a deathless death. The unique, deathless bird reappears in the Latin epigrams and the English sacred and secular poems. In the sacred poems, it assumes its traditional meaning as the symbol of the God man, virgin born, only begotten, and immortal.

Crashaw’s colours, which are fundamentally conventional, are elementary and clearly symbolic. In his religious poems he uses only three; red (or purple) with the royal implications, and its reference to fire (“The Flaming Heart”) allied to love; black and white. Black, to Crashaw, symbolizes sin, mortality and finiteness; “Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return”. In his translation of Catullus, men are “dark Sons of Sorrow or “Darke dusky Man”. The synthesis of colours, is perhaps White, the symbol of luminous purity. It occurs frequently in his secular verse when he refers to the royal family. But it is more frequently used as a symbol of Christ, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and most effectively while referring to Christ as the Lamb.

“Vain loves, avaunt ! bold hand forbear;
The Lamb hath dipp’t his white foot here”.¹¹

(Poems)

He totally excludes from his religious poetry the colour green, the colour of nature. Conspicuous also is the absence of the colour blue, the colour of truth in the tradition of Christian art. The pictorial representation in terms of

light and shade - chiaroscuro - a characteristic device employed by most Baroque painters and writers - is absent from his poems.

Crashaw was a lover of music. This is seen not only in his Music's Duel but also in many other poems. The celebration of all the sweet sounds of instruments is found in On the Name of Jesus :

"Be they such
As sigh with supple wind
Or answer Artful Touch ..."¹²

(On the Name of Jesus)

All these instruments like lutes, flutes and harps are the "soul's most certain wings", and "Heaven on Earth"; Crashaw equates "all things that are", with all that are musical. Indeed Crashaw intended his own poetry to be sweet to the ear. This he achieves by virtue of his mastery of vowel and consonant sequences and alliteration. He also believed that human music was an introduction to heavenly or ideal music, "the harmonious concert of the sphere", which "dull mortality more feels than hears". The ears are "tumultuous shops of noise" when compared with the inner sensibilities, which can hear the inexpressive nuptial hymn.

There is a blend of fragrance and taste in his favourite adjectives such as "sweet" and "Delicious". The odours of flowers and spices are mainly traditional. "Let my prayer be set forth in thy sight as the incense", is found in the Psalms; the fragrance of spices permeates the "Song of Songs". The Magi brought frankincense and myrrh to the Infant Christ. The Magdalene dies as "perfumes expire". In his ode on Prayer, which is considered by some critics to be the most mystical of his poems, Crashaw asks the lover of God, the Virgin Soul, to seize the Bridegroom :

"All fresh and fragrant as he rised
 Dropping with a baulmy shower
 A delicious dew of spices ..."

(On Prayer)

At times his images remain purely physical as seen in the following lines:

"Sweet-lipp'd Angell - Imps, that swill their throats
 In creame of Morning Helicon..."

(On the Name of Jesus)

More often than not the pleasure of the palate becomes symbolical. The angels who throng the Holy Name are wise because they "know what sweets are suck't from out of it". One might see in it his analogy to the Psalmist who bid us to "Taste ... how good the Lord is". For Crashaw the Blessed Sacrament is the miraculous feast that denies the senses. His paraphrases of St. Thomas's Eucharistic hymns are remarkably sparse in sensuous imagery. It is not the Blood of Christ on the altar but the redeeming blood on the cross which stimulates in him spiritual ecstasy.

Crashaw's liquids are also symbolical - water (penitence, tears); milk (nourishment and maternal comfort); blood (martyrdom or life); and wine (religious intoxication of ecstasy). In one of his earliest poems, blood turns into water, while in a later poem Sancta Maria "her eyes bleed Teares, his wound's weep Blood". In Crashaw, the fluids are constantly mixing in miraculous or paradoxical ways. Milk and blood may mingle, as when maternal love brings about self-sacrifice: wine is transubstantiated into Blood in the Sacrament.

Touch, the last of the senses, is the most sensuous in the poems of Crashaw. By traditional use, Fire, the cause of heat, is the symbol of love. Its opposites are lovelessness and death. The "Flaming Heart" of Christ is the heart afire with love. St. Teresa's burning passion renders her insensitive to the chill of the grave. At times Crashaw combines opposities. Since Mary is both Virgin and Mother, her kisses may either warm or cool. The infant Jesus lying between her breasts "sleeps in snow, yet warmly".

