"That great and true Amphibium": Mediation and Unity in the Works of Sir Thomas Browne

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ABSTRACT

The works of Sir Thomas Browne are often described in terms of the contradictions and paradoxes which seem to exist both within his work as a whole and also within the individual essays themselves. Yet many of the apparent oppositions and paradoxes result from our own readings of Browne, conditioned by what Timothy Reiss calls analytico-referential discourse. The primary focus of this thesis is the relationship between seemingly opposed forms of discourse and systems of thought in the *Religio Medici*, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*. The emergence of analytic discourse in the seventeenth century is presented through the study of changing concepts of religious, political and epistemological mediation. Browne's 'mediate' position within the conflicts of his era is seen as representing a desire to unite apparent opposites and arrive at a 'complete' way of thinking which combines the medieval and the modern. The unified vision he advocates is of interest in both modern science and literary theory, where the premise of objectivity fundamental to analytic thinking is now being questioned. Critiques of analytic thought by writers such as Berman, Bordo, Foucault, Keller and Merchant are examined in order to explore the possibilities for a 'new' discourse that, without supplanting the old, can complement it as Browne believed faith did reason. The retrieval of the intuitive or imaginative elements lost in the advent of analytic thought is seen further to contribute to the development of an interdisciplinary and holistic approach to both science and critical theory.

RESUME

Les oeuvres de Sir Thomas Browne sont souvent décrites en termes de paradoxes et contradictions qui semblent exister à l'intérieur de ses essais individuels, comme dans l'ensemble de ses essais. Mais Timothy Reiss nous suggère que ces contradictions proviennent en partie de notre façon moderne et analytique de percevoir. Cette thèse examine la relation entre les systèmes épistémologiques et les façons d'écrire apparement opposés dans les essais *Religio Medici*, *Hydriotaphia* et *The Garden of Cyrus*. Le développement d'un discours analytique au dix-septième siècle est tracé à travers des questions de médiation, en politique, religion et pensée générale. Browne est situé dans une position médiane concernant les conflits de son âge, ce qui semble démontrer son désir d'unir des conceptions opposées et d'arriver à une façon de penser plus complète, combinant des aspects modernes et médiévaux. De plus, la perception unifiée de Browne présente un intérêt au point de vue de la science moderne et des études littéraires, où de nos jours les questions d'objectivité qui sont fondamentales à la pensée analytique se trouvent mises en question. Des critiques de l'analytique par Berman, Bordo, Foucault, Keller et Merchant nous suggèrent la possibilité d'un nouveau discours, d'une nouvelle façon de penser, qui, sans supplanter l'analytique, pourrait le compléter. La reprise d'aspects perdus dans le développement de la pensée analytique peut ensuite être perçu comme contribuant à l'étude interdisciplinaire en science et littérature, au profit des deux.

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Introduction

> . . . thus is man that great and true Amphibium, whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds; for though there bee but one to sense, there are two to reason; the one visible, the other invisible. . . . (Browne 103)

In 1671, Charles II knighted Thomas Browne of Norwich, after the mayor of that town had declined the same privilege. While not the first or most obvious choice, Browne was a suitable candidate, a respected physician with several published works. In this thesis, Browne's major works serve as a starting point for a discussion of certain changes, both scientific and discursive, taking place in the seventeenth century. The names of Bacon, Descartes and Newton may spring to mind first when we think of the seventeenth century enlightenment, but here again, Browne is a more than suitable choice. Equally comfortable with the scientific and the mystical, the rational and the religious, Sir Thomas Browne wrote on such varied subjects as the excavation of burial urns, the aesthetics of gardens, and Christian morality. However, no matter what the topic, the issues of reason and science, as well as religion and faith, found their way to the surface. These issues define the specific focus of *Religio Medici*, Browne's essay on the religion of a doctor, though they are also apparent in the pair of essays *The Garden of Cyrus* and *Hydriotaphia*. To the modern reader, Browne's discussion of these issues may seem to be a paradoxical combination of what we see as 'divided and distinguished

worlds': rational belief in the powers of reason and strong religious faith. Yet in Browne's epistemology such apparent oppositions function together; both reason and faith are essential to the development of knowledge, natural or divine. Browne's approach to knowledge is reflected in his many writing styles, which combine objectivity and spirituality. He writes sometimes as the impartial, detached scientist, sometimes as the mystic inspired by profound faith. By studying Browne's discursive approach in relation to emerging analytic models, Browne can be seen to represent a 'suitable' epistemological and discursive alternative, which is concerned with the unification of opposites rather than the creation of differences.

The different types of discourse represented in Browne's essays correspond in many ways to what Timothy Reiss, in *The Discourse of Modernism*, defines as analytical and analogical. Reiss discusses the emergence of what he calls analytico-referential discourse as the dominant form in the sixteenth century. Before this, analogical discourse--the discourse of patterning or signature--prevailed. In a discourse of patterning, there existed a natural harmony between word and object; "the word was felt to inhere. . . in the thing" (Reiss 31). In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault points out that while later conceptions of language break the link between word and thing,

> in the sixteenth century, signs were thought to have been placed upon things so that men might be able to uncover their secrets, their nature or their virtues; . . but they did not need to be known in order to exist: even if they remained silent, even if no one were to perceive them, they were just as much *there*. (59)

All of nature was in a sense encoded, so that "name and object [were] themselves part of an order of which the enunciator [was] also a part" (Reiss 32). Knowledge was always physically accessible as it was there to be 'read' by the perceptive individual. Complex notions were developed through networks of resemblance and accumulations of meaning which allowed understanding to be approached, though never fully achieved. However, while the search for knowledge was felt to be ideally and necessarily endless, it was believed that "the greater the accumulation of such meanings, the nearer the approach to a wisdom conceived as knowing participation in a totality" (Reiss 31).

During the Renaissance, this endless ascent to knowledge became problematic. In *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, Ernst Cassirer points out that "the Renaissance. . . began . . . with the attempt at an immediate and sensible grasping of nature" (167). While empirical and rational knowledge could be achieved "through a finite series of mental steps" (Cassirer 11), absolute or divine truth was somehow different. In a discourse based on patterns and analogies, "all knowledge presupposes comparison, which, in turn, more precisely understood, is nothing but measurement" . . . [however] by its essence and by definition, the absolute object lies beyond every possibility of comparison and measurement and therefore beyond the possibility of knowledge" (Cassirer 10-11). Analogical discourse was placed in a paradoxical position, ideally functioning through infinite accumulation, but unable to achieve knowledge of the infinite. In the fifteenth century, Nicholas Cusanus declared that "the finite intellect. . . cannot know the truth of things

with any exactitude by means of similarity, no matter how great" (Cassirer 22), while Galileo stated that "we do not come to know what is eternal and necessary in things through a mere accumulation and comparison of sensible experiences" (Cassirer 164). A discourse of patterning began to be perceived as failing to reach the ultimate goal of 'absolute truth'; eventually, its ability to communicate any sort of truth was put into question.

According to Reiss, the fundamental problem in analogical discourse is that

> such a class of discourse places the enunciator within the same structure as englobes name and object as well. Its elements may thus be available to a continuous interpretation, but they cannot be grasped as a whole from within and thereby known in the same sense as they may be by a discourse based on a practice of difference and alterity. (32)

Analytical or referential discourse develops as a response to this perceived failure, out of a desire for "complete knowledge" (Reiss 359). In order to know something completely, a certain distance must be established between the individual and the discourse employed. One must cease to participate in, or be a part of, the reality being defined; it is only by taking a 'step back' that the object, the reality, can be seen in its entirety. Language conceived as an abstract medium, a bridge or single step between things 'in themselves' and our knowledge or comprehension of them, would create this necessary distance. However, not only does this imply a separation of individual from discourse, but a sense that language is separate from its signified elements. Language can no longer be purely 'significant' (implying that it is meaningful in itself), but must become 'referential'

and transparently representative of its signified elements. In this way, the confusion and ambiguity engendered by words and things being of one order is resolved. The new system creates a distance between word and thing in order to clearly distinguish one from the other, and reduces this distance to a minimum in order to clearly achieve knowledge. Such a 'new' discourse, separate from reality although entirely indicative of it, allows 'truth' to emerge directly and (ideally) immediately.

It is not clear where this drive for unmediated knowledge (Cassirer's "immediate and sensible grasping of nature") which ends in the redefinition of language as purely referential, originated. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault explains somewhat obscurely that

> [d]iscontinuity--the fact that within the space of a few years a culture sometimes ceases to think as it had been thinking up till then and begins to think other things in a new way--probably begins with an erosion from outside, from the space which is, for thought, on the other side, but in which it has never ceased to think from the very beginning. (50)

If we consider this space as the space of belief, then without implying direct causal relationships, it is possible to distinguish parallel movements toward an elimination of systems of mediation between knower and known in both religion and science. One of the primary movements of the Reformation was toward "individual conscience, rather than the structure of a church hierarchy to mediate between God and Man" (Hollander 7). Hill declares that "the abolition of mediators, the stress on the individual conscience, left God speaking direct to the elect" (Hill, *World* 91). In science, the realization that

the Earth was not at the center of the universe altered the conception of the infinite, and raised doubts about the possibility of achieving any knowledge through an endless accumulation of analogies and resemblances. In the old, closed system of spheres, 'infinite' seemed to mean 'very, very large' rather than truly 'limitless.' Conceiving of infinity as literally without end prompted the search for unmediated paths to knowledge which could guarantee arrival at a final destination. A discourse of analogy and metaphor could never be limited to any acceptable degree, since "there cannot be two or more things so similar that something even more similar could not be found, and so on *ad infinitum*" (Cassirer 22). While this is an obvious simplification of the influences affecting discourse, it can be seen that both religious and scientific changes take place at the level of fundamental and established beliefs, and require the rethinking of the relationships between the individual and God, and the individual and the universe.

In his attempt to describe the emergence of new ways of thinking, Reiss distinguishes several steps contributing to the development of analytic discourse, from Galileo's treatise on the telescope to Descartes' separation of mind and body. The telescope literally separates the observer from the observed phenomena, creating a distance "between the human mind and the material world before it, the object of its attentive gaze" (Reiss 24). This separation or distance created between mind and object contributes to the development of a "supposedly 'neutral' and 'objective' scientific discourse" (Reiss 25). Reiss takes the telescope as the metaphor for a new conception of a language that is seen as mediating without bias between material

reality and human understanding. Words or signs "can be identified neither with the mind nor with the world, but they are subject to the organization of the former" (Reiss 33). A discourse which is set apart and abstracted so that it cannot be confused with the world, but can be completely (and usefully) controlled by the mind, cannot conceivably function through resemblance and analogy. Infinite accumulation of detail is thus replaced as a path to knowledge by a simple, well-defined trinity of mutually exclusive elements: mind-discourse-phenomena. The nature of this new discourse is one of difference and alienation, and so definition

> . . . no longer [consists] in *drawing things together*, in setting out on a quest for everything that might reveal some sort of kinship, attraction, or secretly shared nature within them, but, on the contrary, in *discriminating*, that is, in establishing their identities. . . . [D]iscrimination imposes upon comparison the primary and fundamental investigation of difference. (Foucault 55)

Discourse is no longer a set of relations, but an attempt to isolate individual elements; it is not a winding, cumulative path to knowledge but a fundamentally linear one.

The imposition of objective distance within the 'new' discourse eliminated confusion and ambiguity between words and things, as well as allowing language to be ordered and controlled. For Francis Bacon and John Locke, both instrumental in the development of modern scientific and political thought, control over language and discourse was essential for the progress of knowledge and the general improvement of humanity. Both men sought to "[remove] some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge" (Locke 1: l). Bacon hoped

to replace the "general agreement in error" (Bacon 344) with simple means of reaching true (and useful) knowledge; Locke wished to improve human understanding and social order by clearly establishing 'collective' truths. The proper definition of language was a common concern for both Bacon and Locke. Both believed that by restricting and clarifying language to such an extent that it became wholly transparent to its signified element, they could discover knowledge which was certain and could be verified and confirmed in every instance. Once language was brought under the control of an enunciating society, knowledge itself could be put to use practically, "for the betterment of men's lives" (Reiss 34). The need for complete knowledge which precipitated the development of analytic discourse was interpreted by Bacon and Locke as a need for knowledge acquired directly, without, or with a minimum of, mediation.

As we shall see further, like the sectarians who sought to diminish or entirely eliminate the mediatory powers of the Church, the seventeenth century scientists and philosophers sought to reduce language to a socially controlled abstract system with no real power or significance in itself. However, the dissenting sects, while upholding the importance of direct revelation from God, still maintained the essentiality of Scripture, the 'word of God' which mediated between God and the people. Similarly, analogy and metaphor in language could not be discarded entirely. Just as there was a certain range of interpretation in religious matters, that which the Anglican church called 'points indifferent', so language could not be legislated perfectly; "the necessity of communication by language brings men to

an agreement in the signification of common words, within some tolerable latitude" (Locke 3:305). Where it could not be transparently representative, definition fell back on "connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy" (Locke 4: 308) in order to put across a 'notion' of the signified. For practical purposes, both resemblance and difference were necessary in the proper definition of a term. Analytic discourse, despite its best intentions, did not break entirely with the discourse of analogy it grew out of.

Analytic discourse and scientific method have remained dominant as approaches to knowledge for over three hundred years. Recently, though, there has been a growing awareness of the limitations of analytic models and an effort to suggest alternative visions. The limitations of isolated and supposedly objective scientific methods have been demonstrated most immediately in the twentieth century in relativity theory and quantum physics. The premise of objectivity and neutrality on which scientific method is based requires that the observer stand outside the sphere of the object under observation; relativity has established that such isolation is impossible. Moreover, this separation, however illusory, of the analytic mind from material reality has reinforced the alienation of intellect from body rooted in Descartes' definition of self as mind, and body as categorically different and inferior. For Descartes, the body is simply extended substance (*res extensa*), under the control of the intellect and unnecessary in the search for truth; significant knowledge is achieved through reason only. In *The Reenchantment of the World*, Morris Berman criticizes the Cartesian, analytic way of knowing which disregards knowledge

gained either intuitively or physically, and ego-consciousness which disallows 'participating' consciousness--the sense that everything in the universe is alive and interrelated. Participating consciousness is part of what Berman calls the 'archaic tradition', which includes the medieval doctrine of signature described by Foucault as the discursive method which maintains that there exists a direct correspondence between an object, its name, and its influence on humanity. Both Evelyn Fox Keller and Carolyn Merchant look at the ways in which assignments of gender work in scientific discourse, separating masculine 'order' from feminine 'chaos', and how they have determined the specific direction of research and technological development. While there is no doubt that great progress has been achieved by experimentation and empiricism, all these authors point out the limitations of a discourse based on separation, isolation and alienation.

