THE PURPLE ISLAND: A CRITICAL STUDY

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PREFACE

The following pages look anew at one of the more curious poems produced in England during the earlier seventeenth century. A complex blending of contemporary thought in science and psychology with medieval thought and practice in religion and literature, The Purple Island uniquely opens the whole age for study. Because Fletcher speaks from and of his times in a way different from his contemporaries such as Donne or Herbert, the rewards of studying The Purple Island include a fuller understanding of the complex age. Despite the tediousness of the allegory, the poem's purpose of leading man to God through the path of self-knowledge remains clear.

This dissertation represents a study of the basic theme and techniques of the poem. I have attempted to show that Fletcher's theme and techniques are not peculiar to him and thus should not present continued difficulty for modern readers. I hope that other readers will be encouraged to read further into Fletcher's works realizing the skill that lies therein.

My special appreciation and thanks go to Dr. David S. Berkeley, chairman of my committee; not only his careful criticism but also his interest in the subject area have made the production of this dissertation much less problematic than it could have been. I also wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. William Wray, Dr. Lionel Arnold, and Dr. Walter Scott, for their interest and careful criticism.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUNDS IN FORM AND FUNCTION

> He that would learn Theologie, must first studie Autologie. The way to God is by ourselves; it is a blinde and dirty way; it hath many windings, and is easie to be lost . . . .[1]

So Phineas Fletcher introduced readers to his The Purple Island, an allegory which indeed has lost many who have attempted to follow its paths. One need not be entirely confused by the curious rendering of the isle, however, because Fletcher constructed his poem utilizing literary conventions which the great tradition in allegory made known to him. He employed a variety of techniques, images, ideas and characters copied from his models.

Admittedly Fletcher imitated Spenser, Vergil, DuBartas and Ovid weakly at times, but he also displayed notable skill in numerous passages throughout the long allegory.[2] A total impression of Fletcher's poem results from his blending some innovations with convention of form; his supplementing weak passages with many delicate ones; his juxtaposing trite images with fresh and consistent images, and his expressing universal themes emphatically. Analysis which focuses upon these characteristics of the poem --form, imagery, ideas-- enables a reader to comprehend more easily Fletcher's purpose for and his accomplishments throughout The Purple Island.

First one must recognize conventions of the tradition Fletcher chose for his poem. To be sure, when Fletcher published his allegorical

study of man, it stirred response among its readers not through fresh method or new themes; these, being conventional, were familiar to his audience. Reception turned on his ability to utilize both form and theme of contemporary style and relevance. Fletcher's imitative style was common; his message one popular with Puritan preachers. As testimony to the acceptance of the poem, one might consider verses affixed to the published poem. Critics such as Abraham Cowley, for instance, praised Fletcher for his "most accurate Poem," and Francis Quarles forecast "If . . . these dull times/ Should want the present strength to prize thy rhymes,/ The time-instructed children of the next/ Shall fill thy margent, and admire the text."

The tradition of pastoral allegory, understood by his literary contemporaries as suitable to didactic poetry, controls the communication between Fletcher and his readers. Thus an understanding of allegorical technique is crucial to modern readers as well. The poem is regarded as moral allegory, openly classified as such by modern editors, such as R. C. Bald. "Fletcher carried on the Spenserian tradition in his longest poem, The Purple Island, an elaborately allegorical and moral account of the human body."[3] Nonetheless, Phineas Fletcher and his friends do not employ the term "allegory" in description of the poem. At first, the failure on Fletcher's part to call his poem an allegory appears to confuse, even contradict, interpretative efforts, yet one must understand the work as allegory. A knowledge of works of the time and familiarity with rhetorics used by seventeenth-century writers confirms this classification.

Seventeenth-century England has been described as an age of allegory. That is, its writers often focused on two planes of reality at

once--that which reproduced what they perceived visibly and that which conveyed what they perceived imaginatively (spiritually). Professor C. S. Lewis has remarked that an allegorical influence from the Middle Ages, being among the stronger ones of the religious struggles and thus pervading every educational process of the land, was carried even further by the seventeenth-century interest in science. Fletcher was acquainted with allegorical focus in all manners of communication and study. When Renaissance English writers began to study themselves and their world specifically, they continued writing allegory.[4] It did not prove inappropriate for the Puritans; rather it became the standard for narrating the Puritan saga of the spiritual life.[5]

Despite the devotion to plainness the Puritans professed, it is a fact that "allegory" was a common rhetorical form in Fletcher's day. Not all writers referred to the term as applicable to their works, and definitions of the technique are not always particularly illuminating. Yet rhetorics of the century do shed some light on the general sense of what the word meant to the literary artists of the times. "Allegory" consistently referred to something brief, and also was connected with use of metaphor. The most compendious statement appears to be one found in Peacham's Garden of Eloquence:

> Allegoria: called of Quintilian, Inversio, is a Trope of a sentence, or forme of speech which expresseth one thing in words, and another in sense. In a Metaphore there is a translation of one word only, in an Allegoria of manie, and for that cause an Allegoria is called a continued Metaphor.[6]

For some Renaissance writers, the application of the term to their works indicated a broad, multi-level interpretation, such as Erasmus' following definition suggests:

> Allegoria: This is a species of narrative. It is not a simple narrative but one which invites a second, different interpretation, alluding to things from quite another sequence of events and to moral attitudes, emotions or types of character present. One kind of allegory is called mythology, the interpretation and explanation of myths. Allegory is also the method of exposition of prophecies, divinations, prodigies, signs and dreams.[7]

Similar definitions all stress the dualistic statement of allegorical works. Thomas Wilson shortens the explanation to one clear point: "It is none other thing, but a metaphore, used throughout a whole sentence, or Oration." His illustrations are of moral situations, thus suggesting the general association of moral tone with the style. He continues:

> . . . as in speaking against a wicked offenderor, I might say thus: Oh, Lord, his nature was so evil, and his witte so wickedly bent, that he meant to bouge the ship, where he himself sailed; meaning that he purposed the destruction of his own countrey.[8]

One final significant literary basis for Renaissance ideas of allegory is found in Dante. His Can Grande letter defines allegory, as "a form of narrative fiction, characterized by a poetic and rhetorical use of language, digressive and episodic."[9]

For the most part, the notable feature of the above definitions is that they all identify allegory as typically more than a single-word inversion of meaning. Yet allegory still remains an obscure description if applied to a long work. The rhetoricians' definitions do not consider allegory as the informing principle of whole narrative works; only Dante's description of his own poem asserts this application to style, and Erasmus suggests an expansion of story.

How can one suppose Fletcher to have been affected by these conceptions of allegory? Insistence upon allegory as a common feature of

"our ordinary speaking" suggests its acceptance by both writers and readers.[10] Describing the popularity of the device, Puttenham declares, "The use of this figure is so large, and his vertue of so great efficacie as it is supposed no man can pleasantly utter and persuade without it."[11] Fletcher has as his immediate precedent Spenser, whose "dark conceit" or "continued allegory" is noted as a direct influence upon Fletcher's poem. With multiplicity of metaphor, Spenser has a more complex style, but nonetheless the extension of a figure to full expression in epic poetry is set within the broad tradition Fletcher inherited from his master.[12]

In summation of the various definitions of allegory, one can generalize on the basis of contemporary allegorical styles that the use of allegory, after the manner of the ancients, to half-conceal topical references was firmly established during the early seventeenth century in England. It was also used to explain religious truths and moral guidelines to laymen. The term suggested to an audience that some key within the sermon or narrative would lead to meanings beyond the literal. The symbolic or allegorical meaning was generally religious, for moral improvement or instruction of the reader.[13]

Turning from definition to analysis of such allegorical function, one notes that the usefulness of allegory as a rhetorical device is never challenged. Wherever the subject is considered at all, the opinion prevails that it is highly effective.[14] Renaissance poets such as Fletcher chose to employ religious allegorical historicity because the link between biblical truth and experiences of ordinary life and knowledge could be more effectively presented through figures. Readers were accustomed to allegorical styles employed in sermons; poets who

extended figures into narrative plots had ready audiences.[15]

Fletcher's particular background in religious training encouraged him to synthesize techniques of the pulpit with literary ones. Yet, his classical reading supplied him with adequate models for any style popular during his time. Fletcher read widely, and among the various authorities he found much to imitate. The works which Fletcher "must have read" are listed in A. B. Langdale's biographical study of the poet.[16]

Most direct in literary influence, as Fletcher himself notes, is Spenser's The Faerie Queene. Based generally on Book II, cantos ix and xi, of the epic by Spenser, The Purple Island expands the description of the House of Alma into an extended account of the human body--both as spirit and corporeal entity. Although Fletcher is not purposing a major emphasis on his poem's ultimate historical or topical meanings which Spenser added to his poem, parallels exist between Fletcher's and Spenser's poems. It is clear that Fletcher's work is marked throughout by the influencing genius of Spenser, and Fletcher openly declares his practice of imitation: "I adore with humble love . . . Colin," he admits in "To Thenot."[17] He repeats the same acknowledgement in The Purple Island where he speaks of his poetic ability in comparison to his predecessors: "I love with just adoring . . . our home-bred Colin" (VI, 5). He asserts that he is Spenser's "steps not following close, but farre admiring/ To lackey [him] . . . is all my prides aspiring" (VI, 5). Later Fletcher notes that Spenser "most sweetly sung, as he before had seen/ In Alma's house," the song which Fletcher takes up anew (and more specifically). The influence of Spenser on Fletcher's work is obvious but broad rather than exact:

"his memory yet green/ Lives in his well tun'd songs, whose leaves immortall been" (VI, 51).

Such statements indicate models Fletcher consciously chose for himself. His imitation was intentional and traditional, and it was the basis by which he judged the success his work might have. He was, after all, a definite follower, considering himself repeatedly no more than a "humble poet and pastor."[18]

Obviously it was from literary pastoral tradition that Fletcher took the great metaphor for his allegory. In The Purple Island he studies the physical body of man literally, but he also studies the actions of man both as simple or humble creature and as the good shepherd's creation (image.). The figures appear to be combinations of Fletcher's imagery in his Eclogues, his piscatory play Sicelides, and his short poetry in A Father's Testament, all derived from models both literary and religious. Within Spenser's poem, Fletcher found sufficient imagery for his own work. The extensions are Fletcher's own, however; the technique of explanation and the particular blending of travel and battle reflect Fletcher's different purpose.

To be sure, Fletcher's narrative is not equivalent to Spenser's. The general critical attitude toward Fletcher's style is voiced in White, Wallerstein, and Quintana:

> Drawing his poetic inspiration chiefly from Spenser, Fletcher exploited his master, and the Italian and Latin writers whom his master had used, in a fresh way and enlarged the tradition of Spenserianism which flowed down to Milton. Spenser is his master in theme, philosophical outlook, poetic invention, expression and texture of verse.[19]

This influence Spenser extended to Fletcher has been extensively

treated. Since Fletcher and his brother Giles were noted disciples of Spenser, the critical attention given their works has largely been directed to additions or qualifications to be made in a stock comparison between either of the brothers and their master. Such comparison has rightly recognized some of the weaknesses and strengths of the poetry Phineas produced in the shadows of Spenser.[20] Fletcher's poem appears tedious and dull in comparison to the more varied poem of Spenser.[21] Yet any comparison needs to admit that Fletcher's poem is not strictly a copy of Spenser's; his different focus and purpose account for major changes in technique, primarily directed by religious concerns.

Although his poem is somewhat individualistic, the religious pastoral allegory chosen by Fletcher to present his study of man would not have been too confusing to his audience. The style was a natural expression of the religious poets and of preachers as well. Particularly relevant to the Puritan preacher, imagery of the humble shepherd, the pilgrim (or traveller), and of the warrior were frequent. The philosophical outlook which is said to have derived from Spenser is one shared by Fletcher's fellows at Cambridge as well--it is not restricted to tradition in secular literature alone.[22] The form and tone which Fletcher chose were only slightly different from those proven through the Middle Ages and continuing in the churches of the Reformation.

Since Fletcher's educational training was to prepare him in ways of religious instruction as well as in ways of literary development, one must certainly acknowledge some religious influences on his poetry. Protestant views shaped his own; religious use of allegory was deemed significant for its ambiguous function and structure. Both Anglican and Puritan leaders advocated use of imagery drawn from the commonplace

which could relate certain biblical truths. Fletcher's conservative views apparently stem from the strong Anglican tradition within his family background, but his equally strong emphasis upon the spiritual salvation of man seems to derive from the rising Puritan influences in his college and around the country.[23] Joshua McClennen's study of Renaissance religious allegory led him to conclude that it was so common a technique among both Anglican and Puritan writers that "the rhetoricians were in almost monotonous agreement as to both its meaning and its function."[24] Agreement does not mean consistency in handling, however, nor does it indicate a single standard within the tradition. Three main influences from the area of religious allegory might be identified as offered to Fletcher through his readings.

One source of authority for Fletcher's technique for religious expression was St. Augustine. His well known figures of the husk and the kernel indicate that for him, story and expression are of value insofar as they leave the mind with a conception of some fundamental doctrinal truths. The function of symbol or figure, as he intended to use such, and influenced others to employ like style, is thus not to produce an intense emotional reaction but to exercise the reason or mind.[25] Such Augustinian views, among the most influential in suggesting the serious effects of allegory, appeared particularly significant to medieval scholars and theologians. The practice of analysis, reflection upon the abstract, through presentation of the specific is also characteristic of Fletcher's technique in The Purple Island. Fletcher's moral statement likewise appeals to reason, not primarily the emotions as the Spenserian style marked by its sensousness and its emotional descriptions has a tendency to do.[26]

A second influence upon Fletcher's handling of moral and religious thought in The Purple Island may have been Dante, who provided in his Divine Comedy figurative Christian concepts which later Christian writers repeated. The function of such Christian figuralism is relevant to Fletcher's purpose specifically. As Erich Auerbach says of Dante in Mimesis, so might be said of Fletcher, that he employed his poetry to take his readers from the earthly and human world into the realm of Christian truths.[27] Particularly in his utilization of Christian history as the general basis for his poem's time reference, Fletcher addresses himself to a Christian medieval perspective rather than a more secular Renaissance historicity. His topical allusions do not assume the structural proportion nor thematic significance of Spenser's, for instance. Rather he directs a tour with the dating of the Island from its creation, through its fall, toward its rescue, figuratively resolving every difficulty in the final acts of the Prince. The reader would thus be led to awareness by descriptions given with meticulous care and directness.