In his mystical poems Crashaw uses freely symbols drawn from courtship and marriage. Christ is "The Noble Bridegroom, the Spouse of Virgins". St. Teresa, who is Love's victim, is seated as "Christ's bride by the full Kingdom of that final kiss", and this marriage has made her the mother of many disciples, many "virgin - births".

In his secular poems the images of the rose and the lily reappear, sometimes singly, sometimes together. The association carries on into the sacred poems, but the symbolical significance of the flowers becomes clear. In the epigram of the Holy Innocents, the mother's milk and the infant's blood, change into lilies and roses. Another ritual linking is that of the pearl and the ruby. In "Hymn for the Circumcision", Crashaw imagines Christ's drops of blood as rubies. Magdalen's tears are Sorrow's "richest Pearls". This combination is found again in the eighteenth stanza of the Wishes and is repeated in his religious poetry :

"The debt is paid in Ruby-teares,
Which thou in Pearles didst lend."

(Wishes)

Crashaw's imagery consists of an undefined but constantly felt series of associations and interrelations. There is a constant metamorphosis where tears turn into soft and fluid things like milk, wine, dew, or into hard things like stars, pearls and diamonds.

Although for Crashaw, the world of senses was exciting, yet it was a world of appearance only - restless appearances that were constantly changing. As Crashaw was a firm believer in the miraculous, his artistic method may be interpreted as a genuine expression of his belief. Subsequently he uses the language of metamorphosis. As has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter, Crashaw was greatly influenced by the Bible. If in the Gospels, water changes to wine and wine to blood, Crashaw was merely extending this idea when he changed tears into pearls, pearls to lilies and lilies into pure Innocents. His style is characterized by the frequent use of oxymorons, paradox and

hyperbole. His Baroque imagery involves all the senses, and suggests a world which transcends them.

Music had an important place in the education of gentlemen and poets throughout Europe in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Philosophers and poets included ecclesiastical and secular song in their works. Poets and musicians inspired and influenced each other so that any changes in musical modes was sure to affect the style of poetry. Composers like Thomas Campion, John Dowland, William and Henry Lawes, John Wilson, Charles Coleman, William Webb, John Gamble, and the Purcells, together with publishers like John and Hency Playford, upheld a long and beautiful tradition of "ayres", miscellanies and "drolleries". They were extremely fond of tavern lines and popular melodies. Ben Jonson and Tom D'Urfrey never ceased to experiment with standard songs and lyrics. But there were variations from generation to generation. The poets of the Baroque "sang" in a different key from that of the Jacobeans. Critics felt that English song was on the decline:

"Soft words, with nothing in them, make a song."

wrote Waller to his friend Creech. France was charged with having corrupted English song with her "Chlorisses and Philisses", for vulgarizing the drama and opera by introducing trivial and irresponsible elements. Even lyric poetry was affected. Dryden, who was interested in dance, introduced lyrics whenever the opportunity presented itself. Melantha and Palamede quote two pieces from Molière's ballet in Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, in Marriage a la Mode. Dryden's Sir Martin Mar-All begins :

"Blind love, to this hour
Had never, like me, a slave under his power,
Then blest be the dart
That he threw at my heart,
For nothing can prove
A joy so great as to be wounded with love."

(Sir Martin Mar - All Act I)

Thomas Campion (poet and composer), John Dowland, and Henry Lawes introduced a series of individual and new music rhythms which were so impressive that they even influenced church and chamber music where chorale measures were substituted for madrigal and dance tunes.

With the Restoration the changes were rapid and total - Charles II sent his choir boys to France, and encouraged his musicians to substitute the lute and the viol for the violin and guitar. The rhythm of the dance permeated the dramatic productions and the church and subsequently all the lyric poetry. There were many who objected to this, Henry Purcell in particular, who rebelled against what he called "the levity and balladry of our neighbours." However, Purcell was not unaware that French music had "somewhat more of gayety and Fashion", than any other.