This critique of the analytic appears in both critical theory and science, and in both cases, the alternative offered is a holistic, interdisciplinary model which seeks to retrieve certain elements lost in the 'disembodiment' of language, discourse and science. In science, a solution has been sought in chaos theory, relativity, and non-linear or random mathematics. In literary study, a holistic approach is sought in methods which would remain open to ideas from all disciplines in the humanities or the sciences. The elements 'lost' in the analytic search for absolute truth, such as intuition and faith, might be used to complement rather than oppose analytic thinking, just as faith complements reason in Browne's *Religio Medici*.

Browne seems the appropriate (or 'suitable') choice for attempting such an interdisciplinary study, as his writing combines what are now perceived as fundamentally different approaches to knowledge. Browne was a contemporary of Descartes and Bacon, yet his works are anything but typical of modern discourse or analytic thinking. Browne 'read' significance in the physical world, in burial urns or the pattern of the outer leaves of the pineapple; he perceived a very real and important correspondance between the quincunx in nature and the mystical properties of the number 5. Browne's writing is often directed towards the metaphysical, both in the sense of speculation on first natures and the transcendence of the physical or natural world. Analytic discourse as well as scientific method discard metaphysical truths outright for their lack of objectivity and their inability to be empirically verified. Browne's love of paradox and mystery, his belief in the mystical, and his method of understanding through analogy and the correspondance between physical objects and spiritual reality marked him as 'unenlightened' or old-fashioned in relation to the new science of his time.

Despite his metaphysical tendencies, however, Browne showed an awareness and involvement in the epistemological changes taking place in the seventeenth century. Like Locke, he was aware of the relativity of meaning in language; like Bacon, he was interested in practical, empirical research, as demonstrated in *Hydriotaphia*. Unlike these two, though, his goal was not control, over language or nature. His search for a fundamental figure in the world, his

perception of burial urns as representations of both death and eternity, and his insistence on the interdependence of reason and faith all indicate an essential belief in unity rather than analytic dissection; Browne sought knowledge in order to glorify God and reinforce the order and coherence of the universe.

In this thesis I will attempt to expore the relation between the development of science and that of analytic discourse by considering their seventeenth century beginnings as well as current issues in both science and literary study. Browne's *Religio Medici* will serve as a starting point for a discussion of important changes in the seventeenth century; his indifference to contemporary religious and political issues will be re-evaluated as a particular kind of involvement in the general intellectual debates of the day. Browne's refusal to situate himself clearly with one side or the other reflects his desire for unity at a time when divisive forces dominate religious, social and epistemological debates. In a subsequent closer reading of the *Religio Medici*, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, Browne's simultaneously analytic and analogical approach to questions of meaning and knowledge will be examined as a possible alternative epistemology. Finally, I will tie Browne's approach to reason and faith to recent directions in both science and critical discourse.

Chapter 1

Social Contexts for Mediation

In the preface to the *Religio Medici*, Sir Thomas Browne advises his readers that the essay is not to be read too critically, as "there might be many reall lapses therein. . . [and] many things therein plausible unto my passed apprehension, which are not agreeable to my present selfe" (60). These 'apologies' for his writing appear to indicate Browne's personal indifference to his youthful reflections on faith, "penned in such a place and with such disadvantage, that. . . from the first setting of pen unto paper, I had not the assistance of any good booke, whereby to promote my invention or relieve my memory" (60). However, Browne also declares that "the allegeance I must ever acknowledge unto truth" (59) prevailed upon him to make public an authorized version of the essay which had been "most imperfectly and surreptitiously published before" (59). In the same way, while Browne proclaims himself indifferent to religious and political controversy, in the few additions and revisions made before the authorized 1643 edition was published, and particularly in the preface, he raises political as well as religious issues more explicitly, situating himself firmly on the Anglican and Royalist side. In the preface, Browne speaks out against the anti-royalist pamphlets of the 1630's in which one found "the name of his Majesty defamed, the honour of Parliament depraved" (59); early in the essay, he clearly declares his religious allegiance to "the Church of *England*, to whose faith I am a sworne

subject, and therefore in a double obligation, subscribe unto her Articles, and endeavour to observe her Constitutions" (64). While Browne's sympathies seem quite evident, "he stands somewhat apart from the movements of his own day" (Dowden 36), obstinately tolerant or 'indifferent' to the excesses on both sides of the issues. This tolerance may strike us as meaning that Browne took a neutral and distant position, but just as "the recent past has taught us that within a partisan context even the flourishing of flowers. . . can be a provocative and inflammatory gesture," (Waddington 99) so seventeenth century 'indifference' can indicate far more involvement than we might initially suppose. By examining the political and religious context in which Browne wrote the *Religio Medici*, we can see to what degree Browne's 'indifference' was not nonchalance, but profound involvement in the intellectual changes of the time.

Browne wrote at a time when, as I have mentioned, concepts of science and discourse were changing, and religious and political conflicts divided the nation.[1] In many ways, the ecclesiastical and civil issues at hand, like the epistemological issues leading to analytic discourse, centered on concepts of mediation. Anglicans and sectarians such as the Puritans, Presbyterians and Independents disagreed as to the extent to which an individual could attain knowledge of God; Anglicans maintained that the Church must mediate in this process, while sectarians believed that God was understood through direct revelation. The civil debates were similar

[1]The following is a necessarily brief summary based on discussions by Bush, Dowden, Hill, McGee and Willey

in their conflicting ideals of political representation. Supporters of the hierarchical royalist government insisted on the divine right of the monarch; the proper government of the nation was possible only if the people were subjected to God's authority through the mediation of the king as head of the Church. For their part, Parliamentarians supported an unmediated system based on the right of individual representation for freemen, or men of property; more radical political movements argued for something approaching complete democracy, maintaining every individual's equal right to govern. This is a simplification of matters, however. The significance of mediation as the fundamental dividing factor between religious and political factions becomes more apparent in a closer examination of the conflicts of Browne's era.

In matters of religion, the principle conflict was between Anglicans and the protestant sects who felt that the English Church was too Roman and Papist. After the break between the Churches of England and Rome, it had been initially important to stress the differences between the two and to emphasize the righteousness of the reformed church. By the seventeenth century, however, it was possible to declare the Church of England "a true Catholic Church, purified from the accumulated inventions and abuses of Rome, perpetuating the apostolic succession and the doctrines, rites, and organization authorized by Scripture, by three creeds, by the first four general councils, and by the fathers of the first five centuries" (Bush 336). The Anglican Church at this time, influenced by Charles I and Bishop Laud, asserted that the separation of the English from the

Roman Church did not indicate a total refusal of Catholicism, but rather an improvement on flawed Roman doctrines. The English Church sought to establish itself as truly catholic in a way that the Roman church was no more; it emphasized its position as a middle ground, or 'via media', between Roman Catholics and extreme Protestant reformers. To the distress of many Protestants, tolerance of Roman Catholicism was encouraged. It was the dissenting sects that saw themselves as fulfilling the spirit of 'protestation' in its literal sense. The more radical of these sects "had long waited to complete the Reformation, which they regarded as having got stuck halfway in the Elizabethan settlement" (Hill, *World* 161). For most of the sects, the complete reformation of the Church would be possible only if the powers of the priests and the church courts were abolished, and "social control was. . . exercised democratically" (Hill, *World* 161).

'Lower case' protestants, as one might call these sectarians, sought radical changes both in the political organization of the Church and in the actual spiritual structure of their faith.[2] As one of its fundamental concepts, "Puritanism maintained, as far as was possible, that the relation between the invisible spirit of man and the invisible God was immediate rather than mediate" (Dowden 11). Many of the other protestant sects held that knowledge of God should only be achieved directly, as a personal message from God to the individual. In default of such unmediated communication, every individual had a

[2]While Anglicans were part of the larger Protestant Church, Puritans, Presbyterians and other sectarians were not, although their beliefs remained consistent with Reformation ideals

responsibility to read and learn for his or herself; Scripture, rather than the priests, was the spiritual guide which, when properly interpreted, would reveal the way to truth and godliness. Sectarian movements to eliminate all forms of mediation also extended the iconoclastic impulse at the base of the Reformation. It was felt that for God's message to manifest itself in any physical or visible way would imply a degradation of the divine; the visible and invisible worlds were considered not only as separate, but antagonistic realms. This separation of spiritual and material worlds "[allowed] each to exist only by the extinction of the other" (Dowden 7); as a result, religious ritual and ceremony favored by the state Church appeared only to detract from spiritual advancement. To the sects, ceremonialism was a profanation of the worship of God; it amounted to idolatry, and "idolatry was the most comprehensive and evocative word in the puritan vocabulary of sin" (McGee 100).[3]

As communication between God and the people was felt to be direct and unmediated, sectarians felt that sin should "no longer. . . be the concern of courts, spiritual or secular. . . [but] the internal problem of each believer" (Hill, *World* 161). Just as direct revelation meant individual responsibility for one's knowledge of God, so internalization of sin implied personal responsibility for one's actions before God, unmediated by church authority. The protestant sects felt that Anglican "pretensions of an ecclesiastical hierarchy [were] an estrangement of the adopted son of the Father; [to the protestant]

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[3]For more on sectarian views of ceremonialism as idolatry, see McGee 83-8, 261-2, and Hill, *World* 82-3.

every lay Christian [was] himself a royal priest" (Dowden 11). Sermons and discussions led by lecturers or lay members of the congregation became the focus of sectarian gatherings; it was felt that every good Christian should be directly involved in defining and regulating his or her own faith.[4] The Church was no longer needed, either as a means of achieving knowledge of God, or as the administrator of God's laws.

The sectarian questioning of Church hierarchy was accompanied by a tendency to undermine established class hierarchies. As the disembodiment of the spiritual implied that godliness was separate from any social or physical state, it was felt that divine favor was not restricted to the church, the aristocracy or the gentry; to the sectarians, "the elect form a spiritual aristocracy, which bears no relation to the worldly aristocracy of birth" (Hill, *World* 153). At the same time, however, the protestant emphasis on individual, internally regulated faith, while allowing spiritual rather than material worth to determine salvation, led to anxiety over the question of membership among the elect. Belief in individual responsibility for one's salvation could lead to personal torment for those uncertain of God's grace, or uncertain of the authenticity of their experience of revelation; for some, doubt meant damnation.[5] John Bunyan's autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, is an example of the intensity of the spiritual struggle which could exist over such points as whether there was grace enough for one's salvation. Even after conversion, Bunyan

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[4]On lecturers, see Hill, *Century of Revolution* 88-90, on discussion as essential to faith, see Hill, *World* 104-6

[5]Calvinist doctrine offered one possible solution by limiting the number of the elect and maintaining the irresistibility of God's grace.

was subject to "inclinings to unbelief" (Bunyan 83) which put his salvation into doubt. For Bunyan as for others, faith and doubt, like salvation and damnation, were mutually exclusive states; one could not exist in the presence of the other. For the more radical sects, though, faith in election and personal salvation justified libertinism.[6] Other groups held the more moderate belief that everyone, peasants and land owners alike, being equally open to revelation, were equal in the eyes of God; by extension, everyone was equally likely to be saved. However, to many the concept of general salvation appeared either democratic or anarchic, both equally horrifying alternatives to seventeenth century society. In order to regulate salvation while maintaining the importance and responsibility of the individual, Puritan theologians taught that "a passionate desire to be saved was strong presumptive evidence that one was in fact among the elect" (Hill, *World* 159).

Futhermore, one's works and labour in this life were felt to be reflective of the individual's godliness and religious fervor. Although the absolute polarization of faith and works, like the division between physical and spiritual life, was maintained as an ideal, it was realized that, while alive, one could never fully deny the physical in favor of the spiritual. Just as Locke acknowledged the need for analogy and metaphor as means of bridging the gap between reality and understanding, so the sectarians had to admit that physical existence and individual lifestyle reflected spiritual strength or weakness. What

[6]For more on Ramblers, Seekers and other radical sects, see Hill, *World*, chapters 9 & 10

emerged was the protestant ethic emphasizing "the religious duty of working hard in one's calling, of avoiding the sins of idleness, waste of time, [and] over-indulgence in the pleasures of the flesh" (Hill, *World* 324). Where Anglicans advocated ceremony and ritual as ways to increase spirituality, sectarians prescribed hard work; the gulf between sense and spirit was bridged not in marble and colour but in private and public action (Dowden 12). For sectarians, one's works and actions form the path leading to God. Eventually, 'action' (as opposed to contemplation) came to be conceived as a religious duty. The lay Christian was called to engage in God's battle, where "light fights against darkness, universal love fights against selfish power; life against death; true knowledge against imaginary thoughts" (Hill, *World* 338).[7]

Unlike the conceptions of the radical sects, the doctrines of the Church of England did not make absolute distinctions between sense and spirit, or between election and damnation. In the Anglican view, the physical and the spiritual were aspects of one reality and the senses played a part in the understanding of the divine. The ceremonies and iconography of the English church were ways for the common people to understand their faith through the mediation of the physical senses, after which a fuller 'spiritual' understanding could be

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[7]Just as godliness was achieved through spirtual battle, so Bacon had defined his search for knowledge as an intellectual combat against error, and a fight to "command nature in action'" (Bacon 314) Antipathy towards ceremonialism surfaces in Bacon's discourse as well, in his description of the principal errors of the mind as 'Idols' Just as to the sectarians religious idols were sinful and unnecessary mediators in an individual's communication with God, so to Bacon the Idols of the Market Place, concerning language, were "the most troublesome of all" (Bacon 341) in impeding human access to truth

achieved; "its rites [were] a manipular invocation of God" (Dowden 7). In maintaining these rituals, Anglicans fulfilled a duty towards God; they "sought simply to 'perform these ceremonies, and observe those decent circumstances in [their] devotion, which either himself (the Lord) enjoined, or his church commanded, for the more reverent setting out and adorning his service'" (McGee 95). Anglican doctrine maintained that grace was received through the sacraments, that is, through the mediation of established rites rather than through direct interaction with God. The English Church sought not only to establish a middle ground between Catholics and sectarians, but also to mediate in each individual's understanding of God and search for spiritual truth.