A third, more immediate, directive regarding religious expressions emanates from Puritan forces in England. William Haller, in The Rise of Puritanism, describes the pervasiveness of the influence Puritan leaders extended. He notes the growing numbers of Puritan preachers and teachers, who ultimately offered an incalculable influence on the development of popular literary taste and expression.[28] It appears that Fletcher must have produced his work in compliance with the attitudes of his fellows at King's College. The Puritan pulpit was dedicated to presenting sermons that were practical: it urged that men learn how to believe and how to act. In aiming to arouse a reader's

interest in salvation, preachers could employ several techniques, but above all, their method included set imagery. Haller describes the Puritan purpose as "to make every man see himself under the eternal images of the pilgrim and the warrior."[29] The purpose to which Fletcher addresses himself echoes both the general Christian directives filtering down to him through the medieval church and also the more contemporary directives of the Puritan pulpit.

The moral allegory as Fletcher imitated it looms ever large in focus throughout his poem. A final source for his general religious expression has been identified as the morality play tradition from medieval England.[30] Such a view appears tenable when one considers the parallels between general conflict and structure within the latter part of Fletcher's allegory and the morality plays which were popular during the early Renaissance years in England. On the other hand, when one further notes that any statement regarding man's predicament in life viewed from a Christian doctrinal stance will suggest the same outcome to all earthly struggles (the protagonist is seen to fall, be saved, and win the great prize of eternal life through Christ's redemption), the morality play may be regarded rather as a parallel expression, not necessarily a certain source. Poems of allegorical account of body and castle do not exclusively contain the story of man's fall and redemption--virtually all Christian literature presents part of the message.

Viewing the variety of religious models for his poem, one might determine that the immediate environment would extend the greatest influence upon him. Yet it appears that Fletcher does not neglect the more conservative background training to which he was exposed. Fletcher

does not restrict himself to only the images of pilgrim and warrior; he goes beyond the travel theme in adding emphasis upon the more authoritative view of knowing one's self completely. That is, authorities for religious expression appear to be synthesized by Fletcher. His purpose is like that of the Puritans around him yet his technique is more traditional and conservative after the style that Dante or St. Augustine advocated.[31]

The emphasis upon mental analysis is consequential in determining levels of meaning characteristic of allegory; Fletcher seems to have remained constant in his adherence to the "rules" of the Augustinian system. The theory of the husk and kernel applied directly to poetry gives a triple reading to that art--letter, sense, sentence.[32] The importance given the poet in the Augustinian system imposed the obligation to write with the ultimate aim of promoting Christian doctrine through appeal to reason, mental stimulation. The Puritan dedication to spirituality, focusing upon the inner man imposed a similar obligation even though a somewhat different technique. The motivation in Fletcher's works, such as his direct biblical exegesis The Way to Blessedness and the allegory which is to enable man to know himself and the path to God, combines the influences from his background. On the level of sentence, Fletcher's works, particularly The Purple Island, appeal morally to a mind progressing in doctrine. And the full force of allegory will affect an intellect approaching perfection. The goal of a writer (or of a preacher) is, then, to lead readers to spiritual maturity through the allegorical narrative. Fletcher complies with this request by supplying his readers with the copious marginalia at the beginning of the poem (for the reader who is just beginning his

travel through knowledge). These notes are reduced to only occasional definitions in later cantos, as the reader progresses in understanding (and the poem's purpose is fulfilled) through the efforts of the poet.[33]

To be sure, a study of Fletcher's works makes it clear that his theory and practice as a poet are governed by a complex of traditions that converge for him in the concept of the poet as teacher. This is perhaps a direct influence from his literary master Spenser, but it is also certainly related to his actual position at Cambridge and later at Hilgay. In much of his work, including The Purple Island, are to be found reverberations of the Renaissance critical theorizing and contemporary Puritan theology that assigned poetry a didactic purpose. Such is acknowledged initially in his prefatory remarks and also in passages throughout the poem (such as near the end of Cantos VI and XI, especially). References make it also clear that Fletcher admired above all others those poets who inculcated virtue while "charming the senses"; he seems to retain the Augustinian emphasis on seriousness of verse while also including the lighter tone of other background influences.[34] In practice, he models himself upon the ancients and Spenser, observing the requirements of the theory of kinds, which held in part that certain types of poetry demanded seriousness in didacticism (as opposed to the primary pleasurable or sensuous effects of such works as sonnets or masques).[35]

Literary and religious sources for The Purple Island thus are noted to be numerous yet general in scope: borrowings may be impossible to trace in many instances other than for occasional passages as Langdale has done. Fletcher's work appears to be a product of his times, a synthesis of the various influences extended to him through

his literary and religious studies. The richness of this heritage makes the work worthy of analysis.

It remains to finish defining just what Fletcher found binding within the forms he combined to construct his work. Particular features of pastoral allegory relevant to discussion of Fletcher's poem are keys to understanding the complex work.[36] Since some modern writers use the term "pastoral" to describe any work which concerns itself with the contrast between simple and complicated ways of living, oftentimes readers fail to note more subtle techniques of traditional pastoral. Pastoral does exalt the naturalness and virtue of the simple man at the expense of the complicated one, whether the former be a shepherd, or a child, or a working man, but such a definition is not descriptive of the total thought of classical pastoral or of Fletcher's poem.[37] Thomas Purney's A Full Enquiry into the True Nature of the Pastoral though published a century after Fletcher's work, may nevertheless be considered accurate in defining the form here under investigation. Purney identifies the form by the uses made of it from classical times through the eighteenth century. He says, "The proper technique of pastoral is to imitate the life of a shepherd. It uses fable, Characters, Sentiments and Language to excite joy or pity." Purney continues to indicate the application of fable to emphasize the poem's moral lessons. Its "proper subjects," as Purney abstracts them from the pastorals produced within the tradition, include love, the death of a friend, songs, and concerns of virtuous living.[38] It is this last subject which one finds relevant to Fletcher's poem.

Further, Fletcher follows Spenser and many others in making pastoral a vehicle for allegorical autobiography and for ecclesiastical

satire.[39] In most of his pastoral expressions Fletcher employs fishermen as main figures and shepherds as less significant figures. In using the life of the fisherman as bases for Christian allegory, Fletcher has, of course, as good a precedent in the New Testament as the pastoralists who followed the Mantuan had in using that of the shepherd--since the first Apostles were fishermen whom Christ commanded to become fishers of men.[40] The Purple Island combines the traditional images of both shepherd and fishermen in a manner different than that of the Eclogues Fletcher composed; however, his insistence upon the pastoral element as transitional establishes its continued significance.

In viewing the multifaceted literary background for Fletcher's poem, one notes that pastoral is only one thread within the network of imagery composing Fletcher's allegory. Fletcher selects only some of the motifs from his models for his great allegory, weaving together the idea of the shepherd as pastor, as country hero, and as emblem of the simple life. To be sure, among the conventions within the tradition he adopted were simple people and universal feelings. This much was required of the poem.

In summary, several different allegorical traditions, ranging from description of the human body in microcosmic terms to the ready-made prophecy of the Book of Revelation, mingle in Fletcher's account of the nature of man, the spiritual warfare in which he is engaged, and his apocalyptic expectation presented in The Purple Island. The poem seems to have some obvious sources in a rather fixed moral philosophy founded upon Scripture, Dante, and contemporary psychology, all drawn upon by Fletcher's comrades as well as by Fletcher.[41] As for the framework of the poem, description of the human body in microcosmic terms was firmly

established when Fletcher came to write. When he describes organs, tissues, and major bodily systems as rivers, mountains, etc., he is not being unique. Although he does present his descriptions in much more detail and on a much fuller scale than others, the topic in allegory had already built a large audience.[42]

Thus the particular form of the allegory in The Purple Island--Fletcher's conception of man as an island--is far from fantastic. He employed one major metaphor that would serve his purpose of investigating the nature of man and locating him in the divine scheme. Available to him for depicting the spiritual warfare in which man is involved was all the traditional psychomachia--the prolonged dragon fight from medieval allegory, the personification of the virtues and vices from religious drama, the familiar Puritan epic heard from lecterns and pulpits daily. The idea of the microcosm drawn on for the description of his physical and psychological attributes was like that employed by other religious writers, including Donne. There was even available a ready-made device for linking the microcosm and the psychomachia--the body as edifice--which Fletcher appears to borrow from Spenser and DuBartas. His figure also allows him to communicate vividly man's relationships to God--that fluctuating relationship that involves man's moving away from God at the Fall, his subsequent wanderings in the seas of death, the sense of insecurity experienced by a troubled searcher, and the feeling of peace attendant upon completion of the mission. It was a Puritan impetus from the atmosphere of Cambridge combined with a more conservative religious perspective rooted in medieval allegory and classical imitative technique that informs Fletcher's style. In all, Fletcher's allegorical habit of mind is traditional and conservative in

the signs he reads and the way he reads them. His inconsistencies in mode are not the flaw they at first appear to be. True they make the poem difficult but they also accurately relate to his overall theme and are thus sufficiently relevant according to the allegorical practice and theory of the times.

In view of the rather loose definitions of allegory and the license in imitation Fletcher followed for his poem, one may caution modern readers of Fletcher as Graham Hough does in his study of Spenser, "we can derive from the rhetorical definitions [and the study of backgrounds] a useful warning against the relentless discovery of deliberately inserted allegorical intentions at every point."[43] The consistency readers expect in long poems of the seventeenth century is often too extensive. The allegory is generally not systematic; the kind of consistency one might justly expect is nothing more than that anticipated in any long poem--the metaphors are various in kind and material, yet all subserve a consistent tone and purpose. And as in the metaphorical content of a long poem, a good many "accidents," as well as "intendments" might happen.[44]

The Purple Island need not lose modern readers because of its curious form. Allegory such as Fletcher wrote presents its readers with keys sufficient to understanding, to be found in the variety of techniques Fletcher found relevant to the form: versification, word schemes, imagery, motifs and themes--all relate to the total expression Fletcher carefully presented.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Phineas Fletcher, "To the Reader," preface to The Purple Island (Cambridge, 1633).

[2]See A. B. Langdale, "Appendix B," Phineas Fletcher: Man of Letters, Science, and Divinty (New York, 1937) for a list of borrowings of specific lines from Fletcher's models.

[3]R. C. Bald, ed., Seventeenth Century English Poetry (New York, 1959), p. 283.

[4]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London, 1948), p. 60.

[5]William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York, 1957), p. 142.

[6]Henry Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence, 2nd ed. (London, 1593), p. 25. Like the other English rhetoricians, Peacham is derivative, so it is not surprising that the same sort of definition and the same relations to metaphor are found in other English rhetorical writers. Angel Day in The English Secretarie defines allegoria as

> A kind of inverting or change of sense, as when we shew one thing in words, and signify another in meaning: A trope most usual among us, even in our common speaking, as when we say, Bow the withe while it is green, meaning to correct children whilest they be young: or, There is no fire without smoake, meaning that there is no ill conceipt without occasion: or, I smell a Rat, that is, I know your meaning, Part II (1595), p. 79.

[7]Desiderius Erasmus, The Colloquies of Erasmus, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago, 1965). Another definition is given by George Puttenham in the Arte of English Poesie. This fuller explication reiterates the rules of usage which prevailed throughout the age:

> Allegoria is when we do speake in sense translative and wrested from his own signification, nevertheless applied to another not altogether contrary, but having much conveniencie with it as before we said of the metaphore: as for example if we should call the commonwealth a ship; the Prince a Pilot, the Counsellors, mariners, the stormes wares, the calm and haven peace, this is spoken all in allegorie: and because such inversion of sense is one single worde is by the figure metaphore, of whom we spake before, and this manner of inversion extending to whole and large speeches,

it maketh the figure allegorie to be called a long and perpetual Metaphore, III (London, 1589), Chapter XVIII.

[8]Thomas Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique (London, 1553), p. 176.

[9]The Letters of Dante, trans. Paget Toynbee, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1966), p. 174.

[10]Puttenham, III, p. 117. See also Prof. Joshua McClennen, "On the Meaning and Function of Allegory in the English Renaissance," The University of Michigan Contributions to Modern Philology, VI (April, 1947) for an annotated listing of dictionaries and rhetorics defining "allegory."

[11]Puttenham, p. 186.

[12]Harry Berger, The Allegorical Temper (New Haven, 1957), p. 182. See also E. A. Bloom, "The Allegorical Principle," ELH, XVIII (1951), 166, on the weakness of allegorical style.

[13]This opinion is nowhere questioned, but it appears that some doubts had arisen near the end of the sixteenth century. Spenser would have been more assured of the validity than Fletcher or his contemporaries.

[14]See McClennen, pp. 37-38.

[15]Allegorical style was serviceable for communication on various topics. Haller notes the acceptance of allegory even by Puritan writers, p. 140. A further indication of its popular function is recorded by Sir John Harrington. He states that ancient poetry read and used as models by Elizabethan and Jacobean writers was an important influence on their writing allegory because it exhibits meaning in three senses: literal, moral, and allegorical. Such a complex style, he says, assures the application of the material to all readers. It makes acts and exploits of the narrative worthy of memory. It thus becomes "profitable for the active life of man, approving vertuous actions and condemning the contraries." And finally, from such works, "some true understanding of naturall Philosophy, or sometimes of politicke government, and now and then of divinitie" may come. Sir John Harrington, Elizabethan Critical Essays, II, ed. G. G. Smith (London, 1904), pp. 201-202.

[16]Langdale, pp. 106-107.

[17]"To Thenot," The Poetical Works of Giles Fletcher and Phineas Fletcher, II, ed. Frederick Boas (Cambridge, 1909), 232.

[18]Langdale, pp. 220-221.

[19]Helen C. White, Ruth C. Wallerstein and Ricardo Quintana, eds., Seventeenth Century Verse and Prose (New York, 1951), p. 103.