Dryden, who had engaged the services of the musician Grabut, for his opera Albion and Albanus in 1685 was considered to be a "convert to the English School". In his dedication of Amphitryon he paid a noble tribute to Henry Purcell. Before Purcell died in 1695, he had not only written the accompaniment for an opera of Dryden, King Arthur but had also set to music the songs from Cleomenes, The Indian Queen, Aureng-Zebe, Oedipus, The Spanish Friar, Tyrannic Love and The Tempest.

In spite of the objections to songs in the Restoration, Dryden, for his part found swift, simple straightforward rhythms pleasing. His earliest song was influenced by the older Caroline Style, as the stanzas were complicated and reflective. Most of his songs are superficial, and never go deeper than the artificial conventions of Petrarchan love, but a few of them go further. The 'Sea Fight' from Amboyna, the 'Song of Tiresias' in the third act of Oedipus, and the 'Harvest Song' from King Arthur are complete departures from conventional modes.

Dryden was a born writer of hymns, though the hymns he wrote were never branded as such. Dryden's original hymn, the translation of Veni Creator

Spiritus (1693) is considered to be his best.¹³ It is more profound than any of the songs. He makes good and varied use of his vowels and the melody is more substantial. He was equally at home in writing hymns of praise as he was in writing satire.

In his dedication to King Arthur Dryden praises Purcell and admits that in certain places the verse has been allowed to suffer, because says Dryden, "My art on this occasion ought to be subservient to his". In the shorter secular masque Secular Masque Dryden celebrates the opening of the new century. Momus, Chronos and Janus review the century just past and come to the conclusion that the affairs of the world are in a state of disarray. The goddess, Diana, who represents the court of James II sings :

"With horns and with hounds I waken the day,
And hie to my woodland walks away.
I tuck up my robe, and am buskined soon.
And tie to my forehead a waxing moon.
I course the fleet stag, unkennel the fox,
And chase the wild goats o'er summits of rocks :
With shouting and hooting we pierce thro' the sky,
And Echo turns hunter, and doubles the cry."

(Secular Masque)

There are many such songs in the masque. The interest which Dryden had in songs, influenced him to write odes. Some of his greatest lyrics are odes, as here he was on native ground. The study of his odes begins not with the formal odes, but with his heroic verse. This is first found in his heroic verse, where the heavy rhythm of the couplets is from time to time relieved by impressive speeches like that of Almanzor to Lyndaraxa.¹⁴ His The State of Innocence is practically one extended ode. Dryden depends entirely on rhythmical force, a force that expresses itself initially through a series of swiftly advancing couplets, finally ending in a number of Alexandrines or triplets. We find this in the speech of Lucifer at the end of the first scene :

"On this foundation, I erect my throne;
 Through brazen gates, vast chaos, and old night
 I'll force my way, and upwards steer my flight;
 Discover this new world, and newer Man;
 Make him my footstep to mount heaven again;
 Then in the clemency of upward air,
 We'll scour our spots, and the dire thunder scar,
 With all the remnants of the unlucky war.
 And once again grow bright, and once again grow fair."

(The State of Innocence)

The account of Paradise given by Eve in the third act is even more elaborately expressed.

Dryden's inclination for the form of the ode grew stronger as the years went by. His hymns, invocations, and addresses were virtually odes included in his heroic verse. Even a work like To the Duchess on Her Return from Scotland (1682) has a prologue which ends with a lyrical flourish.

"Distempered Zeal, Sedition, Cankered Hate,
 No more shall Faction civil discords move,
 Or only discords of too tender love;
 Discords like that of Music's various parts ;
 Discords that only this dispute shall bring,
 Who best shall love the Duke and serve the King."
 (Prologue to To the Duchess on Her Return from Scotland)

Dryden's habit of packing his heroic verse with Alexandrines sometimes lead to over-indulgence, and he used them when they were not required. However, this style became popular and had numerous imitators.

Some of his finest poetry is found in his dramas. His most significant poetic drama is All for Love. Dryden borrows from Shakespeare, the entire

theme, nearly all the characters and many of the lines. However, no line is repeated ad verbatim. The scenes are animated by true poetic force that culminates in a high dramatic climax in the fourth act. Although the play does not possess spiritual and poetic qualities, it does contain scenes of remarkable dignity and emotional force, especially towards the end. Dryden is able to stir our feelings through his sincere and eloquent language.