In asserting its position as guide and mediator between God and the people, the English Church was not required to strictly define the conditions for salvation; while for the Puritans exclusion from the elect implied damnation, "most Anglicans had a more optimistic opinion of the potential of human nature and reason" (McGee 70). Good and evil were seen as neither pre-ordained, nor mutually exclusive categories. The good Christian needed only to take Christ as exemplar, worship God as the Church determined, and concentrate upon the "virtues of obedience, charity, unity, and peacableness" (McGee 110). Anglicans were not enjoined to take action to prove their faith; the focus of the English Church was not change but maintenance of established traditions. Theological disputation and interpretation of Scripture were not the concern of the lay Christian; they were either declared points indifferent, or left to the divines,

whose duty it was to mediate between God and the people (McGee 102). 'Points indifferent' referred specifically to those issues that the Church of England left to individual conscience and reason; "what Scripture has neither commanded, nor forbidden, must be considered indifferent, permitted, free, voluntary--in the sense that so far as man's relation to God is concerned, all such matters make no difference in themselves" (Verkamp 162).

The issues dividing sectarians and Anglicans involved dissension over concepts of mediation in religion and, in what was for both deeply implicated in religion, politics. While religious sectarians found themselves in agreement with political radicals, supporters of the state church were implicitly supporters of the monarchy.[8] In affirming the 'equality' of the people, and questioning the need for Church mediation between the individual and God, the beliefs of the sectarians had obvious appeal for the middle and lower classes.[9] Sectarian criticism of the structure of the Church went hand in hand with criticism of the hierarchical royalist government; Puritans and Presbyterians were sympathetic to the Parliamentarian ideals of the rights of freemen, or men of property, and to even more radical concepts of democracy. English sectarians objected to the Anglican Church's financial and spiritual control over the people. As mediator between God and the people, the Church could reap financial benefits

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[8]On the political implications of both Anglican and Puritan doctrine see Hill

[9]Few sects affirmed absolute democratic equality; certain classes of people were still considered more equal than others On the unprivileged third estate, see in particular Hill, *World* 153. On the effects on the lower classes, see Hill on the Levellers, *World* 107-50; and *Century of Revolution* 129-33.

in the name of holy duty, while at the same time claiming spiritual superiority as God's representative. In the sectarian view, tithes kept poor parishes poor. It seemed that the Church's prosperity, ostensibly a reflection of the spiritual wealth of the parish, was in fact more important than the survival of the parishioners themselves. Many protestant sects were suggesting that the people should elect their own ministers and preachers, and that they should be paid according to the generosity of the parish, or possibly not paid at all. These sectarian ideas of equality, far though they may have been from actual democracy, appeared divisive, anarchic and threatening to the social order of both state and church.[10]

While respect for God's laws as written in Scripture had not been questioned, popular respect for the hierarchy of both church and government and obedience to both civil and ecclesiastical courts declined in the seventeenth century. .The Anglican defence of the hierarchical system was a response to sectarian claims that one's relationship with God did not require church mediation, and that sin was a personal responsibility, not a public offence; just as the Puritans and Presbyterians modified their concept of unmediated, internalized faith to suit political needs, so the English Church stressed obedience and "defined peace and unity in such a way as to indict the Puritans for disrupting them" (McGee 143). To the Anglicans, the loss of income obtained through tithes could be substantial, and the loss of control over both the clergy and people even more so. Anglicans insisted that

[10]For more on the economic solutions proposed by the radical sects for the Church, see Hill, *Century of Revolution* 89-90, 163-4.

true faith and knowledge of God could only be achieved with the guidance of the church; as primary spiritual guide, the Church must remain an authority beyond question. Obedience to the commandments of God, to the laws of the Church, and to the king and his government were perceived by the Anglicans as being inseparable; it was believed that if one was obedient to one God and one Church, then one should also be faithful to a divinely appointed monarch. Next to charity, the English Church upheld the importance of the Christian "duty of obedience to the king and the established ecclesiastical hierarchy" (McGee 98) as essential to the proper worship of God. Obedience to both Church and King was required in fulfillment of the fifth commandment; it was felt that "the king was the father of the nation, and the church was often referred to as the holy mother of its members" (McGee 148).[11] In the Anglican view, church discipline should be considered "as the chastisements of a loving Father and not as the punishments of an angry Judge" (McGee 143). The Church of England urged its members to maintain unity and peaceableness, promoted "willing and cheerful performance of the king's orders and outlawed even murmuring against them" (McGee 151). Civil disobedience was considered a violation of God's law, while maintenance and support of both civil peace and religious unity were part of every good Christian's duty to God; sectarian dissent and rebellion were both unlawful and unchristian, and could lead only to chaos and anarchy.

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[11]The metaphor of marriage was also widely used to describe the conjunction of mind and matter fundamental to the scientific endeavor. Keller examines the very different interpretations of this metaphor given by Renaissance alchemists and Baconian scientists; see in particular 33-61. I will return to the connections between religion and science in chapter 3.

The positions of Anglicans and radicals were polarized in Browne's time by the emphasis on their fundamental differences; Anglicans defined themselves as concerned with civil unity, while the tendency of the sectarians, in breaking away from the established Church and actively promoting change, was towards fragmentation. Browne was in no way a strong voice in the political and religious debates of the day, but his conception of faith and his declared indifference indicated his opposition to religious zeal and political ambition, and his concern with religious unification and civil peace. As a member of the Church of England, Browne also belonged to a larger body of "Protestant" churches, yet he defined his religion as "the same belief our Saviour taught, the Apostles disseminated, the Fathers authorised, and the Martyrs confirmed" (61); his faith was very much non-protestant in the sense in which the sectarians understood the term. In Browne's view, the Roman Catholic Church was flawed because it "had rather promiscuously retaine all, then abridge any, and obstinately be what they are, then what they have beene" (62); however, the Protestant Church "reformed from them, not against them" (62). Browne revised and altered only parts of the *Religio Medici* before its authorized publication, maintaining the core of the work in its original form. In the same way, he conceived that Christianity needed only to be "new trim'd in the dock" (62) rather than radically altered in order "to restore it to its primitive integrity" (62). He perceived the fundamental agreement of different Christian doctrines in the essential points of faith; "there is between [Catholics and Anglicans] one common name and appellation, one faith, and necessary body of

principles common to. . . both" (62). The focus of Browne's religion was his Creator, and not the "doctrines and rules of Faith" (61) which isolated Christians from one another. Browne thus maintained a tolerant attitude towards other faiths, beliefs and opinions whose purpose was the glorification of the Creator and whose final goal was salvation and eternal life in God.

Browne's insistence on reform rather than change enabled him to choose the most inclusive of faiths for his own. The Anglican Church prescribed tolerance and promoted ceremonialism, which to Browne was a means of glorifying and understanding God through a unified body and soul. To Browne, the union of the physical and the spiritual led to a stronger faith; he "[loved] to use. . . all those outward and sensible motions, which may expresse, or promote [his] invisible devotion" (63). He could not condemn "Holy water and Crucifix. . . the fruitlesse journeys of Pilgrims, or. . . the miserable condition of Friers" (63), for these appeared to be symbols, if misplaced, of the same fundamental faith as his own. He saw such things "not as evill in themselves, but as allurements and baits of superstition to those vulgar heads that looke asquint on the face of truth" (63). In Browne's view, sectarians who condemned 'papist' habits such as reverence to the crucifix, the Angelus or figures of saints and martyrs, missed the central point by focusing on 'outward and sensible motions' rather than inner devotion; according to him, "at the sight of a Crosse or Crucifix I can dispence with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour" (63). Browne did not condone extreme Roman or heathen ceremonialism, nor did he condemn them. In encouraging

tolerance, his faith also encouraged understanding and charity towards these aspects of other faiths.

In the second part of the *Religio Medici*, Browne focuses specifically on charity, "without which Faith is a meer notion, and of no existence" (133). This virtue was fundamental not only in Anglican doctrine, but was for Browne an essential duty owed to God. The Church of England held that one's duties towards God were fulfilled by one's charity toward humanity, as well as through "honest participation in the prescribed rituals. . . avoidance of theological controversy. . . and finally. . . by using Christ as an exemplar" (McGee 95).[12] For Browne, charitable, 'Christian' behavior indicated one's love of all humanity, which in turn reflected love of God. Furthermore, it was through charity in all things that one learned godliness and so gained knowledge of the Creator; charity was the link uniting Christian love and duty to divine knowledge. Christian charity by definition understood a further union; Browne tells us that "divinity hath wisely divided the act [of charity] thereof into many branches, and hath taught us in this narrow way, many pathes unto goodnesse" (137). As such, material charity was but one 'branch' of the virtue; it had to be accompanied by spiritual charity, as "there are infirmities, not onely of body, but of soule, and fortunes, which doe require the mercifull hand of our abilities" (137). However, while material and spiritual charity towards others were essential, Browne declared that "this great worke

[12]McGee further explains that with respect to the Commandments, Anglicans gave more attention to the Second Table (Commandments V-X). First Table Commandments, concerning one's duties toward God, were secondary to "the second group [which] consisted entirely of rules which could be deduced by the use of natural reason" (70).

of charity, must have other motives, ends, and impulsions: . . . to fulfill and accomplish the Will and Command of. . . God" (135). Charity towards humanity was made complete by divine charity, the supreme love and obedience of God.

As Browne regarded charity to be the union of natural sympathy towards others and obedience to God's wishes, he held both spiritual and civil obedience to be central to his faith. The English Church asked that questions of theology be left to the declared authorities; the lay Christian's concern should be for his or her own good behavior and for the proper worship of God. In Browne's understanding, "every man is not a proper Champion for Truth, nor fit to take up the Gantlet in the cause of Veritie" (65). His professed faith, and his apparently irenic disposition compelled him to decline "disputes in Religion" (65) so popular among dissenters and sectarians. Aggressive and overzealous attempts to combat and conquer error risked losing sight of truth; Browne felt that "tis therefore farre better to enjoy [truth] with peace, then to hazzard her on a battell" (66). His passive stance was not only consistent with the doctrines of his chosen faith; Browne also felt that it was "the method of charity to suffer without reaction," and that "a good cause [needed] not to be patron'd by a passion" (65).

Browne endeavored to maintain the "double obligation" (64) owed to his chosen Church by subscribing to its constitutions and obeying its laws, yet his adherence to the English Church also permitted him to resolve 'points indifferent' as he chose. In matters of faith, there were for Browne several mediating bodies: Church and Scripture established

basic knowledge of the Creator, while natural reason reinforced the soundness of God's laws. In issues not clearly determined by Church or Scripture, "as points indifferent," Browne observed "according to the rules of [his] private reason": "where the Scripture is silent, the Church is my Text; where that speakes, 'tis but my Comment: where there is a joynt silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my Religion from Rome or Geneva, but the dictates of my owne reason" (64). Reason fixed Browne's particular choice of religion; he declares that "There is no Church whose every part so squares unto my conscience, whose articles, constitutions, and customes seeme so consonant unto reason, and as it were framed to my particular devotion, as . . . the Church of England" (64). Furthermore, although he looked first to Scripture and then to the Church for guidance, Browne's faith and actions were dictated from within, "for there is yet after all the decrees of counsells. . . many things untouch'd, unimagin'd, wherein the libertie of an honest reason may play and expatiate with security and farre without the circle of an heresie" (69). Reason led Browne both to the resolution of points indifferent and the avoidance of error and heresy; in his opinion, "every mans owne reason is his best *Oedipus*, and will upon a reasonable truce, find a way to loose those bonds wherewith the subtilties of errour have enchained our more flexible and tender judgements" (66).

As reason determined Browne's choice of faith, so his understanding of indifference determined his criticism of sectarians and other radicals. In trying to mediate between antipathetic faiths and in allowing its members freedom of belief on points indifferent,

the English Church presented itself as an inclusive religion. For Browne, indifference implied inclusion and acceptance. As the Anglican Church stressed the natural reason which characterized the whole of humanity, Browne believed that the behavior prescribed by Anglican doctrine "could be known and even practiced by reprobates and heathens" (McGee 70). He was critical of those faiths, and most notably of Puritanism, which claimed that salvation was limited to a small number of European, "reformed" Christians, excluding "the Church of God both in Asia and Africa" (129), for "those who doe confine the Church of God, either to particular Nations, Churches, or Families, have made it farre narrower than our Saviour ever meant it" (129). His faith was not restricted by nationality, and therefore he could not "forget the generall charitie. . . [owed] unto humanity" (61), even if this was to "Turkes, Infidels . . . [or] Jewes" (61). Browne decried the arguments among different Christian faiths, which divided the people and excluded individuals over "a few differences more remarkable in the eyes of man than perhaps in the judgement of God" (129). While tolerant of many faiths different from his own, Browne was impatient with the intolerance of others; while he was indifferent to many contemporary issues, he was vehement in his condemnation of irrationality and divisiveness. Browne criticized Puritan "invectives of the Pulpit [which might] perchance produce a good effect on the vulgar, whose eares are opener to Rhetorick then Logick, yet doe they in no wise confirme the faith of wiser beleevers" (65). The importance that the sectarians placed on sermons, their "staff of

spiritual life" (McGee 97), was felt to be politically dangerous, potentially leading to civil upheaval and anarchy.[13] To Browne, "that great enemy of reason, vertue and religion, the multitude. . . [was] a monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra" (134); he saw the irrational mob as a divisive and seditious force, and could not tolerate that Christians who held beliefs close to his own could not comprehend that the focus of their faith was love of God, and not alienation of others.

Rather than apathy, Browne's indifference indicated his particular position in contemporary debates. On some points he stood apart from the Church he appeared to support so completely. Browne considered himself a Christian first and foremost, and it was only "because the name of a Christian is become to generall to expresse our faith" (61) that he aligned himself specifically to Protestantism, "that reformed new-cast Religion, wherein I dislike nothing but the name" (61). He took the Laudian concept of tolerance quite literally and as a result was marked by some as an atheist, because of "the indifferency of my behaviour, and discourse in matters of Religion, neither violently defending one, nor with that common ardour and contention opposing another" (61). Browne's indifference was not limited to points left undetermined by Scripture; it also suggests a desire for a reconciliation of the religious and political differences dividing his nation. In Browne's time, the fragmentation of the Church and

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[13]Hill explains that these fears were well-founded. Puritan preachers up to 1640 "hoped to build up a central alliance with the Crown against Catholics on one hand and social revolutionaries on the other" (*Society and Puritanism* 51). See further *Society and Puritanism*, ch 2, 31-77

collapse of the monarchy had created social chaos and absolute divisions between different faiths and allegiances; Browne, however, declared that he "could never divide my selfe from any man upon a difference of an opinion" (65). He felt that "a moderate and peaceable discretion" (85) could restore order in all conflicts, whether between faith and reason, Anglicans and sectarians, or Royalists and radicals. Early in the *Religio Medici*, he expresses hope that in religious disputes, "the present antipathies between the two extreames, their contrarieties in condition, affection and opinion, may. . . expect an union in the poles of Heaven" (64). Similarly, Browne hoped for the re-establishment of a unified government. Michael Wilding suggests that Browne's indifference to political or religious debate was not

> . . . an explicit or positive political position; but negatively, in [his] rejection of sectarianism, mass action, millenarianism, the multitude, and any manifestations of plebeian puritan activism, it is possible to locate the [*Religio Medici*] in a cautious, conservative, law-and-order context. . . . Browne embodies a recognized, mainstream political response to the documented political circumstances and events of his time. ("*Religio Medici*" 113)

To Wilding, Browne was representative of the "emerging conservative party of law and order" (114), which eventually restored the monarchy. Browne's political allegiance was to the hierarchically organized monarchy, though his faith lay in a Church in the paradoxical situation of asserting the independence of the individual in decisions over points indifferent while advocating and supporting ecclesiastical hierarchy and authority. The *Religio Medici* emerges not only as a statement of Browne's personal religion, but also an

expression of his desire to see the reconciliation of paradoxes and divisions within State and Church.