[20]Langdale asserts that definite links between Fletcher and Spenser center on style, imagery, philosophy, vocabulary, subject matter, character portrayal, prosody, wording, "almost every part of Fletcher's poetry," pp. 132-133. There are relatively few critics who voice a high opinion of Fletcher in comparison with Spenser, but there are some who have been prompted to praise him too well in effort to compensate for the adverse criticism repeatedly given him. Typical among these liberal compliments is this of C. V. Wedgewood: "If Phineas Fletcher is never of the greatest, he is often beautiful and always technically good." Seventeenth Century English Literature (London, 1950), p. 52.) See also W. Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, ed., Piscatory Eclogues (Edinburgh, 1771), pp. 5, 109.

[21]For instance, James Russell Lowell, in "Spenser," The Prince of Poets: Essays on Edmund Spenser, ed. John R. Elliott, Jr. (New York, 1968), pp. 32-33, notes the flatness of Fletcher's imitation.

[22]Haller notes the Puritan aversion for elaborate styles, but both Anglican and Puritan writers employed many rhetorical figures. See pp. 141-145.

[23]Ibid., p. 21. See also Douglas Bush, Classical Influence in Renaissance Literature (Cambridge, 1952).

[24]McClennen, pp. 21-22.

[25]Discussion of St. Augustine on allegory may be found in Bernard Huppe and D. W. Robertson, Jr., Fruyt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories (Princeton, N. J., 1963), p. 6.

[26]Joan Grundy, Spenserian Poets (London, 1969), p. 270, asserts, for instance, that the Fletcherian style is nearest to Spenser when it captures the sensuous description of the human body, but this is a minor part of the total poem.

[27]Trans. Willard Trask (Garden City, N. Y., 1959), p. 196. Dante's influence appears authoritative in both literary form and religious idea.

[28]Haller, p. 21.

[29]Ibid., p. 25.

[30]See Lewis F. Ball, "The Morality Theme in Book II of The Faerie Queene," Appendix VII of the Variorum Spenser, II (1965).

[31]The scholarly prose style of citing one's sources is followed in the first part of Fletcher's poem, with references to Plato, Aristotle, Spenser, Vergil and others as his authorities. Puritans opposed this general practice. See J. R. H. Moorman, A History of the Church in England (London, 1958), pp. 208-209.

[32]St. Hugh of Victor gives further definition of the levels of meaning in allegorical styles: "exposition contains three parts—letter, sense, sentence. Letter is the rightful ordering of discourse, which indeed we call construing. Sense is the easy and as it were open significance which the letter offers at the first appearance. Sentence is the more profound understanding which may not be attained except through exposition or interpretation," The Exposicyon of Saynt Augustynes Rule (London, 1525), pp. 10-11.

[33]The notations supplied by Fletcher appear to be valuable in providing a basis for the development of a reader's awareness of himself physically, mentally, and emotionally.

[34]Fletcher cites Vergil and Homer, whose songs taught the highest lessons of virtue and Sannazaro and DuBartas, poets of that "silver age" when "honour stoopt to be wisdomes page" (I, 26).

[35]CF. Commentaries by Donald L. Clark, Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance (New York, 1963), pp. 10-12; Walter W. Greg, Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama (New York, 1959), p. 4; Bush, Classical Influence in Renaissance Literature, pp. 39-40; Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith, eds. Renaissance England: Poetry and Prose (New York, 1956), p. 112; Jonathan Bouchier, "Milton and Phineas Fletcher," Notes and Queries, 4th Series, XI (June 28, 1873), p. 529 and Rosemond Tuve, Allegorical Imagery (Princeton, N. J., 1966).

[36]Pastoral, as a comprehensive mode, has been difficult to define. John Scaliger, another rhetorician, defines it as follows:

> Pastoralia: The subjects of the pastoral include ploughing, harvest, mowing, the cutting of wood, wayfaring, the lives of sheep and goatherds, vegetable growers, fishing and country houses. They contain arguments, rejoicings, amorous entreaty, love songs, monodies, vows, recitals of deeds, rustic celebrations, praises, wooings, or disputes in praise of different girls . . . . What the poet wished to disguise he may convey by means of rustic personae. Sylvan poems therefore are not a despised form of art. Select Translations from Scaliger's Poetics, trans. F. M. Padelford (New York, 1905).

[37]Comprehensive review of pastoral appears in J. Frank Kermode, ed. English Pastoral Poetry: From Beginnings to Marvell (Freeport, N. Y., 1969) and Leonard Grant, Neo-Latin Literature and the Pastoral (Chapel Hill, 1965).

[38]Thomas Purney, A Full Enquiry into the True Nature of the Pastoral (1717), Augustan Reprint Society edition (Los Angeles, 1948), pp. 5, 6, 10-14.

[39]This is done most obviously in Fletcher's ecloques and in his play, but the openings to each of the Cantos in The Purple Island give Fletcher opportunity to speak briefly of contemporaneous situations,

as does the battle of the concluding cantos.

[40]John F. A. Heath-Stubbs, The Pastoral (London, 1969), pp. 38-39 elaborates this point in discussion of Greek pastoral. Note also William Empson, English Pastoral Poetry (New York, 1938), p. 11.

[41]For information pertaining to "pastoral" ideas within the church at this time, see Philip E. Hughes, Theology of the English Reformers (London, 1965), Paul Baynes, A Healpe to True Happiness (London, 1635) and George Gifford A Brief Discourse of Certaine Points of Religion each employs country imagery to extend the "pastor" concept.

[42]C. L. Powell, "The Castle of the Body," SP, XVI (1919), pp. 197-205.

[43]Graham Hough, The Faerie Queene: A Study in Allegory (New Haven, 1957), p. 224.

[44]Ibid., p. 73.

CHAPTER II

VERSIFICATION, PROSODY AND WORD SCHEMES

Because the principles of Fletcher's poetics are neither strikingly new nor anachronistic, one may wonder why critics have been alternately bemused and angered by them. Judging Fletcher's poetry today is very different, however, from evaluating it during the seventeenth century. Today's readers are introduced to his style piecemeal, rarely finding whole works reprinted for study. Yet, as the total composition of a poem provides valid frame for its criticism, one can best analyze The Purple Island by considering the various aspects of it: prosody, word schemes, structure, imagery, ideas and themes. Observing Fletcher's control of these conventions and features of style provides one with a basis for judgment of the poem. In final analysis, a modern reader can discover certain qualities within passages of the poem which enable him to appreciate and enjoy Fletcher's allegorical work. In the following pages, Fletcher's achievements in prosody and word schemes will be noted as expressive of his imitative and personal style, features which are handled well by the poet.

Essentially Fletcher wrote much like his contemporaries, emphasizing the value of rhetorical style. This stylistic practice must be considered in assessing the poem. It is known that poets like Fletcher were taught from general classical texts. Documents extant from various academies cite Erasmus' De copia as one of the guides to composition

which were assigned to pupils before they progressed to learning rhetoric and dialectic proper.[1] Style, ornament, the nature of poetry and its history, its metres and rhythms, are also subjects of important vernacular treatises on poetry.[2]

Indeed the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century educational procedures, in exacting a thorough familiarity with selected authors, encouraged memorization both of the Latin originals and English equivalents as standard practice. Later followed analysis, by imitation, and lastly some variation. (Fletcher is, of course, not unique in style nor in general subject; yet he, as others, was allowed a minimum of innovation to be added to the traditional handling of allegory.) The wealth of information available encouraged highly allusive creative work. In all areas of writing, it appears that learning was measured in part by quantity of imitated lines, not by freshness of expression.[3]

A poet of the English Renaissance, then, was educated in the techniques of his masters. Elizabeth Donno describes the educational practices in this way:

> 'congruent epithetons,' 'choice phrases, acute sentences, wittie Apophthegmes,' and 'livelie similtudes' were duly recorded in the students' commonplace books, while analysis of language and structure led to a similar familiarity with and reservoir of effective rhetorical devices.[4]

When students were well-stocked with such raw material, they were then encouraged to imitate and vary their models, to seek out the "flowers of fancy, the jerks of inventions." This school habit, lingering in the minds of many poets such as Fletcher, ultimately marked the styles as repetitive and weak rather than pleasurable. The discipline was taken too restrictively by such writers rather than used as a first

plateau in their rise to greatness in expression.

The tradition and conventions that Fletcher adopted were binding because he permitted them to be. Although some features of form or genre were utilized through poetic license, and many others as misconceived parallels to the masters, most of the characteristics of The Purple Island are neither innovative nor fresh. Fletcher's style is a "studied" Spenserian one; and while it may be an exaggeration to assert that he wrote only because Spenser did, as Lowell has done, one does find many weaknesses in the style of the disciple. Nevertheless, all matters of composition must be considered in judging the poem. One may question initially if Fletcher exhibits any art; a close look at his style will yield an answer. Admittedly, his meter is frequently extreme; his diction inappropriate; his syntax strained; his lines repetitious; yet periodically he presents his thought in smooth, fresh, and beautiful style.

The rhetorics of the day included many devices (from stanza form to word schemes) identified as enhancing style. Practice verified certain features to be more effective than others, and of course, some more relevant or appropriate to the pastoral allegory than others. Fletcher's schooling introduced him to rules he could follow, and his work accordingly displays the fruit of his reliance upon precedent and standards.

For example, in I, 43 Fletcher describes the creation of man:

> Now when the first weeks life was almost spent,
> And this world built, and richly furnished;
> To store heav'ns courts, and steer earths regiment,
> He cast to frame an Isle, the heart and head
> Of all his works, compos'd with curious art;
> Which like an Index briefly should impart

The summe of all; the whole, yet of the whole a part.

The passage exhibits many of Fletcher's stylistic traits--penchant for paradox, simile, parallelism, regularity of meter and dominance of rhyme. Throughout the poem, masculine rhymes are prevalent; the mechanics of verse rarely varied. The passage aptly suggests the stylistic achievements that follow throughout the poem.

To extend analysis of versification, one continues to assess Fletcher's blending of tradition and poetic license in his stanza. He patterns his verse not after the formal and slow-moving nine-line Spenserian stanza of the Faerie Queene, nor does he utilize the rime royal stanza of Chaucer's Troilus and Creseyde. Fletcher's seven-line stanza, with its initial iambic pentameter quatrain of both traditional stanzas, concludes with a triplet: a couplet of iambic pentameter followed by a rhyming Alexandrine. Thus he slows the stanza's pace as does Spenser, with the plodding hexameter last line, one considered by Puttenham as "grave and stately" and appropriate to pastoral.[5] Fletcher's verse remains as short as that of Chaucer, but it is without the sharpness of description. Fletcher's stanza form is consistent, with no verses defective in numbers of lines. Perhaps the poem was admired because of such regularity, a feature highly regarded by critics such as Gascoigne who urged retaining one verse form throughout a poem, altering lines infrequently and then only slightly.[6] The general stanza pattern is well handled according to this view.

One must admit, nevertheless, that a cursory reading of The Purple Island is laborious. Despite any initial difficulty, however, an examination of the prosody of the poem removes most of the major problems

in one's reading the lines. The stanzas should not be too generally labeled as awkward or tedious, for objective evaluation reveals both weaknesses and strengths in the control of meter and measure which Fletcher exercises.

The scheme adopted for the examination of Fletcher's prosody below is to assume a normal or regular line and to evaluate all the variations as exceptions to that norm. For this purpose the stanza is defined as having six verses with a decasyllabic line on a disyllabic basis, the seventh verse having twelve syllables. The foot expresses a rising rhythm (i.e., with accents or stresses on the alternate even syllables). The lines are thus either iambic pentameter or iambic hexameter.

Such lines as the following are to be considered the normal ones for the poem:

A/mong/ the/ rout/ they/ take/ two/ gent/le/ swains,
Whose/ sprout/ing/ youth/ did/ now/ but/ green/ly/ bud:
Well/ could/ they/ pipe/ and/ sing;/ but/ yet/ their/ strains
Were/ one/ly/ known/ un/to/ the/ sil/ent/ wood:
Their/ near/est/ bloud/ from/ self-/same/ fount/ains/ flow,
Their/ souls/ self/same/ in/ near/er/ love/ did/ grow:
So/ seem'd/ two/ joyn'd/ in/ one,/ or/ one/ dis/joyn'd/ in/
two. (I, 3)

The reader finds that these lines have ten syllables with five stresses all on the even places, with the concluding hexameter following the same pattern. This stanza has no exceptions in meter; the variance found within the other verses of the poem is discovered in their comparison to the regularity of verses such as this one. They are the following: 1: Variations in number of syllables; 2: Variations in number of stresses; and 3: Variation in position of stresses. These

are the extent of the exceptions due to prosody.

First, one might consider the conditions of change in the number of syllables per line. Of Fletcher's 697 stanzas, he has many lines with exceptions to the syllabic count of ten or twelve. Exceptions appear as both deficiencies and as excesses to the regular lines.

The smallest class of variation includes deficiency of syllables. The poem has few instances among his stanzas' sestets. The effect is noted in such passages as the following:

> The/ Is/lands/ Com/mon/ Cook/ Con/coc/tion;
> . . . Is/ quart/er'd/ fit/ in/ just/ pro/por/tion (II, 33).[7]

The deficiency appears in a reading of the last words as trisyllabic, ending with a "shun" pronunciation of the last syllable.[8] Indicating guidelines to the practice during the Renaissance in England, George Puttenham says that a word "properly" used carries its "ordinary" pronunciation; no "wrenching of a word-accent" for metrical purposes would be considered by the serious poet.[9]

III, 26 presents another instance of deficiency:

> Strange/ may/ it/ seem;/ such/ their/ condi/tion
> That/ they/ are/ more/ dis/spread/ by/ un/ion/
> And/ two/ are/ twen/ty/ made,/ by/ be/ing/ made/ in/ one.

Fletcher accepts a y-glide in the pronunciation of the vowels of the suffixes: to rhyme with "one," both "condition" and "Union" have glides in their pronunciations. Having the glide creates a nine-syllable line for the first two lines of the triplet. The regular twelve-syllable line does contain all its syllables, however.

