



## VISUAL ASPECTS OF POETIC COMPOSITION

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Visual aspect is also a component of poetic composition. The exploration of this aspect may differ from poet to poet or even from one poem to another. The tradition of this kind is surely not very strong but its consciousness or its awareness is not unknown among the poets of English. Poetry after all, is written on paper and is meant to be read. In such case if a poet conceived this idea and reveals this aspect it certainly adds a dimension to poetry and provides a certain degree of richness. The earlier known poet who used this visual technique is George Herbert, a seventeenth century metaphysical poet -

### **Easter-wings**

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,  
Though foolishly he lost the same,  
Decaying more and more,  
Till he became  
Most poore:  
With thee  
O let me rise  
As larks, harmoniously,  
And sing this day thy victories:  
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne:  
And still with sickness and shame  
Thou didst so punish sinne,  
That I became

Mostthinne.  
With thee  
Let me combine  
And feel this day thy victorie:  
For, if I imp my wing on thine,  
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

Obviously, such poetry is comprehensive in totality only when seen and read and not when only heard. The Poet has used graphic techniques and graphological medium to convey his poetic experience. It is customary to compare poetry and painting as forms of art. In fact there have been several notable poets who have been both painters and poets- D.G. Rossetti and Ravindranath Tagore, to name. It is maintained in both these art forms the artist expresses himself in two different media but the poetic experience remains constant, as constant as it can be. In our view visual aspect of poetry may be seen as one other dimension where poetry and painting can be said to converge. George Herbert's Poem is a case in point.

Similarly, we also accept the view that in poetry there are some audio aspects which are exclusive to auditory sense. Several poets, major poets for that have exploited this feature in their poetry. For instance, we can consider the following lines from John Donne's poem:

“Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne  
Which is my sin, though it were done before .....  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done”.

Usually, the poem is interpreted with all the semantic implications of the word 'done'. And the poem is considered as one of the best poems by John Donne. Undoubtedly it is. However a new dimension can be added if we interpret the word 'done' on the phonological dimension-that Dylan Thomas had done it occasionally. All his poems reveal this aspect but the poems which do indicate that he is conscious of this aspect. E.E. Cummings is notable for this kind of poetry. He is notable to the degree that to ignore this aspect of his poetry is to miss a vital aspect-an aspect that substantially determines his poetic comprehension-

The sky was can dy lu minous edible spry pinks shy lemons greens coo I  
chocolates. under, a loco motive spouting violets

The poem may be called pictorial since it resembles smoke puffing and billowing out of a locomotive. To call this just pictorial is an over simplification of the poet's endeavour. What is of importance is the fact that the poem is born out of a different conception. Similarly the following poem can also be quoted -

I (al ea ff al ls) one I iness

As someone has said, "The poem is more like a picture Washington monument or a telephone pole". Again think of the poem only in terms of Washington monument or a telephone is to miss the essential nature of the poem. The poem deals with loneliness and 'a leaf falls' is a symbolic representation of the kind of loneliness the poet wants to project. The vertical dimension of the poem indicates the falling of the leaf - slow and torturous.

As said earlier, Dylan Thomas is not like Cummings- that is to say he had not written many poems which stand out on the graphological dimension in terms of 'poetry for the eye'. But whenever he has done so with intensity and made a significant contribution to this aspect poetry. This can be understood with reference to his poem - "Vision and Prayer". It is worthwhile quoting the poem in full because only then its total impact can be properly comprehended.

### **Vision and Prayer**

I  
Who  
Are you  
Who is born  
In the next room  
So loud to my own  
That I can hear the womb  
Opening and the dark run  
Over the ghost and the dropped son  
Behind the wall thin as a wren's bone?  
. In the birth bloody room unknown  
To the burn and turn of time  
And the heart print of man  
Bows'no baptism  
But-dark alone:  
Blessing on  
The wild  
Child.

1  
Must lie  
Still as stone  
By the wren bone  
Wall hearing the moan  
Of the mother hidden  
And the shadowed head of pain  
Casting to-morrow like a thorn  
And the midwives of miracle sing  
Until the turbulent new born  
Burns me his name and his flame  
And the winged wall is torn  
By his torrid crown  
And the dark throw  
From his loin  
To bright  
Light.

When  
The wren  
Bone writhes down  
And the first dawn  
Furied by his stream  
Swarms on the kingdom come  
Of the dazzler of heaven  
And the splashed mothering maiden  
Who bore him with a bonfire in  
His mouth and rocked him like a storm  
I shall run lost in sudden  
Terror and shining from  
The once hooded room  
Crying in vain  
In the caldron  
Ot his  
Kiss

In  
    'The spin  
    Of the sun  
    In the spuming  
    Cyclone of his wing  
    For I was lost who am  
Crying at the man drenched throne  
    In the first fury of his stream  
    And the lightning's of adoration  
Back to black silence melt and mourn  
    For I was lost who have come  
    To dumbfounding haven  
    And the finding' one  
    And the high noon  
    Of his wound  
    Blinds my  
    Cry.  
    There  
    Crouched bare  
    In the shrine  
    Of his blazing  
    Breast I shall waken  
    To the judge blown bedlam  
    Of the uncaged sea bottom  
The cloud climb of the exhaling tomb  
    And the bidden dust upsailing  
    With his flame in every grain.  
    O spiral of ascension  
    From the vultured urn  
    Of the morning  
    Of man when  
    The land  
    And  
    The  
    Born sea  
    Praised the sun  
    The finding one  
    And upright Adam  
    Sang upon origin!  
    O the wings of the children!  
The wound ward flight of the ancient  
Young from the canyons of oblivion!  
    The sky stride of the always slain  
    In battle! the happening  
    Of saints to their vision!  
    The world winding home!  
    And the whole pain  
    Flows open