Browne's devotion to the reconciliation and unification of differences within politics and religion was rooted in his belief that that "contraries, though they destroy one another, are yet the life of one another" (140). Browne valued unity above all, and specifically the divine unity that permitted "differing faculties. . . to make but one soule and substance" (73). His understanding of his faith led him to trust in his reasoning capacities, although there were many points where "the propositions of Faith seeme absurd unto Reason. . . the Theorems of Reason unto passion, and both unto Faith" (85). Browne did not isolate reason from faith in his conception of true religion, just as he did not divide himself from other Christians or condone the political disputes which divided his country. In the *Religio Medici*, Browne unites antithetical reason and faith, and shows that reason is essential to faith, while faith is the necessary end towards which reason should be directed.[14] Seemingly 'divided and distinguished worlds' are brought together by a relation of complementarity which is equally present in Browne's other works written on subjects varying from burial urns to quincunxes, myths to Christian morals. Like the *Religio Medici*, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* demonstrate an involvement in the intellectual changes of the day, an awareness of

[14]For a contrasting view, see J. R. Mulder. Mulder suggests that "there is no need to posit that [Browne] must inevitably be caught on the horns of *our* dilemma, that of grace or faith *versus* reason... for Browne, reason was *recta ratio*, first implanted by God in Adam Dimmed by the Fall, reason needs to be complemented by faith, and Browne considered it the mark of a wise man to walk in their combined light" (101). However, 'our' dilemma of reason versus faith begins to be made evident in Browne's time.

emerging analytic trends but a refusal to break completely with 'older' approaches. Browne's position in this as in the civil and religious conflicts, while perhaps conservative, was not reactionary; Browne did not reject all radical or sectarian ideals in favor of the old, established order but sought to unite the old and new by amending and completing one with the other. By looking at these two later works, and in particular how they work together, it is possible to understand further Browne's proclaimed indifference as openness and freedom of mind.

Chapter 2

Hydriotaphia and *The Garden of Cyrus*: The not so odd couple

In the previous section, I discussed some of the differences between Anglicans and sectarians, Royalists and Parliamentarians, in order to determine the context in which Browne wrote. I argued that questions of mediation underlay the religious and civil conflicts which led to the civil war, and that the shift from analogical to analytic discourse was characterized by issues of accumulated or unmediated knowledge. Browne was situated in a mediate position in both discussions. In the *Religio Medici* he declared his 'indifference' to the conflicts of Church and State, while also indicating his interest in resolving these differences. His epistemology and his discursive approach in this as well as other essays also stand somewhere between the analogical and the analytic. In Browne's opinion, knowledge, whether spiritual or material, is acquired through the accumulation of metaphors and analogies as well as through direct revelation and direct observation. These ways of knowing are combined in the *Religio Medici* in order to arrive at a more perfect faith: where reason and logic fail to explain the subtleties of religion, Browne looks to the Church, where "unspeakable mysteries in the Scriptures are often delivered in a vulgar and illustrative way, and being written unto man, are delivered, not as they truely are, but as they may bee understood" (117). As the Church mediated in the understanding of things divine, so metaphor and analogy made accessible things incomprehensible to

reason; "where there is an obscurity too deepe for our reason, 'tis good to set downe with a description, periphrasis, or adumbration" (71). This combined analogical and analytic approach to knowledge is perhaps even more apparent in the jointly published works *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* which both display aspects of different discursive methods that are distinguishable without being opposed. In these paired works, Browne appears as both the disinterested scientist and the religious mystic; his discursive method is sometimes dry, informational and direct, sometimes imaginative, colorful and full of digressions. As I will show, Browne's integration of analogical and analytic discourse in these twinned essays allows him to better "trace the Labyrinth of Truth" (386).

Studies of Browne's works have widely acknowledged the presence of 'divided and distinguished worlds' which suggests the coexistence of both types of discourse. Many studies of Browne are directed toward a classification of particular works into particular 'worlds': scientific or imaginative, analytic or analogical. Critics of Browne claim that stylistic and epistemological discontinuities undermine the essays; admirers identify his work as a whole made up of distinct, yet complementary, parts. This is particularly the case in studies of *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, which respectively treat burial urns and gardens. Besides their ostensible subject matter, these two works, like the *Religio Medici*, treat two of Browne's favorite topics, life and death. This at least has been fairly obvious to all those reading the two works. However, the apparent disparity between the overt subjects and Browne's actual focus in the essays, as well as his eclectic

writing style, have inspired a good deal of negative criticism. In his study of Sir Thomas Browne, J. S. Finch dismisses *Hydriotaphia* as "the piece of Browne's writing farthest removed from science and medicine" (182), while Joan Bennett sees the work as merely a forum for Browne's miscellaneous knowledge. It has been suggested that Browne wrote the last chapter under the influence of laudanum (Patrides, *Sir Thomas Browne* 39). Edmund Gosse declares *The Garden of Cyrus* to be a "radically bad book" (128), and claims that it was tacked on to the end of *Hydriotaphia* because the latter was too short to publish on its own. Patrides describes *The Garden of Cyrus* as "the ultimate test of one's response to Browne," a work which "taxes our resources, and certainly our patience" (Patrides *Sir Thomas Browne* 40), and which "skirts dangerously close to becoming a tiresome game" (Nathanson 210).

By examining Browne's approach to knowledge in these two essays, other critics have suggested ways of seeing a relationship both within the individual essays and between the two read together. Analyses of Browne's use of symbol, his Platonic influences and his particular epistemology have achieved a more successful reconciliation of overt topic, actual subject and discursive approach without trivializing or disparaging Browne's works. In "*Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* : a Paradox and a Cosmic Vision," Margaret Heideman suggests that "the relationship of these two compositions is more one of blood than of water. Basically the subjects have a certain identity. . . " (235). She examines how the principal symbols in each essay, the urn-womb in *Hydriotaphia*, and light in *The Garden of Cyrus*, work as reconciling

elements and simplified ways of knowing by creating a unified whole that can be easily interpreted. In *Hydriotaphia* the central symbol is itself a union of contrary images, and both light and shadow are encompassed in the essential symbol in *The Garden of Cyrus*. To Heideman, Browne's use of symbol does not cast "a veil of obscurity" (238) over his topics, but is representative of a particular approach to knowledge in which it is conceived that the spiritual can only be grasped through symbols; that these symbols unite different and opposed concepts indicates further Browne's belief in the interdependence of practical and divine knowledge.[1]

Although she does not use Reiss' terminology, what Heideman has shown is that *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* draw upon a discourse of patterning and analogy. Both works can be 'read' by their central and unifying symbols, which are presented in a variety of forms, interrelated by similitude or metaphor. *Hydriotaphia*, like *The Garden of Cyrus* after it, "has the aspects of the hieroglyph. . . [in which] a prime symbol is kept before the reader literally, representationally, and metaphorically throughout" (Heideman 241). Heideman locates Browne in an analogical and metaphorical system of thought, and claims that the unity of the pair of essays represents "the highest point of artistic perfection reached by a dweller of many worlds: a lover of ancient lore who was a good scientist, a sceptic who was a man of faith, a constant dissector of the microcosm who was also a mental traveller of the macrocosm" (235).

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[1]For more on symbols as paths to knowledge, see Cassirer 53, 74.

The connection between Browne's divided and distinguished worlds which to Heideman is indicated in his complex symbolism, is also suggested by the "contrasting and complementary epistemologies" (Huntley 217) which make up *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*. In particular, Frank Huntley sees the texts as representing different ways of knowing which correspond to Reiss' categories of the analogical and the analytic. Huntley establishes the essays' "nexus through contrast. . . in the mode of their knowledge, [and] the kinds of questions each can raise and answer" (212). He feels that "Truth is at stake" (212) in the two essays, and is more successfully achieved through organized, analytic exploration than through formless contemplation. According to Huntley, *Hydriotaphia* contains only uncertain knowledge, based on "poor fragments of evidence" and "the authority of the past" (212); the 'truths' Browne discovers are founded on the questionable resemblance of the Walsingham urns to other burial urns, and inexact accounts from other writers. This non-analytical approach can only reveal uncertainty. Huntley implies that the results of *Hydriotaphia* are unsatisfying because the wide variety of funeral customs, the variations among the Walsingham urns, and the inadequacy of the urn fragments leave Browne unable to provide a scientifically accurate account of the urns' history or contents. He must depend on conjecture and guesswork, and "hence the questions asked in *Urn Burial* are mostly impossible to answer" (213). *Hydriotaphia* "presents no more pattern and regularity of knowing than does the subject matter known" (212); it is a collection of antiquarian, rather than analytic, scientific or exact knowledge.

In *The Garden of Cyrus*, on the other hand, "Browne employs the possibilities of exactitude which an advancement of learning can furnish him. . . . The process of knowing is sure, and even the adumbrations lead towards significant, rather than vain, knowledge" (Huntley 215). Browne uncovers the fundamental order and regularity in nature; where he is unable to do this, "almost invariably [there is] the assumption that some day man will have a better instrument to lead him to the truth" (215) While in *Hydriotaphia* knowledge is uncertain or undiscernible, in *The Garden of Cyrus* "knowledge keeps opening like an ever-budding flower for further investigation in directions which Browne can merely suggest to a universal forum of inquiry" (216). It is "only lack of room and not of science" (217) that prevents him from answering all the questions posed throughout the essay. Browne's 'exact' or analytical approach in *The Garden of Cyrus* discloses fundamental truths which could never be discovered in the antiquarian *Hydriotaphia*. *The Garden of Cyrus* looks forward to further knowledge, while "the notes in *Urn Burial* look backward" (217). However, Huntley perceives the ultimate conjunction of the essays: together, the 'uncertain' and 'exact', or the analogical and analytic, "form a Platonic dichotomy: two parts opposed yet conjoined, with a rising from the lower or elemental *Urn Burial* (death) to the higher or celestial *Garden of Cyrus*, the 'numerical character' of reality (life)" (209). Although in the end *The Garden of Cyrus* is judged the 'better' essay for its positive and progressive epistemology, and because it deals with the more important subject--the "Paradise [which] succeeds the Grave" (Browne 321)--both essays are necessary

to one another in order to trace humanity's journey "from mutability to deiformity" (Huntley 222).[2]

The unity of these two essays, so different in style and subject matter, is perceived by Huntley to arise from hierarchically organized epistemologies; the uncertainty in *Hydriotaphia* gives way to certain truth in *The Garden of Cyrus*, as death gives way to eternal life. Leonard Nathanson also finds a reconciliation of different modes of knowing in Browne's two essays. However, while Huntley feels that the uncertainty of *Hydriotaphia* is inferior (though necessary) to the exactitude of *The Garden of Cyrus*, Nathanson sees a different hierarchy. He finds that Browne's "complex and eclectic. . . Platonic outlook" allows him to reconcile "the empirical study of nature, the exercise of discursive reason, and the practice of faith" (Nathanson 13). Browne's way of thinking combines apparently contrary conceptions of reason:

> . . . he employs reason according to the Aristotelian and scholastic method which allowed for the derivation of general ideas from the data of sensation as well as the inference of inevitable particular truths from given assumptions . . . . Second, Browne uses reason in its Platonic and Augustinian sense, the strategy of faith and intuition which enables the individual to grasp ultimate truths. (14)

Nathanson finds Browne more successful in applying this method of thought in *Hydriotaphia*, in which he achieves "a balance of

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[2]Huntley further establishes the interdependence of the essays through Browne's conception of God as Wisdom and Eternity: "A religious view that conceives God alone as never-ending must unmask all human pretensions to immortality without Him (*Urn Burial*), and one that defines God as all-wise must insist that man's final knowledge of reality is to be found only in the mind of God as it is reflected in nature and art (*The Garden of Cyrus*)" (223).

detachment and affective involvement" in exploring "the intellectual and emotional certainties and ambiguities existing between such opposites. . . [as] custom and nature, reason and faith, the human and divine, the relative and absolute" (202). In the early chapters Browne discusses the Walsingham urns, and funeral customs in general, in an objective and 'scientific' manner; he "shows no inclination. . . for anything more than patient examination of the evidence itself and a few cautious hypotheses" (185). Uncertainty is nonetheless present in the essay, as well as "an emphasis upon the difficulty of drawing conclusions from physical and historical materials, however carefully studied" (185). *Hydriotaphia* does not present absolute truths, but it does express "the actual process for discovering how the futility of human effort can be transcended" (189).

The Garden of Cyrus, for its part, is for Nathanson both more straightforward and less profound, "an essentially encyclopedic work" (211) which, because of its clearly stated form, is "all too single-dimensioned and predictable" (210). Browne here presents "the quincunx as symbol and symptom of the harmony and unity infused from the One into the world" (210). As in Heideman's study, the quincunx can be seen as a simplified way of 'reading' the world: Browne unifies all of nature by identifying the fundamental pattern which occurs everywhere. However, while *The Garden of Cyrus* displays "Browne's habit of Platonic interpretation of the universe" (212), to Nathanson this interpretation "is not conveyed convincingly or satisfyingly" (214). Where Huntley saw *The Garden of Cyrus* as a progression to true rather than vain knowledge, Nathanson claims that

"instead of truth seized upon and wrested by struggle we have in The Garden a serene and unencumbered ascent along a path fully charted from the outset" (210).