The point illustrated is that for Fletcher the weak ending "-ion" brought with it many metrical difficulties. The deficiencies in either ten or twelve-syllable lines result from rather weak and repetitious phrasing, although these deficiencies are quite few in number.[10]

Significantly larger numbers of lines with supernumerary syllables appear. These can be separated into two classes: those which are extrametrical syllables, and those which are accounted for by poetical elision.[11]

Most of Fletcher's extrametrical syllables appear at the ends of lines. Particularly since he employs feminine rhyme as the most usual variation of his line, one anticipates terminal weak syllables.[12] The terminal weak syllables discussed above constitute only one group Fletcher repeats. An abundance of weak syllables as supernumerary (in both pentameter and hexameter lines) must be accepted as a major feature of his style. That it appears as a defect is the opinion of modern critics. That it was not looked upon so unfavorably by his contemporaries is probable. Puttenham, for instance, comments that an extra syllable in the line was thought to give "greater grace" to an expression.[13]

Besides the "-ion" suffixes, Fletcher repeats "-ed," "-ing," and "-eth," particularly. These more often appear in positions of metrical excess than in deficiency. Furthermore, because Fletcher often unnecessarily employs word forms which carry these endings, the extensive practice looms as a significant characteristic to be analyzed. Some stanzas add an extra syllable to every line: e.g., III, 13: "infected," "detected," "abounding," "sounding," "annoying," "employing," and "convoying." The suffixes in each case are unstressed extrametrical

syllables. Passages using the "-ing" suffix are handled in the same way by accenting and rhyming the root word's syllables as well as by duplicating the unemphatic sounds of the suffix.[14] The repetition of weak endings, even though the root word is rhymed, becomes tiring, especially when the repetition is continued for several passages as in Cantos II (37-48) and XII (74-78).

Sometimes the extrametrical variation includes two syllables as in I, 35, where the syllables are attached at the end of lines 1 and 3. (Such lines become hexametric because they have an additional stress.) The lines read as follows:

Co/ev/al/ with/ the/ world/ in/ her/ na/tiv/i/tie
. . . And/ still/ re/tain'd/ a/ nat/ur/all/ pro/cliv/i/tie.

Also in II, 31 certain lines appear to have excessive extrametrical syllables:

From/ thence/ a/ Groom/ with/ won/drous/ vol/u/bil/i/tie
. . . Of/ Na/ture/ like/ him/self,/ and/ like/ a/gil/i/tie.

It is possible that these four terminal words are allowed in their places because they admit of elision and can be therefore considered as single hangers. Nevertheless the elision is optional; all such lines having two syllables extrametrical at the end, whether theoretically elidible or not, still have twelve syllables.

Although some lines do add two syllables as above, it is more characteristic of Fletcher's style to add one extrametrical syllable as part of his rhyme. Thus he allows the extra syllable to play a part of the general rhythmic pattern of the poem. In most cases Fletcher

employs his extra syllable conspicuously, emphasizing the sound similarity of root words yet letting the suffix stand as a full terminal syllable.

Other examples of eleven syllable lines may be found with "-eth" endings in the last word, e.g., II, 17: "Which/ still/ some/ oth/er/ col/our'd/ stream/ in/fect/eth." Line two here is connected by rhyme to line four, but the later line has only ten syllables: "The/ in/ward/ dis/po/si/tion/ de/tect/eth." Line 2 is clearly scanned as containing eleven syllables; line 4, however, exhibits an uneven rhythm, and must be scanned with difficulty because it is shorter than its parallel line.[15] Instances of variation like these appear to be a defect in Fletcher's style.

In still other passages, Fletcher employs "-es" suffixes for the extra syllable, such as in III, 19: "Increases," and "decreases." Also in I, 35, Fletcher writes "ages" and "rages" as well as "tosses," "crosses," and "losses." The effect is to continue with the pattern of variations, adding terminal extra syllables.

Yet another handling of terminal extra syllables comes from his adding a monosyllabic word: III, 4 illustrates this technique in the triplet.

> Thou/ who/ first/ mad'st/ and/ nev/er/ wilt/ for/sake/ it
> Else/ how/ shall/ my/ weak/ hand/ dare/ und/er/take/ it,
> Where/ thou/ thy/ self/ ask'st/ coun/sel/ of/ thy/ self/ to/ make/ it?

The pronoun "it" is in each line an unstressed extrametrical syllable. Such style is not as common as Fletcher's tendency to add suffixes, yet these phrases are treated as part of the rhyme, effecting the same tonal or rhythmical result as a multisyllabic rhyme.[16]

In all, Fletcher adds so many terminal unstressed syllables to his verses that the reader becomes accustomed to the hanging effect of the line's ending. Unfortunately the abundance is one of the major weaknesses of Fletcher's style, because the poem's serious matter seems too casually treated with the leaping rhythm rather than a formal, complete, or more clearly closed one. Fletcher has many stanzas which add terminal extrametrical syllables to all seven lines: III, 1, 13, 27, and 31; II, 19 and 35; XII, 86, for example. He treats the ten- and twelve-syllable lines alike, lengthening them frequently an extra syllable by his use of feminine rhyme.

Supernumerary syllables may also appear in other parts of the line. In Shakespeare, it is common to find an added syllable in the midst of the line; similar patterns occur in early works of Milton. The origin has been credited to early French verse, with English verse adopting the midverse extrametrical syllable from the caesura of the French. Perhaps it was copied loosely, yet "this extrametrical syllable being originally attached to the old caesura of the twelve-syllable line, its place is properly after the sixth syllable . . . ."[17] Such a practice then, is noted in English pentameter often after the third stress. It is a familiar mark of many of the Elizabethans, but is not detected as a pattern in Fletcher's verse. Fletcher's practice in syllabic additions within a line generally includes those which are appropriate to a final--and different--classification of supernumerary syllables: those resulting from poetical elision and speech contraction patterns. The elision is in every case incomplete, but serves to shorten a syllable so that it becomes a tertiary sound in a trisyllabic foot--in fact, disyllabic in actual pronunciation, since the two syllables which are run

together by the elisions are blended in pronunciation. Because the term elision is accepted generally as "cutting out," there might seem an impropriety in using it to describe the condition of extrametrical syllables. Yet the naked vowel elision involved in these lines is in fact responsible for the line's accepting an extra syllable without a drastic change in basic rhythmical patterns.

In English verse where there is poetic elision of the terminal vowel of one word before the initial vowel of the next word, the sound of it is not lost; the two vowels are glided together, and the conditions may be called synaloepha. For instance, an early example of terminal synaloepha is "Adding new worlds to th' old," given in I, 36. The final vowel of the is glided into the first vowel of old. A vowel is still heard in the glide, although the two become prosodically asyllabic. Fletcher appears to accept the practice of elision as part of a common style. Puttenham describes the matter thus: "That shrewd fellow, poetical license, is allowed to make words shorter or longer."[18]

Such synaloepha of vowels between words began as an imitation of the true Greek elision. Thus the term is etymologically correct to describe the condition in the verse Fletcher writes. As a matter of fact, the first of two vowels is theoretically cut out of the prosody or scansion, although the word does remain a separate word typographically. The apostrophe merely indicates what happens in pronunciation--the omission of one vowel, a gliding of the two words together. What occurs in scansion of the words may be a very quick paced anapest, with the glided syllables each remaining an unstressed part of the foot. The alternate reading of such elision is to consider it as producing a regular iamb--with the two words fully glided into one syllable.[19]

Indeed such a reading would seem appropriate to Fletcher's verse. Fletcher's internal syllabic additions involve an article and some noun or word which may be joined with it in pronunciation. There is no pattern regarding where the addition may appear, yet three conditions seem to remain consistent in his usage: 1) the article is usually elided; 2) it is always an unstressed syllable; and 3) it could involve a change of measure to anapestic foot (when the words may still be considered as separate sounds). The foot may, as mentioned above, be regarded as iambic, and if so, the practice becomes one more mark of his apparent servitude to meter and form rather than idea. The following passages illustrate the frequency and characteristics of his lines' additions: "Heav'n blasts high towers, stoops to a low-rooft cell" (IV, 26). This eleven-syllable line does not have an elided article; yet it shows Fletcher's practice clearly. "To a low" make up an anapestic foot as they are written. If phrased differently, as Fletcher usually writes such combinations--"t'a low"--the words become iambic. One notes some differences in the combinations, however. On some occasions the elided word is pronounced together with an unstressed word; on others it is combined with the stressed syllable. "Th' Assyrian" (VII, 4) yokes the article with an unstressed syllable which pronunciation emphasizes the stressed middle syllable. The same effect results in "th' all seeing" (VI, 28); and "th' Head-citie" (twice, V, 21). In other passages, however, the article is elided and attached to the stressed syllable: "What th' Isle" (III, 25); "girts th' Isle" (II, 16); and "Held th' Isle" (VI, 7).[20] These syllables have the same typographical appearance as the others--two short, unstressed syllables and one stressed syllable. However, their pronunciations differ.

Whereas the former cases combine the two short unstressed syllables for one unstressed syllable in an iambic foot; the latter cases retain one unstressed syllable and add the second short syllable to that of the stressed syllable.

Certainly Fletcher does produce some smooth lines by eliding his vowels and combining syllables. Yet his positioning of words elided is not always euphonous. The word "Isle" is usually in a stressed position, and when involved in synaloepha of vowels of an article it receives the emphasis it deserves as subject of the poem. Some passages such as "Th' Isle thrives" (III, 19), however, which stress the verb become rather awkward in pronunciation of the article and noun together, yet less emphatic than the verb of the lines.

One point to be made from Fletcher's contraction of articles is that the internal extrametrical syllable, if indeed it can be regarded as such, is never obtrusively used even though it is a frequent addition to his lines. In fact, no effect is felt upon the prosody other than that which is noted typographically, since the elided vowel allows two words to be compressed into one sound.

A second point related to Fletcher's extrametrical additions comes from an investigation of the position of stresses. Normally, Fletcher's lines have the 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 position syllables stressed. Adding syllables at the ends of lines does not change that pattern. However, internal additions, even though greatly shortened ones, will move the stress accordingly. Most of the additions do not vary from the rhythmic pattern of rising accent, as the anapestic foot still closes with an accent. Yet changes in the rhythmic pattern do result from Fletcher's substituting trochees for iambs. These are numerous enough

to be considered a significant variation.

Inversions of accent in all places except the first disturb the rhythm so as to call attention to the word which carries the irregular accent of stress: such inversions are therefore used primarily in relation to the change in sense or special phrasing of meaning. But in long poems, the more common inversions soon become as familiar to the ear as is the typical rhythm; they fall into the same condition as the inversion of the first foot. That is, they enliven the rhythm without taxing the sense. Inversion is most common in English verse in the first foot, next in the third and fourth, very rare in the second, most rare in the fifth (or sixth in a hexameter line).[21]

Occasionally inverting his initial foot, Fletcher emphasizes his meaning and freshens his rhythm: "Thither repairs the careful Intellect" he writes in XI, 6, for example. The variation is employed to correctly stress the word syntactically and phonetically. Such is the case when Fletcher's other trochees begin lines--a modifier is often positioned there, out of its normal syntactical position and thus is well emphasized. In XI, 42 a similar phrasing appears: "Freshly these knights assault these fresher bands." In III, 5 "Fairly dispread" begins the second line. Other trochees can be found interspersed throughout the poem. As a general rule, when the first foot is weak, it is strengthened by the slight conventional inversion, in spite of the sense. Yet Fletcher seldom employs inversion to produce that effect. The words which appear as initially inverted to a falling rhythm are words which in context deserve the added emphasis. Words other than adverbs appearing as initial trochees include verb forms as the following: "Adding new worlds" (I, 36); "Rises" (V, 18) and "Thunders aloud"

(V, 23).[22]

One notes that in such cases as mentioned here, Fletcher's pattern becomes somewhat clarified. Descriptions significant to his allegory are made prominent by the change in stress positions. Phrases involving two words with a falling beat appear least frequently, but are nonetheless effective in description: "Age on his hairs the winter snow had spread" (VIII, 25) becomes an emphatic statement describing the anxious character of Covetousness. Similarly, in VIII, 50 "Close to him Pleasing went," accents the first word to indicate a special focus on the relationship between Pleasing and Flatterie.[23]

The inversions, as all other variations of rhythm, owe their value to the metrical type from which they vary; yet the meter is never really falsified by them, because the interruption in any verse is not long. The majority of Fletcher's verses sustain the impression of the typical form; the exceptions to Fletcher's typical verse form and prosody thus do not necessarily seem to be faults.[24]

A third exception to the typical prosody is primarily a matter of rhythm: variety in the number of stresses. These, like the variations in syllabic count, may be in deficiency or excess. Stress deficiencies appear in all lines with fewer than ten syllables, as in III, 5. The lines become tetrametric with hangers, as discussed above. The effect produced speeds the reading on to the following lines, urges an association of descriptions. Excessive numbers of stresses may result from either the terminal additions or internal additions. In verses with two terminal extrametrical syllables, the result noted above was to add a stress, making hexameter lines, as in II, 31. In that stanza, both lines 1 and 3 have six accents rather than the usual five. The rhythm

of the whole stanza is quite slowed because the extra syllables carry so much emphasis.[25]

Another twelve-syllable, hexametric line appears in VI, 63. In this case, the stress is not accounted for by terminal additions; rather it is within the whole phrasing of the line.

/ ⏑ ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ ⏑ / / ⏑ /
Still'd in a broken spirit, and sad vapours rise

One syllable is apparently added in the disyllabic reading of "spirit," a word pronounced variously by Fletcher, as by many others during the times. It typically admits of a monosyllabic pronunciation, indicated by an alternate spelling "sprite."[26] In this line, however, Fletcher has positioned the word so that it requires both the syllables to fit the rhythm of the line. The line is lengthened, but not awkward.

The variations Fletcher employs thus seem, over all, to lend some freshness to his style rather than to produce a general roughness. Some strained lines do appear, but in general, Fletcher's blending of typical lines with exceptions serves to keep the long poem from becoming too cumbersome or artificial.

One might consider the total effect of the prosody of such a verse as XII, 84:

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
His locks like ravens plumes, or shining jet,
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
Fall down in curles along his ivory neck;
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
Within their circlets hundred Graces set,
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
And with love-knots their comely hangings deck:
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
His mighty shoulders, like that Giant Swain,
⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
All heav'n and earth, and all in both sustain;

Yet knows no wearinesse, nor feels oppressing pain.