Dryden's All for Love can be considered to be the result of the type of heroic drama developed by Dryden and his contemporaries and the English drama of an earlier age. This type of drama influenced the 'opera seria' which became very popular in this period. Along with Dryden's theatrical efforts, at least one English opera was written and staged. This was Dido and Aeneas accompanied by music written by his friend Henry Purcell. The story of Dido and Aeneas certainly reveals the continuing popularity of Virgil's epic in the seventeenth century. La Didone by Cavalli pales before the opulent splendour of Dido and Aeneas. It is an extremely compact play and Purcell is able to depict his heroic situations and emotions without having to resort to the bombast and inflation that was so popular in his day. Yet it is considered to be his masterpiece - the very quintessence of the Baroque conception of love - sensuous and tragic, and set against a background of human destiny and natural forces.

"Nymphs and Shepherds, come away, come away, in these Groves let's sport and play..."

(Dido and Aeneas)

The invitation echoes on to the strains of Purcell's music, while the visual imagination catches a glimpse of the fleeting group of scantily clad figures as they move off into some landscape of meadow, brook and copse suffused with the golden light of a magnificent and never ending evening.

There is no doubt that the pastoral world of the Baroque is a deliberate attempt at escapism. This is similarly evident in landscape gardening, in painting

and in literature. There is a definite attempt to escape the harshness of reality. In their most Baroque depictions these nymphs and shepherds seem to be modelled on Greek and Latin originals, whether in the visual arts or in poetry.

In the year 1589 Giambattista Guarini (1538-1612) presented a work entitled Faithful Shepherd. Europe was enthralled, as it opened up a whole new world of possibilities and announced new modes of expression and feeling. Printing presses churned out numerous editions of the original in Italy and it was translated into many languages. In his brilliant Preface the Italian poet stated that his aim was to communicate the delight of love but not the sadness, the perils of love, not the death. Here, indeed, was the most direct and the most eloquent of the Baroque attitudes to the poetry of love and that whole domain of the erotic and the profane of which it was so triumphantly and licentiously aware of. The delights and dangers of love are finally the single and sufficient subject of Baroque love poetry. The closer the proximity of danger and pleasure, the greater the excitement, and the more dramatic the effect. The themes of sadness and death had been the themes of some of the most intense and elegiac poems of Petrarch, and the poets of sixteenth century France, and the Elizabethans. It was indeed a rich tradition which was the background against which the Baroque poets had constantly and consciously worked with.¹⁵ The evocation of the pastoral landscape is found in Comus, Arcades and Lycidas. It is a new Arcadia - the quiet nooks and solitudes of an English pastoral world. It was what the baroque age was creating in its parks and gardens, and in its paintings.

In the love songs of the amorous swains, of the laments of the nymphs or shepherds the elements of this mythical pastoral world, were to become the recurring feature of Baroque poetry and of its music too. Now Arcadian landscapes were situated nearer home. Honoré d'Urfé (1567-1625) chose his own area of Forez in Central France for his Arcadia, as did Michael Drayton in his poem Poly - Olbion (1617). Germany's leading poet Martin Opitz selected Silesia in the first of his Pastoral poems, The Nymph Hercynia (1630). In doing so he was introducing a patriotic element by making his Arcadian setting a source of national pride.

Baroque culture is not only characterized by a desire for sharp contrasts but also by the capacity to ignore or even to woo dangers. Death lurked in Arcadia. So too, the armed presence of the Turks who were massed outside the boundaries of Europe. To the section of society which produced culture, the presence of oriental foes amassed along the borders suggested fitting analogies with the Greece and Rome of classical antiquity. The heathen figures were invested with the same vices and shortcomings of which it was restlessly conscious of in itself. They were used to show up the disappointing standards of conduct and morality at home.

In the spheres of poetry and the attendant arts of illustrative paintings and dramatic music, great impetus had been given to these ways of thinking by Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered. It has captured the imagination of his fellow countrymen when it first appeared in 1575 and its popularity spread throughout Europe. Men and women from a very broad spectrum of society derived great pleasure from it. In music, it was echoed in the works of Monteverdi and Lully. It had a theme that had captured the imagination of many a great poet. Shakespeare used it in Othello, The Moor of Venice. Dryden introduced this element in The Indian Queen, the Indian Emperor, Tyrannic Love and The Conquest of Granada.