In all three analyses, Browne's twin essays are classified through terms that may be expanded by drawing upon Reiss. Heideman sees both essays as representative of a metaphorical system of thought in which the individual metaphors of each essay are joined by complementarity. Conversely, Huntley classifies *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* as representing what Reiss has described as the discourses of patterning and analysis, and prefers *The Garden of Cyrus* for its 'modern' and scientific approach. In turn, Nathanson favors *Hydriotaphia* for much the same reason; its uncertainty is perceived to be far more meaningful than the universality of the quincuncial pattern.[3] While Huntley reads uncertainty in *Hydriotaphia* and scientific exactitude in *The Garden of Cyrus*, it is simultaneously possible to see in *Hydriotaphia* Browne's scientific experimentalism and in *The Garden of Cyrus* a (seemingly) endless accumulation of interrelated 'notions'. The arbitrariness of these classifications suggests that for Browne, the categories we see as discretely opposed are not just complementary but deeply

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[3]These attempts to categorize and hierarchically organize Browne's writing recall the evaluations and classifications of Browne's style which characterized earlier studies of Browne's work such as those by Croll, Saintsbury, Williamson, etc. Most notably, Austin Warren praises Browne for having both a distinctive writing style and "style," a quality attributed to the author "whose originality lies not in his big ideas . . but in his discriminations and nuances, in his intellectual sensibility" (414) This suggests that Browne uses different styles as befits his subject matter, a particular style mediates in the understanding of the importance of a particular work. This same idea also underlies Huntley and Nathanson's focus on Browne's epistemology: an analytic or analogical approach indicates that a particular essay is to be understood (and valued) in a particular way

intertwined with each other, just as reason and faith are inextricably bound together in his conception of true religion.

Browne's *Hydriotaphia* begins with a metaphorical reflection on the shallowness and uncertainty of human knowledge:

> In the deep discovery of the Subterranean world, a shallow part would satisfie some enquirers; who, if two or three yards were open about the surface, would not care to rake the bowels of *Potosi*, and regions towards the Centre. (267)

In many ways, however, the essay is close to what we now consider scientific or analytic discourse. The subject at hand is at least nominally a practical and scientific one, and Browne concentrates initially on the factual aspects of burial urns and funeral customs. Even in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Browne's attempt to correct 'vulgar errors' in knowledge, there is, as Patrides says,

> . . . a sense of qualified despondency because fabulous yet enchanting beliefs--that the beaver when hunted bites off its testicles, that the lamprey is endowed with nine eyes, that man alone possesses an upright stature, and so on--all these must be sacrificed on the altar of demanding truth. (*Sir Thomas Browne* 37)

While *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* is considered to be the most factual and scientific of Browne's works, its nostalgia for the myths it demystifies reveals the author's ambivalence towards science. In comparison, the attitude in the first three chapters of *Hydriotaphia* seems more distant and 'objective'. Browne's subject is itself a collection of 'objects': forty or fifty burial urns found "in a Field of old *Walsingham*, not many moneths past" (274). The essay begins with a description of the recently discovered urns, a carefully compiled history of burial

practices going far into the past, and conjectures as to the source of the urns. In the preface Browne states that "'Tis time to observe Occurrences, and let nothing remarkable escape us" (264). The middle (and longest) chapter is an account of the actual physical appearance of the Walsingham urns and a detailed discussion of the corruption of metal, wood and corpses. It contains what is considered Browne's "one notable scientific discovery. . . adipocere, [or] 'grave wax,' the insoluble fatty acids left as a residue of the pre-existing fats of animals, and produced by the slow hydrolysis of the fats in wet ground" (Finch 182). *Hydriotaphia* is informative and if the argument does not always follow clear straight lines, the digressions and asides are never far off topic.

In a developing scientific discourse, objectivity is fundamental, both in the sense of a focus on actual physical objects and an impersonal detachment from these objects. In *Hydriotaphia*, Browne's objectivity is manifested in the exhaustive and unbiased accounting of different burial traditions, as well as in his attention to physical detail in the actual description of the urns. The first chapter of the work lists the nations where inhumation or burning is traditional, without stating a preference for one over the other; for though "carnall interment or burying, was of the elder date. . . the practice of Burning was also of great Antiquity, and of no slender extent" (268). As reason directs him to choose an inclusive and tolerant faith, so Browne is able to give the many motives "of the most rationall dissolution" (269) for choosing one form of burial over another. He believes that "all customes [are] founded upon some bottome of Reason" (269), and so

remains objectively distant and indifferent; it is not until the final pages of the essay that Browne takes a subjective stance, and states his own preference for Christian burial, "the most magnanimous resolution" (314).

'Scientific' objectivity implies that in the analysis of the unknown, all empirical sense data are to be considered elemental to final knowledge. In both the second and third chapters, Browne records the appearance and contents of the urns, amassing all the physical evidence which might lead to their proper identification. He thoroughly describes their sizes and shapes, as well as the "lasting peeces and toyes included in them" (281). The "exility of bones, thinnesse of skulls, smallnesse of teeth, ribbes, and thigh-bones" (280); the coins, combs and jewels found in the urns; and the covers, color and texture of the urns are all examined in view of accurate classification. However, lacking actual physical evidence, Browne must define the urns by what is not found in and around them as well as what is. As in the analytic method of categorization and definition, the urns must be absolutely differentiated from all others. Browne goes on to establish the Walsingham urns as different from other "sepulchrall Vessels" (286), for "no lamps, included Liquors, Lachrymatories, or Tear-bottles attended these rurall Urnes" (286); unlike other urns, here there are no bay leaves still miraculously green, and "no medall or Emperours Coyne enclosed" (279).

This negative accounting of the urns' contents does not lead to a completely accurate identification or definition of their history. As a

result of this inability to be specific and accurate, "then the time of these Urnes deposited, or precise Antiquity of these Reliques, nothing [is] of more uncertainty" (279). But uncertainty is precisely what analytic or experimental discourse is meant to overcome; accurate definition is meant to establish absolute certainty. In this case, the uncertainty occasioned by insufficient information cannot be resolved, which leads to the discussion of probabilities. By considering the likely or at least possible identities of the urns, some measure of truth can be achieved. These probabilities, like the urns themselves, are stated in terms of what they are not, which is the only certainty available. Thus the second chapter of *Hydriotaphia* asserts that "it is not improbable" that the urns are "of Romanes themselves, or Brittains Romanised. . . nor is it improbable that the Romanes early possessed this Countrey" (276); it is "not improbable that many [of the urnal remains] were persons of minor age, or women" (280). Furthermore, that the Britons followed Roman "religious rites and customes in burials, seems no improbable conjecture" (282). Browne then concludes that "the most assured" (283), that is most probable, source of the urns, is the Romans or romanized Britons.

As it turns out, this conclusion is wrong. In fact, Browne's objective and, as far as possible, accurate and specific method in the first three chapters of *Hydriotaphia* fails to achieve certainty or even accuracy. Moreover, by the fourth and fifth chapters, the essay can no longer be considered a 'scientific' inquiry. Where reason and analysis fail to resolve uncertainty, Browne turns to metaphor and analogy as a means of understanding the nature of the burial urns. Analysis has

demonstrated that certain, factual information is unachievable and therefore, through analogical methods, Browne seeks knowledge, not of the urns themselves, but of death and eternity that they represent.[4] The 'object' under scrutiny is no longer the actual urns, but the reasoning behind funeral customs, rites and ceremonies. Browne sees particular funeral customs as symbols of spiritual concerns: the directing of a corpse's eyes towards the heavens indicates hope for eternal life (299); the use for the funeral pyre of "Trees perpetually verdant, lay silent expressions" of hope for resurrection (299); and the use of music at funeral services signifies "the harmonical nature of the soul; which delivered from the body, [goes] again to enjoy the primitive harmony of heaven. . . " (300). The mystery of death is made accessible to Browne by its analogy to birth. In his description of the urns, Browne remarks that

> . . . the common form [of the urns] with necks was a proper figure, making our last bed like our first; nor much unlike the Urnes of our Nativity, while we lay in the nether part of the Earth, and inward vault of our Microcosme. (284)

To understand death, Browne looks to the analogy of womb and tomb which suggests to him that death is both birth into a better world, and everpresent in life, "since the brother of death [i.e. sleep] daily haunts us with dying memento's" (311). Furthermore, the fire which produces dead ashes is associated with a living fire: o Browne, "life is a pure flame, and we live by an invisible Sun within us. A small fire sufficeth for life, great flames seemed too little after death. . . " (313).

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[4]Davis suggests that reason, analysis and objectivity have gone as far as they usefully can; "when Reason pursues the knowledge of death into the reaches of the afterlife (in Chapter IV), it collapses and shows all to be vanity, ... Reason reaches its limit" (83)

This passage anticipates a similar one in *The Garden of Cyrus*, in which Browne states that "life it self is but the shadow of death. . . and light but the shadow of God" (376).

However, as rational analysis cannot eliminate uncertainty and precisely identify the urns, so analogy cannot resolve all the difficulties and paradoxes arising from the subject of death. For Browne, the very existence of the Walsingham urns is paradoxical. They are nameless memorials meant to preserve a name, whose anonymity has guaranteed that preservation, for "to be unknown was the means of their continuation and obscurity their protection" (306). As a result, the urns contain only

> vain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves, a fruitlesse continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as Emblemes of mortall vanities. (308)

The concern for both longevity and the perpetuation of one's name fundamentally contradicts Christian faith, for

> were the happinesse of the next world as closely apprehended as the felicities of this, it were a martyrdome to live. . . . If we begin to die when we live, and long life be but a prolongation of death; our life is a sad composition; We live with death, and die not in a moment. (304-6)

To Browne, the "restlesse inquietude for the diuturnity of our memories unto present considerations, seems a vanity almost out of date, and superanuated peece of folly" (308). Knowledge of death and the afterlife remain unclear; "the particulars of future beings . . . Christian Philosophy yet determines but in a Cloud of opinions" (303). It has been suggested that *Hydriotaphia* traces a gradual dissolution of all certainty, moving "from the broad uncertainties about existence to a

complete ignorance of anything after burial" (Davis 80). Browne's analytic and analogical study of the urns, failing to establish any certain knowledge, can only identify the irrationality and absurdity of human desires for remembrance.

In the end Browne appears to have achieved no certainty at all; his identification of the urns is somewhat equivocal,[5] and the absurdity of searching for earthly knowledge of a divine state is apparent to him. However, the final quotation from Lucan, "It matters not whether the corpses are burnt on the pyre or decompose with time" (315), indicates Browne's indifference to what he sees as imperfect and unimportant alternatives in the eyes of God. Just as he includes accounts of both pagan cremation and Christian burial in his essay, so Browne joins an objective, scientific approach with an analogical method in order to explore as many forms of mediation as possible, rather than dogmatically set forth a single way to either God or truth. To Davis, Browne's study of the urns is a symbolic exploration of "new knowledge," which ". . . [brings] into question the nature of knowledge itself--its adequacy, its necessary incompleteness, its limits" (76). In *Hydriotaphia*, the analytic and analogical serve to both highlight and compensate for the limitations of the 'other' way of knowing, and combine to form a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Browne arrives not at certain knowledge of what is by nature

[5]Browne's declaration that "the most assured account will fall upon the Romanes" (283), comes in the middle of a discussion of similar remains found to be Scandinavian or Germanic.

incomprehensible, but at a more complete comprehension of "true belief" (315).

Browne's epistemology in *Hydriotaphia* therefore combines the modern and scientific with the 'medieval' and analogical. This is even more evident in *The Garden of Cyrus*, where Browne's confidence in the interconnections and analogies between all things influences his analytic demonstration of the pervasiveness of the quincunx in the world. Here Browne's concern is to prove a unifying principle ordering the universe. His efforts to prove the presence of this figure, as well as the long chapter on botany, are indications of his interest in scientific observation and analysis. However, the order and regularity he attempts to display are undermined by his style, in which facts are connected as much by apposition as by logic. *The Garden of Cyrus* is convoluted, wandering and often obscure in its direction. Browne makes almost no effort to remain on topic to the point where, at times, we are no longer sure what the topic is. The text may seem at first merely a catalogue of incidences of the quincunx in nature, while many of the recorded facts seem imagined or imposed for the sake of a pattern. The quincunx for Browne, like melancholy for Burton, is everywhere, whether we perceive it or not, and affects everything, whether we want it to or not.

The distance Browne maintains in *Hydriotaphia* is replaced in *The Garden of Cyrus* by a profound subjectivity and an involvement with the topic at hand. In the preface to *Hydriotaphia*, Browne establishes his objective, impartial position as a man of science "whose study is life

and death, who daily behold[s] examples of mortality" (264). He refers to the urns as "Theatrical vessels" (263), part of "the whole stage of things [which] scarce serveth for our instruction" (265). The reader is part of a detached audience, observing and evaluating the "old mortality, the ruines of forgotten times, [which] can only speak with life, how long in this corruptible frame, some parts may be uncorrupted" (263). In *The Garden of Cyrus*, however, the stage is Nature itself; the reader, as Browne himself, is inextricably part of "this Garden Discourse" (321). Even Browne's dedication is to "a flourishing branch of that Noble Family. . . long rooted in such perfection" (321): truly 'natural' man.

As a result of this subjectivity and involvement, Browne's discursive method in *The Garden of Cyrus* is different from that found in *Hydriotaphia*. Browne begins his essay, not with the detached observations characteristic of *Hydriotaphia*, but by tracing the existence of gardens, and thus nature in general, to the third day of Creation. Browne's particular attachment is not to nature as represented in gardens, however, but to the well-ordered patterning of the world evidenced in the universality of the 'natural' figure of the quincunx. He begins by establishing the superiority of nature to humanity; there can be "no rivality with Garden contrivance and Herbery," as "Gardens were before Gardiners" (326). He then goes on to admire in particular the gardens and plantations of the ancients, which, imitating the perfection of the first garden, were planned "in rows and orders so handsomly disposed, or five trees so set together, that a regular angularity, and through prospect, was left on every side"

(328). In Browne's view, the quincuncial arrangement of gardens links humanity to its former, divinely ordered perfection.

This "fundamentall figure" (328)--that of the five on a die--appears not only in nature, as in "Plantations of large growing Trees" (328), but also in the artificial contrivances of society. In the first two chapters, Browne traces the artificial representations of the quincunx throughout history, in the ordering of troops, in coins, constellations and crosses. He then affirms that the quincunx is more than a historical oddity, for "the networks and nets of antiquity were little different in the form from ours at present" (336). The quincunx can be discovered in architecture, crowns, beds and needlework; in the cut of precious stones, the disposition of chess boards, the form of forceps and "Instruments of Incision" (338), and the plan of cities. The last two examples in particular show how the 'natural' pattern of the quincunx has been 'artificially' appropriated. Towns and cities are based on a rectangular pattern, for "as the first station and position of trees, so was the first habitation of men" (340). Similarly, surgical instruments use the decussated pattern which resembles "the inward parts of man. . . wherein according to common Anatomy the right and transverse fibres are decussated, by the oblique fibres; and so must frame a Reticulate and Quincunciall Figure by their Obliquations" (358). For those of a more scientific or practical nature, the universality of the figure is further justified by its inherent usefulness in antithetical tasks, "inservient to contrary ends, solution and consolidation, union, and division. . . Evulsion, compression or

incision" (338); the quincuncial design serves as a practical unifying and reconciling pattern.