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And I  
Die.  
In the name of the lost who glory in  
The swinish plains of carrion  
Under the burial song  
Of the birds of burden  
Heavy with the drowned  
And the green dust  
And bearing  
The ghost  
From  
The ground  
Like pollen  
On the black plume  
And the beak of slime  
I pray though I belong  
Not wholly to that lamenting  
Brethren for joy has moved within  
The inmost marrow of my heart bone

That he who learns now the sun and moon  
Of his mother's milk may return  
Before the lips blaze and bloom  
To the birth bloody room  
Behind the wall's wren  
Bone and be dumb  
And the womb  
That bore  
For  
All men  
The adored  
Infant light or  
The dazzling prison  
Yawn to his upcoming.  
In the name of the wanton  
Lost on the unchristened mountain  
In the centre of dark I pray him

That he let the dead lie though they moan  
For his briared hands to heist them  
To the shrine of his world's wound  
And the blood drop's garden  
Endure the stone  
Blind host to sleep  
In the dark  
And deep  
Rock  
Awake  
No heart bone  
But let it break  
On the mountain crown  
Unbidden by the sun  
And the beating dust be blown  
Down to the river rooting plain  
Under the night forever falling.

Forever falling night is a known  
Star and country to the legion  
Of sleepers whose tongue I toll  
To mourn his deluging  
Light through sea and soil  
'And we have come  
To know all  
Places  
Ways  
Mazes  
Passages  
Quarters and graves  
Of the endless fall.  
Now common lazarus  
Of the charting sleepers prays  
Never to awake and arise  
For the country of death is the heart's size

And the star of the lost the shape of the eyes.  
In the name of the fatherless  
In the name of the unborn  
And the undesirers  
Of midwiving morning's  
Hands or instruments  
O in the name  
Of no one  
Now or  
No  
One' to  
Bel pray  
May the crimson  
Sun spin a grave grey  
And the colour of clay  
Stream upon his martyrdom  
In the interpreted evening  
And the known dark of the earth amen,

I turn the corner of prayer and burn  
In a blessing of the sudden  
Sun. In the name of the damned  
I would turn back and ran  
To the hidden land  
But the Joud sua  
Christens down  
The sky,  
I  
Am fouhd,  
O let him  
Scald me and drown  
Me in his world's wound,  
His lightning answers my  
Cry. My voice burns in his hand,  
Now I am lost in the blinding  
One. The sun roars at the prayer's end.



The poem is a typical example where the shape, sound, the sense coincide. In a way one can argue that the sense of the poem includes the shape and the sound. This will not be far from the truth but for the sake of analysis they are being considered three dimensions mutually reinforcing and intensifying each other. The poetic experience is the result of the convergence of the three. For this reason, the feature of the three dimensions, which are autonomous to a large extent need to be analysed and examined separately and finally related to each other. It would be unfair in the context of this poem to consider the shape of the poem less important than any other. Neither are trying to give an undue importance to the shape. What we are emphasizing is the fact that the shape is as much part of the experience as any other. On reading the poem, two things detain us first: the shapes of the stanzas and the theme. Taking the second first, we ask if this poem celebrates the poet's religious conversion or if, as earlier poems suggest, religion serves again as a metaphor for something else-something secular which, feeling holy, demands holy metaphor: secular enlightenment, the birth of a child, the making of a poem? A child's birth seems the occasion. The making of a poem, parallel to the birth of the child, seems a way to the poet's remaking. Jesus seems the light to which child, poet, and poem ascend.

The shapes of the stanzas are significant and ambiguous. A diamond, carrying for Thomas the meaning of Hopkins "immortal diamond" must stand for light, vision and eternity. Yet Thomas' diamonds are often black as coal. Even such diamonds, however, hold light, promise vision, image art and bring things forth. By shape, a diamond represents the womb, as we know from other poems, is heavenly. But why diamonds before wings? Why not wings before diamonds? Answers to these questions depend on which of the several meanings of diamond and wing we prefer. If diamonds are black and temporal wings bring the poet to light and eternity if diamonds are heavenly, black wings are the temporal vehicles to diamond light. In the first case, wings are better where they are. In the second, not. In either case, the poet meant them to be where they but what he meant and meant us to conclude remain dark.

The wings of the second part owe something to George Herbert's "Easter Wings" which like the Mouse's Tale in Alice in Wonderland, belongs to the tradition of "figured" poems - poems that take their shape from that they are about. Shapes aspiring to eternity can be the hour glasses of time. As ambiguous as diamonds, Wings include the opposites of time and eternity, light and dark. May be the poet's eternity is temporal, and his road through

time “as long as for ever is”. What Shapes more suitable for a double-taking poet than diamonds and wings?

What shapes more suitable for a story of process? A diamond rising from point to climax, descends to point. A wing descending from climax to point, ascends to climax. Each part of the poetic process is a miniature of a whole process of one kind or another. The important points of diamond and wing are beginning, middle, and end, the first, ninth, and seventeenth lines of these stanzas. Diamonds ascends and fall. That wings fall and rise seems more triumphant.

Poetry as prayer, vision, and pain is but a facet of this diamond. Another is sex. The winding home of the writing is the fall as entering its heaven, which “flows open”, splashed with the furious stream. Ecstatic “I die”, uniting tomb and womb, is sexual dying to live and create. As the child saves the poet, bringing him to light, so the making of love and poetry. Holy metaphor saves triple salvation.

Conceits may be but also significant shapes, these diamonds are what they are about- or so they seem for the time being. The bottom point of last diamond is “Die” as the top point of the first diamond is “born”. The six diamonds compose a great diamond of which the third and fourth diamonds and the bottom point of the fifth lack distinction by sound from the nasal continuo.