The picture is vividly presented and the rhythm is not overbearing.

On the other hand, many passages strike the ear less pleasingly. One might note that in IV, 10, the meter is regular, but the rhythm seems to be uneven and the style poor:

About this Region round in compasse stands
A guard, both for defence, and respiration,
Of sixtie foure, parted in severall bands;
Half to let out the smokie exhalation,
The other half to draw in fresher windes:
Beside both these, a third of both their kindes,
That lets both out, & in; which no enforcement bindes.

The passage admits a galloping pace at times, yet creeping at others. In the description Fletcher need not change tone or feeling, since the subject is all the same body function and parts; nevertheless, his failure to be consistent in measure makes the whole stanza seem disorganized. The syntactical arrangement of the words, with the several internal pauses in the lines, adds to the jerkiness of the stanza.

V, 4 is another such weak stanza:

The third precinct, the best and chief of all,
Though least in compasse, and of narrow space,
Was therefore fram'd like heaven, spherically,
Of largest figure, and of loveliest grace:
Though shap'd at first the least of all the three:
Yet highest set in place, as in degree,
And over all the rest bore rule and soveraigntie.

Fletcher's effort to explain a paradoxical bodily arrangement of parts

and functions is perhaps well presented in a style that is not smooth; yet again his uneven lines are not compatible with the style of the whole poem. The fact that rhythm is so much more evident than prosody, and is felt to lie so much nearer to the poetic effects, inclines many people to think that prosody is in fact only pedantic rubbish, which primarily hampers the natural expression of thought and so on. But in all arts, and in poetry as Fletcher studied it particularly, the part that can be taught is the dry detail which has to be considered thoroughly. Fletcher developed his ear and eye by measuring his lines carefully against the standards he had set for himself. Despite the occasional weaknesses, he does succeed in creating a smooth and harmonious style in many stanzas. IX, 6 is one of his best:

> So choicest drugs in meanest shrubs are found;
> So precious gold in deepest centre dwells;
> So sweetest violets trail on lowly ground;
> So richest pearls ly clos'd in vilest shells;
> So lowest dales we let at highest rates;
> So creeping strawberries yeeld daintiest cates
> The Highest highly loves the low, the loftie hates.

The repetition does not become monotonous; it builds the emphasis of the comparison to the strength of the last line, the hexameter. The rhythm is regular, but smooth and effective throughout the earlier lines.

Also involved in Fletcher's style so that his meter and rhythm are harmonious are elisions, contractions, archaisms or other word schemes. All appear frequently throughout the poem.

Ordinary speech contractions abound in Fletcher's lines as one mark of his metrical dedication. Particularly numerous are the contractions of verbs: preterites and participles ending "-ed." He writes

them "-t" or "-'d" to indicate a shortened pronunciation. The ending "-en" is also shortened to "-'n" in many passages. In I, 57 one notes "strai'd," "betrai'd," "unsnarl'd," "secur'd," "endur'd," and "recur'd."[27] Stanza 60 in Canto VI has five contracted participles: "entict," "fixt," "deni'd," "stain'd," and "fill'd." "Driv'n" appears in VII, 52. So it is with Fletcher's handling of the past participle forms. They are usually shortened, as his meter requires. He also seems to have preferred the contracted form of the second person singular verbs, writing "sitt'st," for example, in VI, 3. Also, III, 4 provides a plentiful example: "hid'st," "know'st," "mad'st," and "ask'st."[28] Such contractions compose a major part of his style.[29]

From the above analysis, it becomes clear that Fletcher has adopted a characteristic style in handling his rhythm and meter. His word schemes are significant to meter. He abbreviates words. Synaloepha, which in the Latin tradition ruled between words, was more freely extended in English verse to the same syllabic conditions within words. It was in every case optional, but one noticing the frequency with which Fletcher elides the unstressed vowels may certainly conclude that he considered it advisable.

It has been shown that the poetic elision of naked vowels between words is a natural extension of the similar treatment in common speech of the same vowels.[30] It can be shown that elision of the semi-vowels has an exact counterpart in the habitual treatment of certain other words. That is, words such as <u>prism</u> are often hypermonosyllabic in pronunciation (sound almost like prison). Fletcher indicates a shortening of these, even though the part shortened is one syllable: "alar'ms" of IV, 4 is one example.[31]

Also among the elisions were unaccented vowels of syllables closed by "r," "l" or "n" before another vowel. Unstressed vowels separated by "n" also suffer syllabic loss. Fletcher writes "bus'ness" and "op'ning," for instance. In the semivowel elisions which are illustrated below, the syllabic loss within the word is of course much more real if the consonant that precedes the "l," "n," or "r" can be amalgamated with it, so as to be pronounced together with it and without a breath. "Wand'ring" is very easy to pronounce, smoothly said; "glimmering" is, however, easier than "glim'ring" and thus is no longer. These are a few of the many instances of syncope Fletcher included in his poem: "Ord'ring," II, 14; "temp'ring," IV, 27 and IX, 3; "prosp'rous," II, 31; "poys'nous," VII, 13.[32]

Certain vowel elisions of common speech were used frequently by many poets of the times; Fletcher was no exception. In such a word as "obedience," which Fletcher writes in IX, 18 (twice), the "i" and the "e" are neither a diphthong nor a disyllabic sound. The two vowels are both heard, yet they are nevertheless pronounced as one syllable.[33]

It is true, however, that the usage of all poets, with regard to obsolescent pronunciations, is conservative and archaic, and even in our contemporary poetry, such a word as "obedience" may be found in full syllabic extension at the end of a line. A poet like Fletcher who intentionally affects an archaic style might be expected to use the fuller pronunciations, yet the y-glide appears throughout his allegory.

The w-glide seems less appealing to him. Its effect in words such as "flower," "power," and "fewer" is to make them monosyllabic, where indeed they are affected at all. Such a shortening is suggested by the spellings "flowre" in I, 1; "lowr" in VII, 47; "powr" in VI, 15 and IX,

5; "flowrie," in X, 24; "powrfull," in VI, 14. Most frequently Fletcher continues to employ the words with full disyllabic value: he rhymes "flowers," "bowers," "towers" in IX, i.[34] In XI, 11 his spelling makes it unclear whether he is indicating a disyllabic rhyme or a monosyllabic one: "powres," "showers," "lowres." Such confusion in handling is not a major difficulty, however, since the second syllable would be extrametrical. In all cases, the omission of the sound indicated by the change in spelling is not effected by that omission. The orthography is an attempt to designate what happens; a strong vowel is glided into a weak one.

Elisions by way of glides originated in speech patterns, but poetic elisions reproduce that effect. The point to be made is that vowel sequences which can be elided carry with them an option for the poet to use the words as either monosyllabic or disyllabic at will. As optional, the use of elision becomes a part of the uniqueness of a particular poet's style. Rules are in every case only permissive--indeed no "rule" for their use may exist. Fletcher appears to employ his elisions to smooth out his verse. Most are unobtrusively read into the line.

Also, Fletcher employs the common poetical contractions such as "o're," "e'er," "i' the," or "o' the." These contractions, although generally popular, lend a colloquial tone to the poem where they appear, and Fletcher does not resort to them so often that he violates the pervasive somber and serious sense of his message. It appears that it is primarily for keeping meter smooth that he contracts the function words as he does; he is not concerned first with recording the speech around him as were the dramatists, in whose work the practice is seen

most frequently. "O're" appears in II, 19, 47, and VII, 7, 42, as well as intermittently throughout the poem. "'Tis" is written in II, 20, 23, 28 and V, 40, 48, 70, for instance.[35] XII, 72 has "i'th'" a double contraction of the words. VII, 32 has an unusual contraction of a preposition and pronoun, "with's" (with his). Similar contractions do appear with the prepositions "in" and "on" as Fletcher shortens his description of the opposing sides in battle and their armour. "On's shield" is found in VII, 34, 39 and VIII, 37, for instance. "In's" is found in VII, 36 and XI, 42 and VIII, 35. The colloquial contractions constitute a significant part of Fletcher's abbreviated words; yet throughout the poem he employs them carefully to fit the sense and the rhythm.[36]

Although Fletcher does not contract all phrases which could admit of abbreviation, his style is marked by a large number of contractions. His handling of them is not of consistent effectiveness. On occasion phrasing becomes rather awkward, such as "head's" in XII, 58 and "self's" in VII, 7. Such shortened forms appear to exist merely to keep meter even. Others seem to flow naturally from speech rhythms and indeed are read with ease. In keeping with the dignity of the verse's general style of description, most of the contractions do not appear in weighty passages. They are most numerous in either the pastoral setting stanzas at the Canto beginnings or in passages which involve the words of a character.

Other word schemes Fletcher turns to with significant frequency include aphaeresis, subtracting a syllable from the beginning of a word. Perhaps the word most often shortened this way is "begin"—"'gin" appears in I, 22; II, 25; VII, 47 and 56; VIII, 59; XI, 31, 48, for

instance.[37] A sampling of the other shortened words Fletcher chooses to fit his meter encompass the following: "'twixt" which seems to be almost as pervasively written as "'gin." It is used in V, 60, VI, 4; VII, 4, VIII, 8; IX, 7, X, 16 and XIII, 8, for example.[38] Fletcher thus handles his word schemes in such a way to keep his meter and rhythm euphonous. Aphaeresis does not in any case obscure meaning.

Apocope, subtracting a syllable from the end of a word, is also characteristic of Fletcher's style. Besides the common poetic abbreviations for "open" and "often," he writes several less usual ones.[39] "Fount" appears in IV, 6 and 7; "mount" in IV, 7, 8, 28, and 32; "hid" in VIII, 8 and 15; "writ" in VII, 2 and 22. Less well-known abbreviations include "self" of VII, 49 and "Tantal" for Tantalus in V, 64.[40] Apocope may be said to explain also his interchange of "isle" and "island."

Moving to less common word schemes, one notes that neologisms were not a usual feature of pastoral style, and thus it is not a unique characteristic of Fletcher's poems that few appear. Archaic words were conventional in pastoral however, and Fletcher's poem provides several instances. Among them are "eyn" as plural for "eyes" in II, 18 and VI, 24 and "meynt" in IV, 21.[41]

Thomas Purney concludes from his survey that the writers of pastoral can appropriately employ words from the folk of the country and thus enrich a poem's effects. He notes, "Old words are useful." The advantages he attributes to employment of these Old-words include such as these:

1. There is a spirit and a Liveliness of Expression to be present in Pastoral as well as Other Poetry (and Old

Words are necessary for this).

2. The greatest advantage of Old-words, is, that they afford the writer so fine an opportunity of rendering the Language most inimitably soft and smooth.[42]

It is true, however, that earlier rhetoricians did not all share the view that old words were good style. George Puttenham is one who advises more cautiously against the overuse of archaisms.[43] He admits that the best language for pastoral is that soft and sweet, not bold and low. Dialect could make the pastoral too unpleasant, he believes. One might note that the extensive archaisms of Spenser, for instance, are accountable for a major portion of the roughness in his verse. Fletcher's style has few archaisms to mar it, though the frequent employment of them makes them more noticeable as a part of his style. Evidently sensing that too heavy a use of "natural" vocabulary or too learned a language both seemed to mar many pastoral efforts, Fletcher seems to have tempered urges to be original or archaic in language. His style in The Purple Island is not overcrowded with archaisms; generally, clear and appropriate terms are chosen.[44]

Thus one notes Fletcher's style marked extensively by his rhetorical word schemes and his consciousness of meter. His technique produce verse which is generally easily read, harmonious to hear. Although some of his lines are awkward, a majority are not. Word schemes appear to lead to effective versification for Fletcher.

Yet Fletcher's stanzas are not all equally well written or euphonous. A second category of devices relates primarily to Fletcher's concern with sound, not rhythm. Much of the difficulty in wording, diction, and so forth, originates within the rhyme burden he assumes

with his stanza. In his alteration of traditional verse forms, he evidently sought to reduce the demands on the rhyme of the one (Spenserian) and to give more formality and perhaps more unity to the last lines of the other (rime royal). Spenser's stanza required four "B" rhymes and three "C" rhymes; Fletcher's drops two of the "B" rhymes. The last line of the rime royal's quatrain doubles as the first line of the first couplet, and thus it is integrally related; the concluding couplet was not, however, and often became a separate verbal unit for many of the poets using the form. Fletcher's verse retains somewhat of a burden in the demands on the "C" rhyme, and he adds the difficulty of making the pentameter-and-hexameter line triplet euphonous. Even though he has reduced the length of the stanza from that which Spenser wrote, use of such rhyme pattern, while tedious enough for short works, looms as a major problem for his long poem. The weakest part of Fletcher's style is caused, it seems, by his writing rhymed verse.

Typically, Fletcher selects masculine or monosyllabic rhymes, e.g. VII, 13 "Hold/bold; lie/nigh; heat/beat/seat." If multisyllabic words are rhymed with monosyllabic ones, the accent is noted as falling on the terminal syllable: VII, 12 "Thence/defence/providence," or in IX, 42, "appetite/sprite." Fletcher generally selects clear and definite sound repetitions for rhymes. Of rhyme, the critic Puttenham says, "Rhyme falling on the last syllable is most sweet and commendable. Double or feminine rhyme is lighter and not so pleasing. Triple rhyme is least pleasing of all."[45] Fletcher's contemporaries would judge his poetry by standards accordingly, as their preferences were shaped by those of the past. The poem's use of rhyme and its dominance of stressed rhyme would have been favorably regarded, it appears.

Yet a significant variation in rhyme is Fletcher's penchant for feminine or disyllabic rhyme. The poem has many feminine rhymes: I, 35 e.g., has all multisyllabic rhymes. "Nativity/proclivity; ages/rages; tosses/crosses/losses." III, 13 and XII, 86 are two more of the many stanzas which have every rhyme multisyllabic.