Having identified the quincunx in its multiple, analogical forms, in the third chapter Browne reestablishes an analytic distance from his subject in order to further affirm the universality of the fundamental figure. In the first chapters Browne had discovered the quincunx through patterns and analogies. In the third chapter, Browne appears once more to be the impartial and indifferent observer who in *Hydriotaphia* described the details of burial urns. Browne compiles an extensive catalogue of scientific observations and sensibly evident occurrences of the quincunx. The presence of the quincunx "may be observed" (344) in the head of the thistle; it "is discoverable" (344) in many other plants; and it is "elegantly observable, in severall works of nature" (343). Other botanical facts are "observable," "manifest," "perceptible" or "visibly verified" (343-55). Browne's recognition (by analogy) of the quincuncial figure in all its possible forms, together with his 'scientific' observations of its presence, seems to confirm unequivocally the universality of this "regular ordination" (327).

However, Browne's writing is neither consistently ordered nor accurately analytic in *The Garden of Cyrus*. At times his objective and 'scientific' approach is as absurd as it is accurate in the description of the thistle; Browne's 'observations' lead him to confirm the old myth of spontaneous production: "the generation of Bees out of the bodies of dead Heifers, or what is strange yet well attested, the production of

Eeles in the backs of living Cods and Perches" (351).[6] He falls back onto a way of knowing where authority and tradition can establish facts unsupported by empirical data. In the third chapter Browne also explores areas where objective observation and identification of quincuncial patterns become impossible, even with "good augmenting glasses" (356), for the object of study is so small or hidden as to be "indistinguishable" or "undiscernable" (351). The existence of a unifying element is put in doubt when the quincunx cannot be clearly discerned; uncertainty arises where Browne can no longer argue "in a diagrammatically regular way" (Halley 102). As in *Hydriotaphia*, this occurs where there is a lack of clear or definite information: "certainty is allied. . . to formal regularity, doubt and ignorance to distortion of regular shapes" (Halley 102). Browne therefore returns to the relationships of analogy and similarity which link the artificial manifestations of the quincunx. Resemblance ties together the shape or texture of the bee's mouth, animal skins, the feet of water fowl and the stomachs of ruminants; furthermore, "studious Observators may discover more analogies in the orderly book of nature, and cannot escape the Elegancy of her hand in other correspondencies" (360).

In the third and central chapter of the essay, Browne shifts noticeably from objective observation to the identification of resemblance and correspondence. He perceives a harmony within nature, evident in the universality of the quincuncial pattern. His demonstration of this harmony requires the use of both analogy and

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[6]Browne's belief in this myth of production is less surprising in light of the fact that he has also mentioned a desire to procreate like trees (*Religio Medici* 148).

analysis as complementary approaches, yet like the limitations of analysis and observation, the inadequacy of the analogical as a way of knowing is also made evident, undermining his very argument; "his treatise bulges with digressions from its proposed argument, digressions which list empirical evidence that nature is not entirely ordered in fives" (Halley 100). Although his entire purpose thus far has been to establish the absolute universality of the quincunx, Browne includes even those figures "not observing any just order" (359) Even more oddly, he states that these figures, "being not agreeable unto our order, nor yet observed by any, we shall not here discourse on" (360). The chapter ends with an example of the incongruous and "very anomalous motion" (364) in certain animals. Neither objective nor analogical methods can account for these exceptions to natural harmony and order; it would seem that Browne has failed to establish the quincunx as a fundamental figure.

Browne's failure to recognize the quincunx in all things does not diminish his faith in an ordered universe; he "expected perfect order, perfect significance, and perfect knowledge only on the Last Day" (Halley 115). He can thus disregard the few uncertainties and exceptions he encounters, and maintain this faith in order and regularity. In the final chapters of *The Garden of Cyrus*, Browne suggests that the complementarity or harmony of different epistemological (and discursive) approaches is essential, both in order to perceive the omnipresent quincuncial pattern, and to find true knowledge.

> A large field is yet left unto sharper discerners to enlarge upon this order, to search out the quaternio's and figured draughts of this nature, and moderating the study of names, and meer nomenclature of plants, to erect generalities, disclose unobserved proprieties, not only in the vegetable shop, but the whole volume of nature; affording delightful Truths, confirmable by sense and ocular Observation, which seems to me the surest path, to trace the Labyrinth of Truth. For though discursive enquiry and rationall conjecture, may leave handsome gashes and flesh-wounds; yet without conjunction of this expect no mortal or dispatching blows unto errour. (386)

The necessary union of objective analysis, "discursive inquiry and rationall conjecture," which Browne upholds in his writing is particularly important in the final two chapters, together entitled "The Quincunx Mistically Considered" (Patrides, *Sir Thomas Browne* 364n1) In a passage of nearly "inexcusable Pythagorisme" (379), we learn that the quincunx can be seen, not only in X patterns, but in patterns of ten, as X is the Roman representation of ten; in V patterns, as in the Roman numeral five; and in combinations of the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 when they add up to 5. In fact, we find that patterns of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 10 all represent the pervasiveness of the quincunx in nature. Browne appears to have combined his 'rational' observations with an exaggerated sense of analogy, in order to impose the unity of the quincunx, whether it exists or not.

For the modern reader, Browne has proved nothing. The universality he perceives is so flexible, it is meaningless. For the reader familiar with Burton's method in the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, though, Browne has proven everything. Just as Burton's enumeration of the infinite causes, effects and cures of melancholy 'proves' the omnipresence of melancholy, so does Browne's literal and figurative

enumeration of instances of the quincunx prove it to be a unifying symbol in nature. To Browne, the quincunx represents "the wondrous connexion of the severall faculties conjointly in one substance. . . the indivisible or divine, the divisible or corporeal, and that third, which [is] the *Systasis* or harmony of those two" (378). Patrides notes that systasis means both "union" and "communication between a man and a god" (*Sir Thomas Browne* 378n71). The quincunx is an ultimate, universal mediator; it is Anglican mediation between God and each individual, and at the same time it is the pattern of similarities and resemblances mediating between mind and phenomena.

As universal mediator, the quincunx also allows for the union of different and apparently paradoxical discourses and ways of knowing. Analysis and analogy, like reason and faith, are brought together; the two methods we see as belonging to different worlds are for Browne essentially interrelated. This is apparent within *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* individually, and in the two works considered together. The types of discourse within which Browne moves quite easily are not mutually exclusive. While they proceed on different premises, there are areas in which they agree and topics in which it is possible to shift easily from one to the other. Moreover, it is only together that these discourses can lead to any significant knowledge. In both *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, Browne achieves a greater comprehension of faith than he could have reached by proceeding simply by linear analytic exploration of burial urns and quincunxes, or by mystical accumulation of Burtonian analogies. As reason and faith function together in the *Religio Medici* to lead to

greater knowledge and comprehension of God, so *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus* together form a unified and ordered vision of the world where, as "all things began in order, so shall they end, and so shall they begin again; according to the ordainer of order and mystical Mathematicks of the City of Heaven" (387). Here as earlier, Browne refuses to limit himself to an imperfect and incomplete way of knowing, and chooses to remain in both his unified yet 'divided and distinguished worlds'.

Chapter 3

The Anxiety of Analytic Thought: Philosophers on the verge of a nervous breakdown

In looking at *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, I have tried to establish that Browne's way of knowing, and consequently his way of writing, involve a combination of what we see as two separate worlds: analysis and analogy, reason and faith, science and imagination. The result of these dual presences is more than simply "nexus through contrast" (Huntley 212); these different worlds are interconnected in such a way that one is necessary to the other. In the movement towards a dominant analytic discourse, Browne is situated at a mid-point where 'opposites' can be acknowledged without contradiction, and when paradoxes and impossibilities serve to strengthen one's faith in God. This is not the case in later writers such as Locke, whose writing reflects a more purely analytic epistemology. While allowing for a more 'complete' and well-defined body of knowledge, the gradual shift towards analysis in the seventeenth century generated certain problems, some resulting from the very impulses which led to an analytic, scientific discursive method. Susan Bordo has recently discussed the anxieties that inspired Cartesianism, while Carolyn Merchant and Evelyn Fox Keller have examined changes occurring in the seventeenth century which affected both modern society and science. In this section I will consider some of the 'negative' factors in the development of an analytic discourse, as well as those elements

which have been lost in the emergence of an analytic epistemology. Recent trends in both science and literary studies towards holistic, non-linear and chaotic approaches to knowledge indicate a retrieval of the elements which in Browne's writing form the paradoxes and impossibilities of which "there be not. . . enough. . . for an active faith" (69). Browne's refusal to choose between alternative discursive and epistemological methods, like his indifference to religious and political dissension, allows him to explore 'divided and distinguished worlds' without remaining in one exclusively; he seeks to unite these worlds, "so. . . as to make but one soule and substance" (73).

Browne's apparent inability to separate or 'dissect' different approaches to knowledge has given him a reputation as being quaint and conservative. The scientist who in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* tries to rectify common errors still acknowledges Satan, "the first Contriver of Error, and professed opposer of Truth" (192), as an important promoter of error; an objective and descriptive discussion of burial urns concludes with a digressive philosophical reflection on life and death; and Browne's most sustained and methodical analysis of any topic serves to prove the (questionable) omnipresence of the quincunx in our world. Leonard Nathanson opens his study of Browne by stating that "the historian of ideas is likely to conclude that Browne is deficient in elementary consistency of thought" (vii). It is likely that both seventeenth century and modern scientists would come to the same conclusion. Browne's thinking lacks the linearity and rigor that is associated with modern scientific discourse; his perception of pattern and correspondence extends beyond all 'reasonable' limits, as

is obvious in *The Garden of Cyrus*. As I have indicated, even in his own era, analogical thinking and discourse based on pattern and correspondence were seen as failing to lead to absolute or incontrovertible truths. By the standards of the 'new' science emerging in the seventeenth century, which measured the worth of knowledge by its utility, Browne's 'old fashioned' way of thinking was impractical, deluded, and may be ultimately useless.

The scientific enlightenment of the seventeenth century is often considered as the emergence from the scientific dark ages, when magic and alchemy were pursued as seriously as physics and chemistry. In *The Flight to Objectivity*, however, Susan Bordo considers the emergence of 'scientific' method and thought as a response to profound and wide-spread anxieties and doubts brought about by social, religious and intellectual upheavals:

> No longer was there one true church. Nor could there be a claim to one true culture--sensationally increased levels of exploration and commerce with other cultures had radically upset the eurocentrism that prevailed throughout the medieval era. No longer, after the telescope, could the most intimate and ubiquitous mode of human access to the world--the naked senses--be trusted. And perhaps most disorienting, "infinity had opened its jaws". . . . [T]he snug, finite universe of the medieval imagination had been burst asunder. (13)[1]

While these cultural changes resulted in greater awareness, sophistication and knowledge of the (now larger) universe, they also

[1]See also Hill's *The Century of Revolution* 179-182, and Merchant, *The Death of Nature* 99-126. Hill explores the connection between scientific discovery, and religious and political anxiety while Merchant, like Bordo, traces the defensiveness apparent in both Bacon and Descartes to the widespread "fear that nature would interdict her own laws, that the cosmic frame would crumble, and that chaos and anarchy would rule" (Merchant 126).

raised the disturbing possibility that "*everything*--perception, ideas, values--is determined by the vicissitudes of cultural 'perspective'" (Bordo 41). With the extension and enlargement of the universe, one was faced with a multiplicity of 'points of view', many of which could not be reconciled: the sun seemed to circle the earth, yet it was established that the reverse was true; contact with new cultures put into question traditional concepts of social norms and values; and the fragmentation brought about by the Reformation inspired endless debates on the nature of 'true' faith. In short, these changes, or "upheavals" of tradition, did "not simply [undermine] a set of old beliefs, but. . . [threw] into question the very status of belief and the possibility of adjudicating among beliefs" (Bordo 39).

Doubt in humanity's ability ever to achieve 'pure' truth was an important source of the epistemological anxiety and tension at this time. The religious reforms which emphasized individual communication with and personal comprehension of God occurred along with a questioning of secular beliefs not founded on rational and tangible proofs. Furthermore, it was conceived possible that in the search for truth, "even the best, most rigorous uses of our cognitive capacities may not suffice" (Bordo 43), and, consequently, that there was "no ultimate grounding for human discrimination, for sorting the rotten from the good apples of knowledge" (Bordo 39). These fears are reflected in many works of the period. Bordo's reading of Descartes' *Meditations* underlines the importance of doubt in the development of Cartesian certainty: "more than merely a lingering, hollow vestige of an earlier intellectual fashion . . . doubt [is] presented to us through the

imagery of madmen's delusions, evil geniuses, and hallucinations" (14). These nightmare images are eventually conquered "by the vigilance of his reason," and Descartes is able to construct the model of knowledge for which he is known, a model "based on clarity, certainty, and detachment" (Bordo 14). He overcomes the doubts which plague him once he posits the separation of mind and body, and the superiority of the former, able to single-handedly establish our existence. Descartes then declares "the capacity of the intellect to discriminate *between* the merely subjective and the objective state of things" (Bordo 43) He perceives mathematics as the most purely objective model for knowledge, as it deals "with an object so pure and uncomplicated, that [it] need make no assumption at all which experience renders uncertain."[2] Knowledge based on such a 'pure' and objective model is unaffected by individual bias, and its accuracy is therefore universal and unquestionable; doubt is eradicated, and 'truth' is back within our grasp.