Another element which contributes to the establishing of a Baroque theme in poetry and literature, is the right of nations to control the seas. The Dutch East India Company was established in 1602. The Dutch soon became one of the century's major European maritime trading nations. By 1660 Amsterdam had become the undisputed centre not just of shipping but also of banking and insurance. The great Dutch lawyer Grotius, in his Mare Liberum, said that the oceans of this earth are open to one and all. The expansion of merchant shipping opened up great opportunities, which led to new discoveries overseas. It influenced Vondel to write his grandiose poem In Praise of Navigation (Het lof der zeevaart).¹⁶ In it are communicated the sense of pride, promise, self-confidence and proud achievement. Mythological allusions are used side by side with the jargon of deck and quayside. The total effect is like

that of a Dutch painting off the period, with the sailors soothed by the cool sea breezes, and the ships bulging their sail with a favourable wind, and the sunlight bathing the poops in golden colour :

It seems as if they're building
 Church towers out to sea, from which you may perchance
 Survey the world as from some pinnacle:
 No, no, those are not masts of fighting-tops; they're chains
 To venture further and make Olympus fast !
 (In Praise of Navigation)

He speaks with true proud wonderment :

At last to see my ship on even keel,
 Riding at anchor in the stream ;
 This surely is a dream!
 (In Praise of Navifation)

This soon turns into a declaration of love, a panegyric of truly Baroque dimensions. The object of his love is not some creature of his erotic imagination but the real object of a Dutchman's passion - a ship - the supreme achievement of seventeenth century technology:

"godlike vessel ! you allure my senses.
 A mirthful mermaid or a watery bridge,
 You hold King Neptune captive in your golden hair
 As he spies the jewels hanging in your ear ;
 You look like Venus on her course for Cyprus
 Across the living marble of the sea ...
 Great Proteus ! what wonder mortal man
 Disdains the plough and longs for the sea air !
 And this despite the fact he knows full well
 The ship will heave and plunge deaf to the arts

Of sea - craft, astrolabe and wheel, storm - tossed
 And at the mercy of a tempest raging
 Like inflamed Janissaries deaf to a Sultan's will.

(In Praise of Navigation)

Vondel's poem is one of the great poems of Baroque Europe. Its pace, the flow of images, its sense of order, its expansive quality, its fluid sequences all bear testimony to this fact. But ultimately it is the tone of voice with which the poet asserts the mastery of nature over man and of Dutchmen over nature that invests his poem with something of the quality which one associates with the Dutch painters of maritime subjects : painters like Jan van de Cappelle (1624-79), Albert Cuyp (1629-90), and Willem vander Veldt (1633-1704).

In 1571, Portugal expressed her sense of national destiny in an epic entitled Os Lusíadas, written by Luiz Vaz da Camoens. It is set in Macao, Portugal's colony in China, and in Goa, the Indian seaport and the symbolic centre of Christian influence in the East, the shrine of St. Francis Xavier, its apostle. Like St. Thomas or St. Paul, this Jesuit missionary was one of the outstanding and popular embodiments of the ideal of Christian faith and Christian expansion. This epic poem reflects the values of such stalwarts as St. Francis - heroism, self-assertion, fortitude and Christian faith. On the other hand, it opens up for the first time a vision of that imaginative world which was to become the familiar sphere of Baroque Europe.

In the abstrusest Grottoes of the Deep,
 Where th' Ocean hides his head far under ground,
 There, whence to play their pranks the Billows creep,
 When (mocking the lowd Tempest) they resound,
 Neptune resides. There wanton Sea - Nymphs keep,
 And other Gods that haunt the Seas profound,
 Where arched Waves leave many Cities dry,
 In which abides each watery Diety.

(Os Lusíadas)

What the poet has expressed with such mastery in his poem is undoubtedly what many sailors also thought and felt about the Baroque seas. This work depicts the fusion of experience and art which took place then and which the poet captured and embodied in his work.