One major weakness stemming from the use of feminine rhyme is the strain put upon the extrametrical unstressed syllable. Many of the rhymes involve the endings discussed above--"-ing," "-ion," "-eth," "-er." In II, 19, for example, "matter/fatter; overflowing/growing; subsisteth/listeth/resisteth." On some occasions Fletcher employs the rhyme for only a portion of the stanza. In such cases the rhythm is generally uneven. III, 10, for example, has "habitation/nation; brother/other; kind/mind/binde." The first four lines being extrametrical develop a pattern for the stanza, yet that pattern is changed with the abrupt masculine endings to the last three lines.[46]

Difficulty in handling rhyme (and rhythm) appears in many other triplets, too. Occasionally, the lines do not come out even, either in rhyme or meter; Fletcher fails to blend the Alexandrine into the rhythm smoothly. Particularly when feminine rhymes appear in the triplet, the Alexandrine seems overly long. II, 14 has one such instance: "largest See/dignitie/soveraigntie." On other occasions the rhyme is awkward because the words are of different natural accents or syllabic count: "wreath/tortureth/Death" are supposed to rhyme in II, 35, but they are not euphonous. The "-eth" suffixes seldom appear emphatically. In the sixth line, however, "tortureth" is given as /⏑/ in order to fill out the meter and thus could be more clearly rhymed and balanced with the accented words "wreath" and "death." The lines become awkward with

such an attempt to keep the rhythm and rhyme balanced, however.

In all, Fletcher then must be noted as having both major flaws juxtaposed to significantly appealing features in his style. Usually he successfully rhymes multisyllabic words by including both root and suffix in the rhyme, such as in III, 30: "Contented/rented/repented." Besides true rhyme, however, some sight or eye-rhymes are selected and written some obviously different, some closely approximate. The following examples indicate the handling: III, 8 "Dwells/deals"; IX, 19 "field/childe."[47] The demands for sound repetition are met with surprising accuracy; however Fletcher appears to have wisely avoided as much wrenching of words as possible.

Yet such servitude to rhyme marks one other feature of Fletcher's handling of sound. By far the most damaging fault of his rhyme-pattern is the lack of variety in sounds for single stanzas or sequences of stanzas. Critics both then and now attack too much repetition. With effective rhymes being those with different initial consonants followed by homophonous syllables, Fletcher's poem suffers because he fails to change his word choice often enough. Besides frequently rhyming identical words he employs the same weak endings repeatedly. Already mentioned have been the numbers of "-ing" words in successive lines in Cantos II, VII, and XII, particularly. In II, 35 "-eth" rhymes appear in five of the seven lines. XII, 49 has only two sounds: "-ear" and "-ay." XII, 44, 45, 51, 53 all have the same rhyme in their triplets: "-ear." XII, 67 and 68 also have repetitious sounds in the triplet: "-ay." Fletcher does not possess a tin ear; but his choice of words for the nearly 5000 lines will certainly not always please him or his readers. As illustrated above, the poem has some well-phrased,

memorable lines; however, the sheer magnitude of the poem and its rhyme burden unfortunately lead to many bad lines and weak phrasing.

Besides matters of rhyme involved in handling of sound, Fletcher exhibits his educational discipline in assonance, alliteration and consonance, final features in his handling of sound. Ornament, achieved by application of rhetorical devices to poetry, was regarded well by Fletcher and his contemporaries. Puttenham offers the view that alliteration is "an improvement in the style; it maketh utterances more melodious."[48] Peacham agrees, saying it "makes the sentence more ready for the tongue and more pleasant to the ear."[49] It has been noted above that Fletcher relies on word schemes to assist the reader in responding to his ideas. His technique in utilizing sound continues to express this attitude toward reader involvement. In VII, 4 he plays upon the long "a" sound to produce an excited tone: "Where that great Persian Beare . . ." In I, 8 the apology for his lack of talent accents the low "u": his "rude" pipe lay "unus'd, untun'd." In I, 17 where he writes both long and short "a" to describe the falsely critical audiences, the vowels quicken the pace and concern of the statement: "What cares an asse for arts: he brayes at sacred Muses." In XII, 45 he emphasizes the diphthong "ou" throughout, creating the sad tone suggested also by the sense:

> At length sad sorrow, mounted on the wings
> Of loud-breath'd sighs . . .
> Which seem'd with doudie brow her grief to sympathize.

Although his instances of vowel repetition in words other than rhymed ones is infrequent, Fletcher tends to use assonance to enrich the sense suggested.[50] Further, in alliteration and consonance, he exhibits a

variety of moods and tones.

He frequently alliterates words with "f" beginnings; IV, 33 provides an example--"full fed lambes." Other verses read, "with this few drops fell from her fainting eyes" (VI, 34); "Rusht in a false, foul, fiend-like companie" (VI, 10); "For from the first a fellow soul he fram'd" (III, 24). Other frequently repeated sounds are the sibilants: "stops there the sudding stream her steady race" (IV, 7); "But strongly stop the wave . . ." (IV, 22); "Thus whispering soft her soul to heav'n she sent" (XI, 32); "Whose silver spanglets sparkle 'gainst the day" (XII, 69). Liquid sounds are used to mellow the mood for subjects needing special consideration or concentration; "m" and "w" repetition is pervasive. "And twentie merrie-mates mirth causes fitting" (IV, 13); "and molehill faults to mountains multiplie" (VII, 67); "(whom all the world would wooe) woo'd her his onely one" (XI, 7). "l" and "n" are repeated in I, 7:

> New light new love, new love, new life hath bred.
> A life that lives by love, and loves by light

The harsher sounds abound in the passages describing either battles or the rather vulgar body parts.[51] "d" in VIII, 55--"Dull dead, and leaden was his cheerlesse vain"; and III, 18--"dark, dolefull, deadly dull, a little hell"; and IX, 14--"all ill due debt, good undeserv'd he thought." Thus Fletcher seemed to effect a certain condition for the reading by alliterative phrasing. Phonetical effect supports the descriptive line in the stanzas quoted. The repetition aids the reader in understanding the meaning through mood and tone. Fletcher's practice seems carefully handled. He avoids the awkward sounds which may

arise from ending and beginning with consonants frequently juxtaposed.

From a modern perspective, the effects of onomatopoeia appear to direct his choice of words and combinations of sounds.[52] From the beginning of the poem through to the end, word sounds offer hints to the reader; they suggest Fletcher's meaning or feeling through mood or tone of the situations envisioned. Among the clearest instances of onomatopoeia are the following lines: I, 18 describes the "witlesse vulgar" metaphorically as flies and the sound of the buzzing fly echoes through the passage--"Like summer flies about dunghills [they] swarm." XII, 5 records in sound and sense the contrasts of elation and dejection:

> Then thou high Light, whom shepherds low adore,
> Teach me, oh do thou teach thy humble swain
> To raise my creeping song from earthly floor:
> Fill thou my empty breast with loftie strain:
> That singing of thy warres and dreadfull fight,
> My notes may thunder out thy conqu'ring might.
> And 'twixt the golden starres cut out her tow'ring flight.

When he wanted the effect that word sounds can suggest collectively, Fletcher literally filled his stanzas with such. VIII, 2 also illustrates the comprehensive results of alliteration, assonance, consonance as effecting onomatopoeia:

> What watchfull care must fence that weary state;
> Which deadly foes begirt with cruell siege;
> And frailest wall of glasse, and trait'rous gate
> Strive which should first yeeld up their wofull liege?
> By enemies assail'd, by friends betray'd
> When others hurt himself refuses aid:
> By weaknesse self his strength is foil'd and overlay'd.

The reader is overwhelmed by the "f" and "w" alliteration, but within the stanza, he also finds the struggle suggested in the pattern of "g" and "h" sounds. Fletcher's handling of sound is thus as uneven as is

his handling of rhythm. Bad rhymes abound yet the total effect of onomatopoeia seems to carry the reader through weak phrases.

A third category of rhetorical devices appears to be related to either meter or rhyme, or both: general syntax. One of these devices is anastrophe. It is employed sometimes well enough, occasionally to emphasize a thought memorably, but too frequently rather awkwardly. Quintilian identified "reversio" merely as a "trope, a reversal of order" (VIII, vi, 65); but later rhetoricians recognized the weakness of using it too frequently. Angel Day calls it "a preposterous inversion of words besides their common course."[53] It is true that most of Fletcher's uneven or "bad" lines involve some inversion of syntax. Whether he was prompted by meter or rhyme demands or by critical demands or by critical demands for changes in syntactical style, the point remains--Fletcher did not blend his syntactic inversions into his verse's sense or rhythm consistently. Lines in several stanzas from Canto IV illustrate the effects: "The middle Province next this lower stands" (IV, 2) places "stands" at the end of the line for rhyme, but it would read more naturally after the subject "Province." In IV, 11 "This third the merrie Diazome we call" is another instance of anastrophe required by Fletcher's rhyme. The sentence is awkward and rather obscure in reference until the name is understood as it is given.[54] Yet some instances are neither unclear nor awkward: "Fitly 't is cloath'd with hangings thinne and light" (IV, 28) changes a usual syntax so that the adjectives become emphatic. This emphasis is warranted by Fletcher's continuation in the next line explain why the delicate quality is good and emphasis required.

In all, the poem suffers somewhat from an over-ornateness in

rhetoric, especially since a repetition of any sort for 697 stanzas is tiring. Word sounds, rhymes, measure without variation all become tedious. Syntax, too, becomes strained because of Fletcher's rhyme patterns and his meter emphasis. A second among this last category is periphrasis. There are varying ways Fletcher is able to stretch a line. Function words such as conjunctions and prepositions too frequently occupying the unstressed positions in lines mark one way. A weak, sing-song rhythm results in such cases: "in which at first it found a happy place," (VI, 8). XII, 72 is similar in rhythm: "My hope, my love, my Joy, my Life, my Blisse."[55]

Another periphrastic technique besides pervasive use of articles or adjectives to fill out the measure between accents, appears in Fletcher's writing of connectives "and," "or," and "but." V, 6 illustrates:

> Here all the senses dwell and all the arts:
> Here learned Muses by their silver spring:
> The citie sever'd in two divers parts,
> Within the walls, and Suburbs neighbouring;
> The Suburbs girt but with the common fence,
> Rounded with wondrous skill, and great expence,
> And therefore beautie here keeps her chief residence.

The stanza indicates Fletcher's tendency to coordinate many descriptive phrases, verbs, prepositions, or objectives of prepositions. Although he develops his poem's action through the Isle's description to the battle's climax, the poem lags in many cantos because of the highly coordinated style.

To be sure, periphrastic style is conventional for both the pastoral and the allegory, but not always well handled by some poets. McCoy, is reviewing pastoral conventions, has well described the total

effect of Fletcher's verbosity as "periphrase without purpose."[56] Pastoral periphrasis is a third means through which Fletcher achieves indirect statement and is noted in The Purple Island particularly at the beginnings and endings of each canto, where the time is set and the task before Thirsil is taken up or interrupted for rest. It marks the vehicle of the allegory clearly in such phrases as:

> The shepherds to their wonted seats repair;
> Thirsil, refresht with this soft-breathing aire;
> Thus 'gan renew his task, and broken song repair. (VIII, 1)

Periphrasis obscures other matters, however. Each initial stanza describes the Sun's position in such manner:

> The warmer Sun the golden Bull outran,
> And with the Twins made haste to inne and play:
> Scatt'ring ten thousand flowres, he new began
> To paint the world, and piece the length'ning day (I, i).

Fletcher takes four lines to say "the sun rose," which is, of course, not poetic, but much clearer to modern readers. The periphrasis involving astrological terms causes most modern readers problems, although fewer difficulties in meaning would have been experienced by Fletcher's contemporary audience whose education provided keys to understanding and indeed writing such phrasings.

Another peculiarity of Fletcher's style includes his efforts of revision that resulted in his reworking spelling and adding punctuation and lines he had used in other poems. Miss Ethel Seaton's discovery of some of his manuscripts to the Eclogues and Venus and Anchises has revealed much about his pastoral writing technique. Changes in form and style as he revised his lines are delineated by Miss Seaton's

edition of Venus and Anchises. If Fletcher worked as carefully in producing The Purple Island, then one may suppose that the word schemes and prosody resulted from deliberate effort, not the natural "rudeness" of his shepherd's pipe as his verse declares. Although his direct repetition or self-quoting is tedious for readers who are familiar with all his works, a close reading of the stanzas repeated reveals them to be important to the themes which he also reconsiders.[57] It evidently seemed advantageous to Fletcher to repeat lines he thought might readily express his thought and feeling even though the style bores his readers.

Other features of Fletcher's syntax which seem to retard the reading are his interruptions, such as apostrophe and parenthesis. The cantos of The Purple Island overflow with such "diversions" appropriate to the mode of pastoral. Fletcher appeals in Cantos I, III, V, VI, VIII, X, XI, XII to the pastoral Muse for aid in singing his song. Besides the conventional allusions to the Muses, he adds prayers to the "Great Spirit" of the Island and more clearly to the "Lord" of his Christian faith.[58] The major difference between the two types of apostrophes is that the appeal to the Muse ultimately is identified as a delay in the movement of the story, emphasizing a difficult description or significant part of the action. The prayers are, however, an integral part of the story--they may be uttered by either the singer or the characters--but most importantly, a response to them is seen as part of the story's action. Such is noted in XII, at the battle's ending, directly a result of the speaker's petition.

As for parenthesis, asides abound in the poem. From the initial lines through to the terminating ones, the poem is indeed indirect,

both in figure and syntax. The added comments interrupt the harmonious flow of thought and language. Peacham analyzes the technique well: the poet "setteth a sentence asunder by the interposition of another . . . . When a sentence is cast between the speech . . . which although it giveth some strength, yet being taken away, it leaveth the same speech perfect enough . . . . If they be very long, they cause obscurity of the sense."[59] Purney, too, observes the pastoral simplicity as effective, avoiding the ornateness of the parenthetic style. "In order to compose a Pastoral Dialect entirely perfect; the first thing I think a writer has to do is . . . enervate it and deprive it of all strength or elaborateness."[60] Parenthetical phrases complicate it.