While provoking a growing skepticism over the accessibility of truth, rapid changes in science and society also inspired a widespread sense that the infinite universe was both unpredictable and threatening. Nature itself was no longer to be trusted, and appeared to have taken control away from humanity As a result, "in much of early modern science and philosophy - in Bacon, most dramatically - the dream of knowledge is. . . imagined as an explicit revenge fantasy, an attempt to wrest back control from nature" (Bordo 75). For

[2]Descartes , quoted in Bordo 76

Descartes, knowledge had been made uncertain by the question of individual subjectivity and the possibility of the "Evil Genius, powerful enough to have created us, but malicious enough to have created us with 'such a deceptive nature that even the best evidence is not good enough'" (Bordo 43) to guarantee the truth of knowledge. Like Descartes, Bacon perceives knowledge as maliciously permeated and obscured by "the fogs and clouds of nature, and the phantoms flitting about on every side" (Bacon 308). Like the protestant sectarians who 'fought' for knowledge of God, he also sees the search for knowledge as a battle "both against the shocks and embattled ranks of opinion, and against. . . inward hesitations and scruples" (Bacon 308). Accordingly, Bacon feels that the scientist's responsibility is to cut through both the misty and combative barriers to knowledge in order to finally 'conquer' truth

In Bacon's view, human knowledge is indefinite and uncertain as a result of errors established by his scholastic predecessors, errors which he sees as a kind of original sin. His *New Organon* is written so that "knowledge [can be] . . . discharged of that venom which the serpent infused into it" (Bacon 309). In order to 'decontaminate' knowledge and overcome "the difficulties and obscurities of nature," Bacon develops a form of logic through which one can gain control and "command nature in action" (314). Throughout his works, 'Nature' is personified as woman, either as object to be 'dis-covered' and seduced, or as dangerous perpetrator of original sin, and his use of metaphor reinforces his concern with issues of domination, and particularly sexual domination. Bacon argues for the invasion, combat

and conquest of nature; he searches for knowledge of "the remoter and more hidden parts of nature (308), and works "to examine and dissect the nature of this very world itself" (318). He presents his methods "naked and open" (309) so they may be best understood, and he feels that by these means he has "established forever a true and lawful marriage between the empirical and the rational faculty" (309), a 'marriage' which will lead to the (literal) discovery of the secrets of nature, and thus to absolute truths. Active control over nature, along with control over the "idols, or phantoms, by which the mind is occupied" (317) is necessary in order to overcome uncertainty and arrive at pure and untainted knowledge. For Bacon, "those twin objects, human knowledge and human power, do really meet in one" (323).

For Bacon, knowledge is domination over nature as represented by the female body. However, Bacon tells his readers that "nature [cannot] be commanded except by being obeyed" (323). As man is both "the servant and interpreter of nature" (323), and an aggressive explorer seeking "a way. . . into her [nature's] inner chambers" (329), a more complex relationship between man and nature exists in Bacon's work. According to Bacon, the mind is first purified and cleansed, then made open, receptive and submissive, and finally "impregnated by God and, in that act, virilized" (Keller 38). Man need only be a servant to nature until truth has been received into the intellect, after this point, "nature becomes indubitably female, the object of actions" (Keller 39). Once the mind has been 'impregnated' with truth, the initial stage of female receptivity and submission is transcended.

Bacon thereby establishes the ability of the (male) mind to conceive and generate knowledge; the manipulation and control over nature which he advocates cleanses knowledge of any remaining (female) confusion, and allows it to be put to use "for the benefit and use of life" (Bacon 310).

Bacon advocates a 'purification' of knowledge in order to reach "the true end and termination of infinite error" (311) introduced into the world by woman, and in order to "lay the foundation, not of any sect or doctrine, but of human utility and power" (310); he seeks to control truth and establish certainty. Locke, writing after the civil war, is more directly concerned with questions of social order, control and security The political disorder and dissent of the mid-century inspires Locke to extend Bacon's equation of knowledge and power and find a philosophical basis to explain how social order can exist. Locke defines political security and epistemological certainty together as grounds for peaceful social existence; to Locke, "justice and truth are the common ties of society" (Locke 1: 35). For Locke, social order and knowledge are ideally founded on common sense and general agreement, a social contract between private and public, individual and collective understanding, discourse is the link which would allow this contract to be established and social order to be achieved. The purification of language is thus essential in order "to discourse with any clearness or order concerning knowledge" (Locke 2: 161). Locke perceives language as flawed by abuses which obscure its meaning, and consequently its communication, thus potentially undermining social order. In the third book of his *Essay Concerning Human*

Understanding, Locke focuses his attention on language, and seeks to narrowly define words, since "he that uses words without any clear and steady meaning, what does he but lead himself and others into errors? And he that designedly does it ought to be looked on as an enemy to truth and knowledge" (2. 291) Language abuse is conceived as epistemological treason.[3] Locke feels that language, "as subservient to instruction and knowledge" (2: 160), must be re-structured so that certain and ordered knowledge can be discovered, and social order established.

In trying to regulate the definitions of both knowledge and language so as to guarantee social order, Locke encounters certain problems reminiscent of Descartes' nightmares of epistemological doubt. In searching to define 'man', Locke finds that the boundary lines between human and non-human, like those between opinion and knowledge, defy clarification

> There are creatures in the world that have shapes like ours, but are hairy, and want language and reason. There are naturals amongst us that have perfectly our shape, but want reason, and some of them language too. There are creatures. . that, with language and reason, and a shape in other things agreeing with ours, have hairy tails, if the inquiry be made concerning the supposed real essence, and whether the internal constitution and frame of these several creatures be specifically different, it is wholly impossible for us to answer (2 221)

The ordering of nature and the clear and distinct categorization of both words and ideas which would allow meaning, like nature and society, to be brought under control seem unachievable. Locke is left

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[3]In "The Epistemology of Metaphor," de Man discusses this same idea specifically in relation to the use of metaphor in philosophical texts

to wonder over the existence not of an evil genius, but of monsters in men's shapes:

> Shall a defect in the body make a monster; a defect in the mind (the far more noble, and, in the common phrase, the far more essential part) not?. . . Where now (I ask) shall be the just measure of the outmost bounds of that shape, that carries with it a rational soul?. . . What sort of outside is the certain sign that there is, or is not such an inhabitant within? (2: 395-6)

Given the possible existence of monsters and other unclassifiable creatures, Locke comes to equate truth with agreement, specifying that the "signification [of words] must agree with the truth of things as well as with men's ideas" (2: 303). Subjectivity ('individual' opinion) is then an inadmissible path to significant knowledge. Browne's treatise on the quincunx as universal figure can only be acknowledged as a curiosity, never as a valid proof.

What readings like Bordo's, Keller's and Merchant's demonstrate is the anxiety concerning boundaries, order, definition and certainty that motivate thinkers like Descartes, Bacon and Locke, who have set the standards for modern thought. Feminist critiques have focused more specifically on the origins and effects of issues of control and domination in modern ways of knowing. Responding to contemporary fears and anxieties, Descartes, Bacon and Locke develop approaches to knowledge which seem to overcome and master the demons and monsters (and evil women) preventing access to absolute truth. In doing so, all three focus their concern on purification and cleansing: the body by mind, error by truth, chaos by order and certainty. Their conceptions of knowledge are important in shaping our modern views

which privilege mind over body, and analysis over imagination. Bacon's equation of knowledge with power comes to be fundamental to modern science, while objectivity is soon conceived as essential in all types of discourse: scientific, political, religious, or literary. An analytic, disinterested and essentially manipulative approach to the study of nature reestablishes humanity's (and specifically man's) centrality and importance in the world; a clear and transparent system of communication establishes the superiority of the human mind, able first to perceive and then conceive of nature's truths. However, the purification advocated by these three also requires many forms of alienation. Intellect is separated from the body, and 'masculine' science is divided from and favored over 'feminine' intuition In matters of language, words are isolated from the two realms they are meant to represent; they do not exist as thought itself, nor as tangible realities. Ideally, language mediates transparently between these two realms without interfering with or affecting either one Language, like nature, has come to be conceived as under the control and subject to the manipulations of man, in this way, both nature and language are dominated, ordered and 'put to use' for the betterment of men's lives.

Both Bordo and Keller raise the question of the validity of these models for knowledge, discourse and government which are built as a defense against the fears engendered by scientific and social changes, and which isolate and privilege a concept as abstract as 'mind' Analytic thought "has a secret story to tell, in the alternative perspectives to which it has denied legitimacy, and in the historical and political circumstances of its own dominance" (Bordo 115).

Detachment, objectivity and control (both of self and others) are undermined when the irrational, superstitious and arbitrary foundations of analytic thinking are considered. Cartesian detachment and certainty, and Baconian power, emerge as "type[s] of mystification" (Bordo 117) developed to justify a particular way of thinking. Foucault suggests that Lockean order and classification are similarly deceptive, and are no more useful than the taxonomy in which

> 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'. (xv)

To Foucault, "the thing that. . . is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own" (xv).

To Bordo, Keller and Merchant, analytic thought is limited further by its misogynous aspects. Analysis grows out of a fear of the incomprehensible female:

> Like the infinite universe, which threatens to swallow the individual "like a speck," the female, with her strange rhythms, long acknowledged to have their chief affinities with the rhythms of the natural (now alien) world, becomes a reminder of how much lies outside the grasp of man. (Bordo 111)

Science develops as an effective means to "tame the female universe. . . through aggressive assault and violation of her 'secrets'. . . [and] through the philosophical neutralization of her vitality" (Bordo 111). For Keller, Bacon's use of the imagery of power and domination is a Freudian "fantasy of childhood sexuality" (40), a defense mechanism

stemming from an oedipal "impulse to appropriate and deny the maternal" (41).

> In the context of this interpretation, the sexual aggressivity in Bacon's imagery begins to assume a somewhat defensive quality. What is most immediately conspicuous in that imagery is its denial of the feminine as subject - a denial often taken to be generally characteristic of the scientific endeavor. (Keller 41)

The repression of the female in what was rapidly becoming the dominant epistemological model "insured the revitalization of human hope of conquering nature" (Bordo 112). More than simply repressed, however, the 'female' aspects of knowledge--intuition, imagination, faith, subjectivity--were entirely suppressed in the development of analytic thought. Carolyn Merchant argues that Baconian misogyny, coupled with the view of nature as female, produced a way of thinking which is environmentally and ecologically unsound. Knowledge of alternately passive and dangerous nature is obtained by force through mechanistic and technological development, mining and the exploitation of the land. However, as nature is stripped of her secrets, she is also destroyed; this is perhaps more evident now than ever before.[4] The suppression of the feminine in the analytic model is thus, in a more general sense, Descartes' alienation of all that is related to the body; certain, true knowledge is limited to the mind, specifically to the male mind

[4]Merchant argues that the "uncontrolled growth associated with capitalism, technology, and progress--concepts that over the last two hundred years have been treated with reverence in Western culture" (xvi)--have left us largely unaware of "the costs of progress, the limits to growth, the deficiencies of technological decision making, and the urgency of the conservation and recycling of natural resources" (xvii) For an earlier discussion from a different perspective, see Knights 109-11

Like scientific thought, analytic discourse as described by Reiss is limited by its very nature; for both Bacon and Locke, the purification of language means the restriction of language to what we "now call the referential function--that which is of primary importance in exact description and rational analysis" (Knights 102). Locating language purely within the mind (as opposed to earlier conceptions in which language had a physical existence as signature) seems to allow understanding to proceed without distortion or ambiguity, but at the same time it "sanctions that divorce between imagination and reason, emotion and intelligence, that. . . was to have a bad effect on English poetry" (Knights 106). Morris Berman suggests that, besides possibly precipitating a "dissociation of sensibility" (Eliot 288), analytic discourse and thought, although developed in order to recapture a newly confusing and incomprehensible universe, in fact heighten the sense of the meaninglessness of all things; "scientific consciousness is alienated consciousness" (Berman 3). Scientific method and analysis "encourage the relegation of instinctive and emotional life to a sphere separate from and inferior to the sphere of 'thought' and practical activity" (Knights 108). Analytic, scientific language speeds the "process leading to that division within the mind and feelings--within the human psyche as a whole. . ." (Knights 108), which Weber described as the disenchantment of the world (57).

Fundamental to analytic thought is the idea that while we cannot know with certainty <u>why</u> things are as they are in the world, we can discover <u>how</u> they function, and how we can control their functioning; we cannot know the meaning of things, but we can develop an ordered

knowledge of things. Questions of meaning have given way to questions of utility; "in the twentieth century. . . 'how' [becomes] our 'why'" (Berman 15). Bacon's efforts to manipulate and control female nature required an alienation of all that is female from knowledge. In general, the 'alienated consciousness' which developed in the seventeenth century was characterized by movements towards separation and differentiation. Descartes isolates mind from body in positing thought as necessary and sufficient to existence; the new science separates observer from observed in order to achieve objective, unbiased and 'true' results. In analytic discourse, the separation occurs between sign, signified and signification; as in science, questions of 'how' come to supercede questions of 'why'. Interpretation gives way to analysis;

> one no longer attempts to uncover the great enigmatic statement that lies hidden beneath. . . signs; one asks how [language] functions: what representations it designates, what elements it cuts out and removes, how it analyses and composes, what play of substitutions enables it to accomplish its role of representation. *Commentary* has yielded to *criticism.* (Foucault 79)

The devaluation of commentary in favor of criticism is particularly apparent in the study of literature, "the privileged object of criticism. . . since Mallarmé" (Foucault 81). Literary theories each have their own method of attacking and dissecting a given work, but the analysis of the text, like the analysis of a mutant cell, is frequently directed towards categorization and classification. Texts can be categorized by style, form, 'worth', length, subject, ideology or period. One might question, however, if any of these classifications is any more useful than Foucault's taxonomy of animals. Not only limited in scope,

classification is also extremely difficult if we consider authors such as Browne, who was hopelessly eclectic, and works such as the *Religio Medici* which resist classification. Browne cannot be categorically declared a scientist, man of faith, mystic, or antiquarian; in the eyes of his contemporaries it was not clear whether he was a devout Anglican, a closet Catholic, or an atheist. Although in the *Religio Medici* he explores many of the same questions as his contemporaries, Browne's position, like his stance on religious and political issues, remains ambiguous and amphibious.

Epistemologically, Browne, like Descartes, Bacon and even Locke, was situated at a time when analysis was not yet dominant in either discourse or thought. Individual anxieties and sociopolitical circumstances contributing to the development of analysis undoubtedly influenced Browne as well; these sometimes appeared as arbitrary or superstitious as Descartes' demons. Browne's political and religious conservatism in the *Religio Medici* can appear to be a reactionary response to social and ecclesiastical upheaval; his "much-proclaimed toleration" is for Michael Wilding undermined by his "hostility to the radical sects and to the multitude" ("*Religio Medici*" 110) he feared would subvert social order. Stanford reads *Hydriotaphia* and *Religio Medici* as demonstrating Browne's fear and revulsion towards sex and death, and his Cartesian desire for an alienation of self from body. He suggests that there is a "tortured element in his work" (Stanford 418) which reflects "Browne's nearly desperate wish to *have done* with the body" (Stanford 421); for Stanford, Browne's torment "displays a mind [not] at home in the

world" (422). However, Browne's personal anxiety leads to significantly different responses than those of Descartes, Bacon or Locke. These thinkers interpret their fears as calls for control; they create and advocate the implementation of an active and progressive epistemology. Browne's search for knowledge remains deeply tied to his faith; he "was not as interested in setting forth grand plans for arriving at the truth, as he was in discovering the intricacies of God's designs, in the book of God's Word, as well as in the book of God's works, the natural world" (Knott 19).