Many of Dryden's heroic plays, especially on "Indian" and "Moroccan" themes have many qualities in common with Portugal's national epic. The translation of the Portuguese epic by Sir Richard Franshawe in 1655 did much to promote the Baroque manner in England.

What is lacking in the English heroic dramas is the purpose and unity given by a sense of national destiny. Dryden's King Arthur did try to create a sense of epic purpose and contemporary relevance around the nebulous figure of the legendary British King, but Dryden was not successful in this venture. Dryden's failure was due partly to the fact that Arthur's enemies carried far less topical conviction than the Moors and Saracens against whom Camoen's and Tasso's heroes had to fight. But there are some elements in common between the works of the said writers. Where Dryden did capture the spirit of the Portuguese epic is in the closing stanzas of his "historical poem Annus Mirabilis (1666). Here as he himself explained, he was intent on celebrating the victories and changes of Britain by means of "lively and apt description, dress'd in such colours of speech that it sets before your eyes the absent object, as perfectly and delightfully as nature." Here Dryden shares with Tasso, Camoens and Vondel a Baroque ability to recast the heroic sense of destiny into rhyme and rhythm :

The British Ocean shall such triumph boast,
That those who now disdain our Trade to share,
Shall rob like Pyrats on our wealthy Coast ...

Thus to the Eastern wealth through storms we go!
But now, the Cape once doubled, fear no more;
A constant Trade - wind will securely blow,
And gently lay us on the Spicy shore.

(Annus Mirabilis)

Minor nations, shared Europe's Baroque ethos and its culture as is evident in their literature, arts and music, Osman, by the Croatian poet Ivan Gundulic (1589-1638), traces , the rise, triumph and fall of Sultan Osman II who was defeated by the Christian Might in Poland. Many writers tried to adapt their respective languages to the enormous demands of an essentially cosmopolitan occurrence more associated with the major powers. None of them achieved anything like the success of Gundulic.

"Let's on and live the noble life of sense,
If we be bad, 'tis Nature's fault that made us so."
(Don Juan in Shadwell's The Libertine (1975).

Don Juan's remark pinpoints the central theme of the libertine outlook which is found in various parts of Europe in the Baroque period. This was closely associated with the changing attitudes towards education and social behaviour, and became popular at court. The libertine outlook was open to excess and misinterpretation. In the notorious court circles of Restoration London, its easy going emphasis on individual freedom was little more than an excuse for self indulgence and lecherous behaviour. In Silesia, which was at that time the literary centre of Germany, Libertinism was a pose, an attitude, which fashionable men of letters affected, concealing beneath the deliberate lewdness of their verses a degree of moral integrity. This aesthetic facade of the German Baroque writers is imposing, but they lack something of the causal ease of the Restoration lyricists. The urbane, worldly manner that characterizes the poetry of Sir Charles Sedley, the Earl of Rochester or Sir John Suckling usually eludes the Germans. Instead they indulge in a display of verbal ornamentation which is highly artificial, and resort to stereotyped motifs. Lips of coral, rose and ruby, lily - white breasts of swan's down or alabaster, lack spontaneity and feeling. They are what might be called, the masters of cosmetic poetry of eye and cheek, hair, mouth and breast. They had learnt their craft in Italy where

such poetry had a long tradition that harkens back to Petrarch. The greatest exponent of this was Giambattista Marino, who was known as the Cavallieri Marini (1569-1625).¹⁷ He was the founder of the Baroque manner in the domain of metaphorical language. In 1623, when Marino was enjoying fame and patronage in Paris, he published his most erotic poem L'Adore. No single poem enjoyed such a reputation in Baroque Europe. It was the embodiment of verbal beauty. The literary fate of L'Adore is an apt example of the Baroque theme of the transitoriness of worldly glory.

The vanity of all earthly things is reiterated in every cultural language by poets, philosophers and preachers; the awareness of time forever slipping by and ready to take with it the things of beauty which we love and cherish most; the grave forever waiting as a reminder that the body is mortal and that man is dust: all this led not to the despair of pessimism, but to an extraordinary capacity and zest for living. Baroque man could live with disenchantment, gather reseed while the moment lasted, and, above all, he could appreciate the colourful masquerade of living.

CHAPTER-III NOTES

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