The expansion of description is not a fault of Fletcher alone. He echoes those of his predecessors and contemporaries. Tasso, for example, often extended his descriptions periphrastically by putting specific descriptions within general ones--obscuring both by their length and disorganization. Also the technique blurs Fletcher's communication; his use of parenthesis is so common that one may find some interruption on every page. Several examples from Canto IV indicate the variety in his use of parenthesis: "His matter hid, and (like it self) unknown," describes the heart in Stanza 17. The note to that stanza also contains a parenthetical comment: "The point of the heart is (as with a diademe) girt with two arteries, and a vein, called the crowns."[61]

Final features of style in this category of rhetorical devices affecting general syntax include five important schemes of balance, devices which are conventional and thus pervasive in The Purple Island. Various modes of parallelism: series, ellipsis, chiasmus, antithesis, paradox must be noted. Since the way Fletcher structures his ideas is

determined only partly by the external matters of rhyme and meter, perhaps more extensively by the content he intends to have his audience note, it suffices to illustrate here his syntactical style and to present a fuller discussion of his ideas below.

1. Instances of parallel series are pervasive; Fletcher coordinates every possible syntactical unit every possible way at some point within the poem. Isocolon series appear far more frequently than tricolon series, but the series are written so many ways they sometimes are not initially recognized. According to Puttenham, "parison" "goeth by clauses of equal quantity and not very long. They give good graces to a ditty . . ."[62] Scaliger adds that "used well it is a great virtue of style, badly it may become a vice."[63] Such is also the view of most Puritan critics of ornate literature. Fletcher's verse does not reflect a close adherence to the style advocated by his masters at Cambridge. He begins his poem with a coordinate pattern and carries them to the end: "The warmer Sun the Golden Bull outran/ And with the Twins made haste to inne and play" (italics mine). The next lines of this first stanza contain coordinate verbs "paint" and "piece"; coordinate adjectives "worse" and "older." So reads the poem, stanza after stanza to the end. Parallel phrasing is a typical feature.[64] The last stanza of XII (89) is no different: Fletcher describes actions as balanced coordinately: The pipes blew and shepherds led Thirsil home. The nymphs bound Thirsil's locks in bay and palm, lillies and hyacinths. "And Lord of all the years, and their may-sportings crown'd."

Fletcher's parallelisms are sometimes characterized by many conjunctions. Instances of polysyndeton typical of the practices are these: VI, 33--"He knows nor death nor yeares nor feeble age"; VII,

35--"nor good, nor bad, nor heav'n nor earth affects him." The connectives fit well into the rhythm of the verse; Fletcher employs them to emphasize that best. In all, Fletcher's conjunctions add to the utterance vigor and emphasis, which, according to Quintilian, the poet should build into his verse (IX, iii, 50). Many conjunctions appear to have been acceptable to both poets and critics as enhancing style.

Fletcher also juxtaposes coordinate elements without conjunctions at times. Instances of asyndeton are typified in the following lines: XI, 32--"If ever thou my self, my vows, my love has loved . . ." The unstressed positions are taken up by other function words (adjectives here) rather than the conjunctions. Whether Fletcher chose to omit the connectives because they would not fit the meter he was employing, or whether he wanted to create the definite mood of urgency and emphasis by rushing the plea together, one cannot say with certainty, yet the effect is appropriate to the sense of the lines. Another instance appears in I, 26--"Let others trust the seas, dare death and hell./ Search either Inde, vaunt of their scarres and wounds." Fletcher here combines the use of connectives with absence of them. The parallel items are then better kept distinctly separate. In III, 30 he again appropriately quickens the pace and thus the tone by offering this description: "she all too late, too soon, too much repented."

2. Ellipsis is often used in the second of the elements of coordinate phrases, and well it is that Fletcher chooses to avoid any more repetition than his poem exhibits as he left it. One might consider II, 27--"On this side border'd by the Splenion,/ On that by soveraigne Hepars large commands." In the omission of "side bordered" in the second phrase, no meaning is lost, but needless repetition is

prudently avoided. A more awkward ellipsis appears in passages where the first element is the shortened one: "if hare or snake her way, herself she crosses" seems to be made elliptical for sake of the rhyme not the sense.

3. Chiasmus is another structure for Fletcher's parallel expressions. If a coordinate element can not be effectively shortened for variety in phrases or meter consideration Fletcher has another alternative syntax. Often he gains added emphasis for a coordinate element by reversing the second part, a practice wisely chosen since the frequency of the series makes the style unemphatic unless it is varied. For illustration of the effects of chiasmus, one might consider V, 18--"The fourth, the first in worth, in rank the last," or III, 24--"Arren the first, the second Thelu nam'd." Neither line is less clear because of the reversal; indeed the change is effective.

4. Changes often times involve contrast as indicated by antithetical structures. One might further note that the juxtaposing of words and thoughts throughout the poem is a main characteristic of Fletcher's style. It is this practice which serves to carry the poem forward to its climax. Through repetition, Fletcher reinforces a possibly vague meaning; through balance he links the thoughts of the various lines. On the other hand, many of the expressions serve to contrast points, and indeed his use of antithesis and paradox suggests his awareness of the conflicts in the world he describes. Both antithesis and paradox appear pervasively. Antithesis apparently meant comparison and contrast to the poets who employed the device; for Peacham defines it as "a comparison of contrary things and diverse persons in one sentence." Further he states, it is a "form of speech which Quintilian interpreteth

a comment, forasmuch as it may well be called the whole action and sentence of the mind as it is . . . when the sentence concluded consisteth of contraries."[65] Because of the difficulty in separating form from content of this stylistic characteristic, only a sampling illustration will be given here; the ideas so contrasted are discussed later. Antithetical structures are written in V, 1 and 2, e.g. "And Thirsil with nights death revives his morning lay"; "So heav'nly fair, of basest element,/ Make this inglorious verse thy glories instrument." Contrasts such as these are numerous; extremes juxtaposed allow for the reader to encompass the gamut of life in a comparison. The points of contrast appear to be too repetitious of terms such as "High" and "low" and "Most" and "least"; however, Fletcher's thought turns on the opposition or contrast between such polar positions. IV, 2 describes the sun's path "between his highest throne, and low declining." IV, 9 announces "his highest heav'n is dead, our low heav'n lives."

5. The most frequent poetic device Fletcher uses is, of course, the paradoxical statement of description. The world around him was certainly suggestive of such a rhetorical description. With the rapid changes in science, politics, and religion, Fletcher must have had many unanswered questions about life and its meaning (as did other people of the age). Thus paradox fits the view of conditions as Fletcher and his contemporaries struggled in England's climate of growth. Paradoxical phrasing appears all the way through the poem, from the first canto to the twelfth. Fletcher begins by noting that the world is more aged by new youth's "accrewing." It is paradoxical that a world situation could be turned upside down by a new influence; yet he continues to say man is "wretched" in a "wretched" world, which still grows "worse by

age, & older by renewing."[66] Fletcher's paradoxes are appropriate then because he views his world as complex. Rampant in his world are evils; it is full of contraries and conflicts. His song narrates the conditions within and without man as the struggle between virtue and vice continues, the victor claiming control of man.

The nature of man as perfect is a view which Fletcher does not project into his poem without some qualification. The initial description comes through paradox: man experienced "joy without grief, love without jealousie," etc. Such however is impossible to people in the world as it is seen throughout The Purple Island. The later condition is paradoxically presented, too:

> How falls it than that such an heav'nly light
> As this great King should sink so wondrous low,
> That scarce he can suspect his former height?
> (VI, 68-71)[67]

As Fletcher views life, man's descriptions require carefully drawn paradoxes to accurately describe. He records in other passages that most people think they are strong; they are weak. They need to learn more about themselves; Fletcher's poem directs the way.

In summary, one notes that both Fletcher's handling of prosody and his use of schemes enhance his poem's style. Over all, his rhetorical devices add force and charm to his matter, giving his language a conformation other than the obvious and ordinary.

FOOTNOTES

[1]M. L. Clarke, in Classical Education in Britain, analyzes the texts properly as constituting definitions, descriptions, and examples of different genres.

[2]George Puttenham's The Arts of English Poesie, for instance, has sections describing poems that have been written according to genre; stress is given to vernacular renderings.

[3]See Lee A. Sonnino, A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric (London, 1968), who discusses the similarity of even the rhetorical treatises.

[4]Elizabeth Donno, Elizabethan Minor Epics (New York, 1963), p. 1.

[5]Puttenham, p. 72.

[6]G. G. Smith, ed., Elizabethan Critical Essays, I (London, 1904), 47.

[7]The line naming the cook as "concoction" is one which Langdale links to the phrasing of Spenser, perhaps explaining why it would be more difficult for Fletcher to work the word in smoothly.

[8]This pronunciation is suggested by Fletcher's earlier use of such suffixes, e.g., II, 5:

> It grounded lies upon a sure foundation
> . . . To marble turns in strongest congelation

and in I, 46:

> Vigour, sense, reason, and a perfect notion,
> . . . And know what falls within the verge of motion.

Each of these lines has ten syllables before the -ion ending. The suffix thus rides as an extra half-foot. Since Fletcher's meter is so regular in other lines, it appears that he would conceive of the pronunciation as regular--in the first case creating only a one-syllable deficiency and in the second cases only a one-syllable excess. The other possible pronunciation for these lines--"i-on"--would result in a regular line for the lines in II, 33; however, the other lines would all count two extra syllables with such a reading. This does not seem probable. Limiting the line to a one-syllable excess (by gliding the pronunciation) can be easily accounted for; the full foot extra would be too burdensome on the rhythm. The elaborated pronunciation does not seem warranted or consistent with Fletcher's other practices.

Another ambiguous case appear in III, 5 involving the same suffix:

Fair/ly/ di/spread/ in/ large/ do/min/ion
. . . To/ all/ with/in/ this/ low/er/ re/gion.

"Region" appears in IV, 10 as a disyllabic word (to read the line as decasyllabic) and thus some justification exists for its being pronounced here as disyllabic. "Dominion" as rhyming with a disyllabic "region" would make it clear that both lines are deficient in syllabic count. In IV, 28 another instance of line deficiency appears with the same ending: "Lest/ too/ much/ weight/ might/ hind/er/ mo/tion." This line reads as obviously shortened; and because its rhyming line has two more syllables, the rhythm changes are starkly realized. "The/ voice/ which/ pub/lish/es/ each/ hid/den/ no/tion," has eleven syllables. The technique marks Fletcher's style; he often juxtaposes lines of deficiency with those of excess. Line endings appear to be glided in such cases rather than given full vowel pronunciation. "Glided" means quite simply adjacent syllables together by combining the vowels sounds in them as one. A fuller discussion follows below.

[9]Puttenham, p. 81.

[10]On occasion Fletcher seems to strain a pronunciation to avoid a deficiency in meter. The hexameter in II, 31, offers sufficient illustration: "and in Koilias port with nimble oars glide." "Oars" as disyllabic enables the line to be scanned as regular. The word is heard in common speech as monosyllabic with a diphthong pronunciation of the vowels. Fletcher here chooses an obsolescent handling of the vowels.

[11]"Elision" used in this sense is defined according to its correct etymological use. See Robert Bridges, Milton's Prosody (Oxford, 1921) and discussion below for extended explanation of the term.

[12]This rhyme style marks nearly all his poetry. Elisa has 97 of its 100 lines ending with a feminine rhyme--indicating one extreme of Fletcher's styles.

[13]Puttenham, p. 72.

[14]See II, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43; III, 23, 24, 27 (which has all seven lines terminating with an -ing suffix); IV, 23, 30, 31, 32; V, 24, 58; VII, 45, 53; XII, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78.

[15]III, 23 has a different handling of the "-eth" suffix:

Too eas'ly led into the sea of death
. . . Which in their off-spring newly florisheth.

The suffix appears not as extrametrical but as a necessary stress in both "death" and as the last syllable of "flourisheth." The same use is found in another stanza, X, 35:

Upon his shield Alecto with a wreath
Of snakie whips the damn'd souls tortureth
And round about was wrote, "reward of Sinne is Death."

Stress is needed on "-eth" of Line 6 to complete the regular measure, although such a pronunciation is not usual, and the accent is made clear here by being suggested in Lines 5 and 7 with the single syllable endings.

[16]III, 31 has five such endings: "lament thee," "repent thee," "lend her," "bend her," and "end her."

[17]Bridges, pp. 6, 7.

[18]Puttenham, p. 119.

[19]The relation between this syllabic count elision and the measure of verse length must be explained. If, in accentual verse, the accent fell on a short syllable, then that syllable needs another short syllable with it to fill up its time. In prosody of syllabic verse as Fletcher writes, the word elided is typographically printed, but accordingly pronounced as one of the syllables having the adjoining, unelided vowel.

[20]Several other instances may be found throughout the poem. Among them are the following samples: "While th' Isle," VI, 22. "Isle" is generally accented and often accepts "th'" as part of its pronunication. "Th' Immortal Father," VI, 72; "How th' earth," VI, 12 add to the list. A peculiar contraction appears in "Who th' deitie inflesht" of VI, 72. The vowel is elided before a consonant.

[21]See Bridges, p. 40. Inversions are in all cases best used sparingly. See also Puttenham for commentary contemporary to Fletcher, p. 140.

[22]Many others are the -ing verbs. See IV, 1 "shewing," and "cutting," V, 12; "lab'ring," V, 15; "Danting," V, 28; "alt'ring," V, 29; "Dressing," V, 53; "resting," V, 57; "Topping," IV, 11. "Fitting the sound," V, 42; "Seemeth," VI, 6; "Settles," VI, 16; "curb'd her with iron," V, 58; "Strength'ning," V, 37.

[23]Names may also be used in trochaic feet: "Arren" in III, 24 and "Patience" in X, 7 appear as inversions of Fletcher's regular rhythm.

[24]Yet one cannot ignore "bad" lines produced by awkward inversions of beat within some of the poem's lines. "And therefore beautie here keeps her chief residence" V, 6, illustrates one such case. The line appears to be read with a typical number of accents by having trochaic feet for "keeps her" and "chief res-", a reading supported by recognition of the assonance. The double inversion is not ineffective in itself, for the positioning of the changes is not unusual in English

verse. It does seem to be obtrusive in this verse, however, because Fletcher so seldom varies his meter within a line, and even less frequently varies adjacent feet.