Browne's anticipation of eternal life and the knowledge which "is an accessary of our glorification" (148), compels him to privilege spiritual life over material, physical existence. Like Descartes, Browne maintains a separation between soul and body, yet he nonetheless expresses the need for a union between the soul "in this her sublunary estate" (106) and the body; "for the performance of her [the soul's] ordinary actions, is required not onely a symmetry and proper disposition of Organs, but a Crasis [blend] and temper correspondent to its operations" (106-7). Furthermore, Browne perceives the union of organic and inorganic faculties to be essential to both individual and social harmony. For Browne, the "masse of Antipathies" (144) which constitutes his personality imitates the greater social and political conflicts in the world, and the harmony of these contributes to social and spiritual unity: "divided Antipathies and contrary faces doe yet carry a charitable regard unto the whole by their particular discords, preserving the common harmony" (146). Within his own small microcosm, these contradictions and discords, which led Descartes to

doubt everything, are to be encouraged as they are indicative of the divine within each one of us; Browne feels that "Man [is] like God, for in the same things that wee resemble him, wee are utterly different from him" (137). Browne declares that he is nothing, "if within the compasse of my selfe, I doe not find the batteil of *Lepanto*, passion against reason, reason against faith, faith against the Devill, and my conscience against all" (145). Descartes' doubts encouraged him to construct paths to certainty; for Browne, inner contradictions fuel his faith and his reason to discern a divine harmony which subsumes earthly paradoxes.

Just as Browne maintains a 'Cartesian' separation of mind and body, although with different implications, so does he support Baconian enthusiasm for science as a productive path to truth. However, again Browne's intentions are different. Where Bacon seeks to eradicate error and exclude all 'polluting' elements from knowledge, Browne looks to include all forms of information, whether paradoxical or contradictory.[5] He stands "like *Janus* in the field of knowledge" (148), intrigued by the ambiguity of truth rather than interested in limiting and delimiting its scope.[6] More than simply of practical use to society, the scientific endeavor is for Browne "the debt of our reason wee owe unto God, and the homage wee pay for not being beasts" (75). As true charity is both secular and divine, so Browne's interest in science and the study of nature unites worldly and spiritual aspects; he feels that "those highly magnifie him [God] whose judicious enquiry

[5]See Hall on Browne as "naturalist" and collector of natural fact

[6]See Rajan 9-11, on figure of Janus in Milton and Browne

into his acts, and deliberate research into his creatures, returne the duty of a devout and learned admiration" (75). Like Bacon, Browne perceives nature as female, and his opinion of women is that "the whole world was made for man, but the twelfth part of man for woman. man is the whole world and the breath of God, woman the rib and crooked piece of man" (148). But despite this, for Browne female nature is closely associated with God; the search for knowledge proceeds not by Baconian "exclusion and rejection" (Bacon 315), but by the inclusive study of all aspects of nature, "the Art of God" (Browne 81).

While Bacon and Locke are interested in the ordering of science, society and language, Browne values order as an expression of God's wisdom. Their concern with completely eliminating misunderstanding and confusion is alien to Browne, who conceives of chaos and paradox as unavoidable in this life. Browne's sense of 'the order of things' is consequently not as rigid as Locke's. He feels that social order cannot be attained in all quarters, "because the glory of one State depends upon the ruine of another" (82). To Browne, natural order is simultaneous with disorder; ultimate order, like absolute knowledge, can only be found in God. While Locke equates order with all significant knowledge, Browne assumes that God's ways are not comprehensible to inferior human reason, and so he does not seek out perfect clarity in knowledge or discourse. To Browne, "it is impossible that either in the discourse of man, or in the infallible voyce of God, to the weakenesse of our apprehensions, there should not appeare irregularities, contradictions and antimonies" (87).

Browne maintains the importance of the analogical path to knowledge, where mysteries are understood "without a rigid definition in an easie and Platonick description" (70), and where truths are grasped through faith, while at the same time humbling what sets humanity apart from beasts, the reasoning faculty. He believes that reason is yet "his best Oedipus" (66), but acknowledges and even advocates non-analytic paths to truth, particularly in matters of faith; to Browne, it "is no vulgar part of faith to believe a thing not only above, but contrary to reason, and against the arguments of our proper senses" (72). Browne's focus in his search for knowledge is spiritual understanding, even as this may contradict knowledge applicable to social, political and 'earth-bound' situations.

Browne's inclusion of apparent contradictions in his conception of knowledge is in direct contrast with the alienation of opposites characteristic of an analytic epistemology. In the holy Trinity, "though there be three persons, there is but one minde that decrees, without contradiction" (75); so to Browne, oppositions and differences do not hinder the achievement of truth, but unite in order to indicate greater and incomprehensible truths. In Browne's view,

> we are onely that amphibious piece betweene a corporall and spirituall essence, that middle forme that linkes those two together, and makes good the method of God and nature, that jumps not from extreames, but unites the incompatible distances by some middle and participating natures. (103)

As an amphibious being, Browne belongs to both the physical and spiritual worlds, just as his epistemology belongs to both the analogical and the analytic. Browne is interested in the "causes, nature, and

affections of the Eclipse of Sunne and Moone" at the same time that he is drawn "to contemplate a reason why [God's] providence hath so disposed and ordered their motions" (77) In Berman's terms, Browne maintains a "participating consciousness" which "bespeaks a psychic wholeness that has long since passed from the scene" (2) with the advent of a purely analytic consciousness However, analysis is not to be discarded outright for its inability to encompass the whole of human understanding. Browne's work itself indicates, if not solutions to a problem, then at least an example of the 'larger vision' which includes rather than excludes, and which helps further the 'advancement of learning' if not in a straight line, then at least along a broader path.

What emerges from a discussion of Browne's unified and inclusive approach to thought is an awareness of the weaknesses of analytical and scientific discourse, and the need for a retrieval of those elements--the analogical, the intuitive, the 'feminine' and the imaginative--which have been repressed. It is in this sense that Browne's works are significant, for within them, I argue, one can find these 'subjective' aspects side by side with the analytical and objective; more than complementary, these 'opposed' approaches are both interconnected and interdependent.

Conclusion

The Fundamental Interconnectedness of all Things

Throughout this study I have suggested that Browne's way of thinking and his way of writing represent an alternative to a strictly analytic epistemology and discourse. Browne's approach to knowledge consists in reconciling the apparently irreconcilable: reason and faith, analysis and imagination, science and imagination. While the legacy of Descartes and Bacon is an atomistic way of thinking "in the sense that knowing consists of subdividing a thing into its smallest components" (Berman 21), Browne's method is holistic and inclusive; he sees knowledge as requiring a union of contraries in order to achieve truth which is greater than the sum of its parts. As Browne's approach to knowledge combines the analytic and the analogical, it is not a question of discarding analysis entirely. Rather than an alternative method excluded from all others, Browne's epistemology stands as an inducement for a redefinition of our way of thinking which might lead to more 'complete' ways of knowing. As a final conclusion, I would like to examine briefly recent critical suggestions for such a redefinition, specifically in science and literary study.

The Cartesian separation of mind and body allowed for the development of a reductive and mechanical method which, in science, was not questioned until early in our own century. The limitations of atomistic, apparently objective methods are made manifest most

notably in quantum physics, where theories of uncertainty and relativity undermine the concept of the detached neutrality and objectivity of the scientist. In particular, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle asserts that observation is affected by the observer's own situation in time and space in such a way that "the first condition of any rigorous prediction, namely, the accurate establishment of a system of initial data, is impossible" (Simon 199), in physics, the result is that "it is objectively impossible to distinguish between object and motion" (Bachelard 138) [1] Theories which take into account the interdependence of observer and observed are by nature empirically unverifiable, the breakdown of a problem into discretely resolvable parts is no longer justified, as the 'parts' are now seen to be fundamentally inseparable.

In *The New Scientific Spirit*, Gaston Bachelard stresses that the awareness of the interconnection of scientific variables does not imply that Cartesian science and Newtonian physics no longer hold true, but that they can represent only simple cases of larger, more complex theories. Bachelard outlines the possibilities for a non-Cartesian epistemology which can account for the complexities of inter-dependence rather than seeking to simplify and alienate variables; to Bachelard, "the only way to form a correct idea of the simple is first to study the complex in depth" (152). Fundamental to his proposed non-Cartesian science is the awareness of "the reality of the complex. . . of qualities in the whole not evident in the parts" (142). Furthermore,

[1] See further Bachelard 122-34

scientific indeterminism allows for the existence of self-contradictory terms which entail, in Bachelard's words, the "introduction of transcendental qualities, by which I mean that something that is not a property of any part of the system may be imputed to that system as a whole" (114).[2] In Browne, this way of thinking is apparent in his faith in the quincuncial ordering of the world despite evidence to the contrary.[3] Bachelard notes that a theory of indeterminism actually subsumes deterministic models "by specifying with precision the conditions and limitations under which it is possible to regard a phenomenon for all practical purposes as determinate" (121).[4] Non-Cartesian methods do not look to reduce and simplify, they search to establish complex systems of thought, in which simple laws and rules are "reduced to nothing more than the simplicity of an example, a truncated truth, a schematic outline, a blackboard sketch" (156).

Mathematical chaos theory has been explored as a comprehensive model which accounts for all (even contradictory) observations and finds "order in disorder" (Taubes 63). In contrast to the orthodox Cartesian approach, "chaoticians concentrate on the dynamics of the system as a whole: on what the parts are doing, not individually, but all together" (Taubes 65). Since the traditional use of linear equations to

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[2]For more on the implications of scientific indeterminism, see Bachelard 113-121

[3]While the concept of the whole system acting differently from its parts is used in a positive way in scientific research, for Browne the negative side is to be seen in the behavior of the mob, which contradicts the behavior of rational individuals See in particular Browne 134

[4]Bachelard's specific example is Heisenberg's nondeterministic physics, however, there is a mathematical analogy in the definition of the set of real numbers, which subsumes natural numbers, rational numbers and integers by specifying the conditions for their existence

describe phenomena is limited as Cartesian science is limited, by its inherent need to have everything fit into narrow, restricted patterns, scientists have looked to non-linear dynamics Non-linear equations (in which variables are squared or raised to higher powers), exponential and recursive (cyclical) equations are far more difficult to solve, but also are far more accurate representations of natural systems. The applications of non-linear and chaotic models range from biology to meteorology, and provide "hope of understanding [complex systems] at some fundamental level, even if the future state of a chaotic system cannot be predicted in detail" (Taubes 65)

The study of chaos and indeterminacy is part of the expansion of scientific research which Keller suggests could reestablish "a conception of nature orderly in its complexity rather than lawful in its simplicity" (136). Like Bachelard, she differentiates the reductionist search for scientific laws from the perception of pattern and complex order. Keller sees a principle of unified difference--as opposed to division--underlying the search for scientific patterns: "[s]elf and other, mind and nature survive not in mutual alienation, or in symbiotic fusion, but in structural integrity" (165). She expresses the importance of difference in terms reminiscent of Browne:

> Whereas these oppositions [subject-object, mind-matter, feeling-reason, disorder-law] are directed toward a cosmic unity typically excluding or devouring one of the pair, toward a unified, all-encompassing law, respect for difference remains constant with multiplicity as an end in itself. (163)

To Keller, the "emphasis on intuition, on feeling, on connection and relatedness" (173) in what might be a 'new' science indicates the need

for a fundamental rethinking of "the terms in which our understanding of science is constructed" (175-6). Issues of gender, of male mind dominating female nature, must be transcended in order to "help us reconstruct our understanding of science in terms born out of the diverse spectrum of human experience rather than out of the narrow spectrum that our culture has labeled masculine" (176).

The prevalence and inadequacy of masculine theories of scientific domination are demonstrated in Keller's own field of study, mathematical biology Research concerning theories of aggregation in cellular slime mold leads her to question traditional analyses which, lacking conclusive evidence, still impose a "'Master Molecule'" as governor of a system, overlooking the possibility for a "'Steady State' concept" characterized by "functional interrelationships" (54). To Keller, science is predisposed to conceptually simple explanations that posit a masculine, dominant, controlling factor, to the detriment of both accuracy and further understanding. In the same way, Berman questions the scientific preference for maximization over optimization, which goes hand in hand with a sociological privileging of profit over balance and domination over unity.[5] Berman perceives an adjustment of our epistemological goals as necessary in order to prevent the deterioration of the natural as well as the psychical world. The restoration of global and spiritual health for Berman requires the retrieval of the archaic tradition of participating consciousness, "the end of ego-consciousness" (303), and a redefinition of the search for

[5]For more on 'steady state' concepts, or homeostasis, see Berman 256-60, 287-88.

meaning as an endless and cyclical process rather than an escalating, anxiety-filled search for control. The reenchantment of the world would mean the reunion of individuals to the world they live in, and the world they believe in; "once again, the secular would be the handmaiden of the sacred" (Berman 301)

As new theories in science and sociology tend towards holistic and inclusive models of thought so do they presage changes in literary study, towards an interdisciplinary approach. Although certain trends in literary theory have sought to isolate the text from its cultural context,[6] Paisley Livingston points out that

> the history of criticism in the twentieth century. . . is a history of the borrowings, both creative and sterile, whereby the study of literature has been oriented and stimulated by a range of ideas, theories, and orientations arising from within other fields (264)

Literary study is both expanded and improved by our knowledge of history, philosophy, psychology and science In return, Livingston feels that literary knowledge can contribute to general knowledge if the literary work "is approached as the manifestation of a useful and revealing *perspective on* the problem" (262). Complementing the benefits to literary theory of its union with other disciplines is "the possibility that literature be employed to complexify, challenge and improve the models and hypotheses guiding research within the humanities and social sciences" (Livingston 266).

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[6]See in particular Eagleton on structuralism and semiotics 91-126

These alternative definitions of scientific and literary inquiry have in common a focus on the varied, complex, and holistic nature of knowledge requiring equivalent methodological approaches. To both scientists and students of literature, an awareness extending outside the specific scope of research is necessary in order to achieve any 'complete' knowledge, just as for Browne faith was necessary to knowledge of the world, and reason to knowledge of God. Patrides sees Browne's approach to knowledge as employing a strategy of indirection that "is at once singular to him and yet conformable to God's prototypically 'cryptick and involved method'" ("*The Best Part of Nothing*" 46). Browne comprehends God "asquint upon reflex or shadow" (74) in the quincuncial patterns in nature, the solemnity of burial practices and the significance of his medical profession. In the same way, knowledge, literary, scientific or otherwise, must sometimes be achieved 'asquint' through the indirection of an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach.

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