[25]"Quantity" means in this reference, the relative duration of time different syllables fill in pronouncing, and as such is an omnipresent efficient factor of rhythm. Although quantity is not a technical matter of prosody, the rhythm of the stanza is affected both by syllabic count and length of syllables. Line 6 has only ten syllables, but in pronunciation is also lengthened because of its sound combinations in "oh," "sl," "-ns," "th," and "wh." It reads as slow as lines 1 and 3:

From/ thence/ a/ Groom/ with/ won/drous/ vol/u/bil/i/tie
. . . Of/ Na/ture/ like/ him/self,/ and/ like/ a/gil/i/tie;
. . . Which/ straight/ from/ thence/ with/ prosp'/rous/
chan/nel/ slide.

The retardation of the pace of the earlier lines is carried over into the last lines. The sixth line blends into the slow pace of the regular hexametric seventh.

[26]Indeed, "sprite" is a usual pronunciation for the word during the Renaissance. One of the more commonly known references is made in Donne's Divine Meditation, "I Am a Little World . . ." For Fletcher the pronunciation varies; such liberal employment of optional pronunciation varies; such liberal employment of optional pronunciations and spellings is not to be considered as a serious defect of any particular poet, more of the age, perhaps. What appears to most affect a reader's estimation of Fletcher's style is the proximity of his variations: In VI, 26 his apostrophe, "And Thou dread Spirit, which at first didst spread" gives the word disyllabic quality, a pronunciation which falls into the typical iambic pentameter measures. Yet six lines below, in Stanza 27, he requires a monosyllabic pronunciation of the word in another apostrophe: "Dread spirit, do thou those severall bands unfold." As a single syllable, the word fits the verse smoothly. The monosyllabic reading is also needed in VI, 72: "Earth, heav'n, flesh, spirit, man, God, are met in one." The line simply cannot be read with it as a disyllable among monosyllables.

[27]In the same stanza Fletcher gives full disyllabic value to "yoked" and "bridled," and in III, 6 Fletcher writes "nurst," "fill'd," "pull'd," "scatter'd," and "backt."

[28]In VIII, 78 he adds "wrong'st," "surfet'st" and "drown'st." Others include: "sitt'st" VI, 3; "didst," VI, 26; "sent'st," VI, 27. VI, 25 had three such contractions: "took'st," "vaunt'st," and "deign'st." In VII, 78 where many contractions appear, Fletcher also used "woundest," and "increasest" internally. For rhymes he used full spellings for "slakest," "takest," "makest."

[29]Less frequently, he contracts the superlative suffix of adjectives. In XI, 27, he writes "watchfull'st," and in VI, 30, "readi'st" but more often he writes the full syllabification of the words, as "largest," in IV, 27. Most adjective superlatives are written in full. "Blackest," VI, 8; "fairest," and "brightest," VI, 19; "darkest," and "highest," VI, 60; "largest," IV, 27; "widest," "deepest," I, 56; "largest," "loveliest," and "highest," V, 4.

[30]Poetic elision of vowels differs from the speech or common pattern of elision. When two vowel sounds come together, then if the first of the two has a tail-glide, there may be elision. That is, the sound may be glided together so as to make a sound which can be reckoned as one syllable in the disyllabic verse. The glides are "y" and "w." The y-glide figures in words already discussed above as affecting the prosody of Fletcher's verses. "Region," "dominion," "nation," etc. were commonly glided, as were "fire" and "desire." The full conditions of the y-glides are these:

1. When the first vowel is stressed as in "riot" or "hideous" VII, 6; 'glorious," XII, 55; "plenteous," V, 21; "Curious," III, 3.

2. When the second vowel is stressed as in "humiliate," in VII, 4; "Heliotrope," in VI, 69; or "insatiate," in VII, 77.

3. When neither vowel is stressed as in "Michael." In this third case, it may be conceded that one of the two vowels is generally more stressed than the other, so that most cases of this class might be correctly ascribed to one of the previous classes. Ambiguous examples Fletcher uses include: "pineons," in V, 3; VII, 4, and XII, 20; "tedious," in V, 69; "valiant," in XI, 9; "beauteous," in XI, 10.

The w-glide is not often employed by Fletcher, although it is quite common among his contemporaries. It does seem peculiar that he, being so fond of all other elisions, would not also find it helpful or convenient or pleasing to make fuller use of the w-glide. The conditions of the glide are these:

1. When the first vowel is stressed as in "ruin" or "rescuing," in IX, 5.

2. When the second vowel is stressed as in "fluctuate." Most generally this w-glide will appear between words rather than within a single word, as in "so oft." Fletcher's usual practice is to retain a full syllabic pronunciation for his words as in "Fido oft," in XII, 7 and "to obey," in XII, 9.

3. When neither vowel is stressed more than the other, as in "virtuous." Fletcher's elision is found in such words

as "mutuall" and "casuall," in III, 6. They are disyllabic in scansion of the verses.

[31]Milton's practice was the same; the style was thus not too unusual.

[32]Others are "tim'rous," X, 13; "desp'rate," V, 68; "batt'ring," VII, 6; "vent'rous," VIII, 41; "Vict'als," II, 31; "ta'ne," V, 63 and XII, 64; "flutt'ring," I, 35. "Vict'als" elides one of a double vowel; "ta'ne" omits the consonant rather than the vowel--with the vowel elided from the pronunciation when spelled after the "n" however. These two words are shortened even though they do not fit the conditions for elision mentioned above.

[33]Such a condition comes from the conversion of the first vowel into a y-glide. This phonetic condition is a duplication of the synaloepha occurring between naked vowels. It was only in Elizabethan times that such contiguous vowels lost their disyllabic value; thus much inconsistency might be expected in English verse produced during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. See Bridges, p. 19, on dating of the shift. The syllabic values of words is one of the most easily recognized distinctions between the earlier and later verse.

[34]"Tower," IV, 26 and XII, 61 is understood in scansion as two syllables, as are "power" in XII, 62 and "fewer" in V, 66.

[35]"E're" may be found in VII, 7, 42, 47, and IX, 19; "ne're" in II, 33; IV, 8; V, 46 and 66; X, 16.

[36]Also usual are colloquial noun/verb contractions. Among those which are scattered throughout the poem are the following: "he'd" in VIII, 35; "he's" in VIII, 30, 35, and XII, 12, 64; "We'l" in VII, 85.

[37]"'gan" is written twice in VIII, 1 and used also in XI, 37.

[38]"'Kin" appears in XII, 33; "'lone," in X, 28; "'gainst," in IX, 5, 7; X, 10' XI, 18; "'mendment," in VII, 40; "'fore," in VIII, 6, and others include: "'lure," VII, 15; "'tire," IV, 8; "'mong," in VII, 35 (twice) and IX, 39.

[39]"Oft" is used pervasively, e.g., II, 34; III, 28, 29; IV, 25, 26; VII, 10; IX, 41; X, 21; XI, 29. "Ope" is written in VII, 12 and V, 59.

[40]Mentioned before and relevant here are participle forms of certain verbs, such as "fall'n" of XI, 28. Most "-en" words are, in fact, shortened: "heav'n" is pervasive, e.g. I, 43; IV, 9 and 26; V, 3; VII, 1; and XII, 27.

[41]Other words falling among the affected archaisms include "affray" which appears in VII, 6; "impight," in XI, 29; "ne" in IX, 40 and "ne mought" in VII, 8. "Whilome" appears in VII, 30 and IX, 43; "dirth," in IV, 30.

[42]Purney, pp. 63-64.

[43]Puttenham, pp. 77-78.

[44]A final category of word schemes includes puns. Fletcher's interest in words leads him to accept the rhetorical device of punning which became popular among his late contemporaries. Antanaclasis is used in I, 58 where Fletcher speaks of "death" (personified) and "death" (literal). Paranomasia is found in his "Sunne, Sonne" of I, 45. Other instances of puns include his phrasing "charge discharged" in II, 40; "nearely neare" of I, 38 and IV, 3; "a deare Deers side," in III, 30. Antanaclaisis is a pun described by Quintilian (IX, iii, 68) as "The same word (or one like it) is used in two different meanings (Sonnino, p. 193). Generally, puns were all grouped together as plays on words, and not well regarded. According to Peacham, "a figure which declineth into a contrary by a likelihood of letters either added, changed, or taken away . . ." (p. 56). Extensive use of these types of rhetorical devices was not advised for Puritan writers.

[45]Puttenham, pp. 89-91.

[46]Double rhymes are also used, as in III, 1: "left her/bereft her" and in III, 4 "forsake it/undertake it/make it." This double rhyme produces the same effect as the feminine rhymes of single words; in general, the verse ends with an extrametrical unstressed syllable. The stanza's pace slows with extra syllables, but tends to become jingly with multisyllabic rhymes. The tone often seems less serious because the jingle ends on half a regular measure. Even though the sense of the double rhyme may be relevant to the passage's image seriously, and even though the words are syntactically interlaced, the overall results are a weak rhythm. Others are XII, 6, "torment him/ sent him/ content him"; XII, 37, "move him/ reprove him"; XII, 48, "told me/ hold thee/ unfold thee"; XII, 50, "repent thee/ content thee/ torment me"; IX, 15, "unto him/ wooe him."

[47]Several rhymes involve such sounds as the y: XII, 71 "majestie/ see" or XII, 47 "eye/ majestie." Either the pronunciation is inconsistent, or the rhymes are only approximate. Other partial rhymes involve words which have for modern readers lost an earlier optional pronunciation: "tongue/strong" in XII, 46 and "tongue/throng" in XII, 72. These sounds do not appear as rhymes to a twentieth-century reader; yet were considered such by Fletcher.

In II, 46 "long/young/ song" appear in the triplet as repeated sounds. The pronunciation given the -on is now dissimilar in the words, but the OED verifies the optional pronunciation as a true rhyme during the seventeenth century. There are other similar problems in spelling and pronunciation. A modern reader needs to read carefully to note relationships between words and sounds.

Other sight rhymes include: XII, 42 "feast/opprest"; XII, 53 "sacrifice/rise"; IX, 5 "increase/cease/numberless." (The triplet involves inconsistency in rhythm of these words as well.) Among still

other instances are X, 15 "increased/depressed/oppressed"; II, 46 "least/breast"; IV, 13 "care/are"; IV, 15, "feat/heat/wet"; VII, 7 "beneath/death/breathe"; X, 12 "shadowed/red"; X, 24 "conjunction/bone/one"; I, 36 "shows/grows/lose."

[48]Puttenham, p. 174.

[49]Peacham, pp. 49-50.

[50]Assonance also appears in IV, 22--short "a" sounds; in IV, 25--short and long "i"; IV, 26--long "i". See also II, 44.

[51]Among the various sounds are the following: "b" in VIII, 5--"Bright burnisht gold, indeed base alchymie"; "k" in V, 25--"Here Visus keeps, whose court, then crystall smooth."

[52]According to Peacham, onomatopoeia was defined with a much broader meaning by Fletcher than by modern writers. To Fletcher and other poets of his age, it meant that the poet "maketh and feigneth a name to something, imitating the sound or voice of that it signifieth or else whereby he affecteth a word derived from the name of person, or from the original of the thing which it doth express." Peacham goes on to say, "feigning, and framing names is used diverse ways. First, by imitation of sound . . . Secondly by imitation of voices . . . Thirdly by the derivation from the original. Fourthly by composition, as when we put two words together and make of them but one . . . . Fifthly by reviving antiquity . . . . Sixthly when we signify the imitation of another man's property or fashion. Examples: 1. A hurliburly, creaking. 2. The roaring of lions, the bellowing of bulls. 3. Luds-town of Lud (now London) 4. Scholarlike, thickskin, pinchpenny . . . 5. --archaisms-- 6. I cannot court it; I cannot Italian it," pp. 14-15.

[53]Day, p. 82.

[54]"And with his yellow streams the fruitful Island wet," again picks up the syntactical structure of writing the verb at the end of the sentence. A non-English pattern, the phrasing is read as strained because the emphasis is unclear (IV, 15).

[55]Others are found in VII, 38 "smooth rush, hard peach, sere wood, false mire, a voice, a name." VIII, 39 reads: "with which in spite of heav'n he weaves his fate." The line seems to drag out its description.

[56]McCoy, p. 17. One should note that Fletcher does not begin every canto at sunrise as McCoy mistakenly asserts as she continues her analysis of the poem.

[57]Passages which refer to his extreme anti-Roman Catholic bias, to his personal status at Cambridge, for instance, are among the lines of The Locusts, his Piscatory Eclogues, and The Purple Island alike. These repetitions do not, however, completely spoil the reading of a single work, as only those familiar with several of Fletcher's works

would be aware of the repetition.

[58]Apostrophes may be found in the following stanzas: I, 21, 32-33, 58; III, 2-4; V, 2-3; VI, 24-25, 26-27; VIII, 8; X, 4-5; XI, 3-4, 28, 32-34; XII, 8, 47, 48-53, 72-73.

[59]Peacham, p. 198.

[60]Purney, p. 60.

[61]Fletcher often includes comparisons as these within parentheses. Other passages are added to give some clarity or emphasis, such as these in Stanza 21:

> The Cities left side, (by some hid direction)
> Of this tinne aire, and of that right sides rent,
> (Compound together) makes a strange confection:
> And in one vessel both together meynt,
> Stills them with equall never-quenched firing:
> Then in small streams (through all the Island wiring)
> Sends it to every part, both heat and life inspiring.

[62]Puttenham, p. 214.

[63]IV, XXX, ix.

[64]One might consider Stanza 3, e.g., which used several conjunctions: "but"; "and"; "or"; plus coordinate clauses in ll. 5 and 6 which are juxtaposed without conjunctions.

In Canto IV, one might note that every stanza has some type of isocolon series: see list below.

1. low and hidden
2. sure and friendly
3. light and life
4. heat and life
5. strength and ornament
6. larger rooms and bigger spaces
7. coordinate verbs from ll. 6 & 7--staggers/returns
8. gifts and qualities
9. verbs in ll. 6 & 7--sets/ fills
10. defence and respiration
11. of anger and of loving
12. harder and drier
13. lumpish griefs and wrinkled cares
14. whole preceinct and every part
    chiefest cities and Imperial
15. Of this whole isle and of this government;
    life and heat
16. soft waves and circling profluence
    sure and active
17. matter hid and . . . unknown
18. brought/ and here distill'd or words or thought
19. with much, yet much lesse
20. Of severall stuffe and severall working
21. subtile wrought and thinne
    heat and life
22. drive on and speed
23. gates and barres
24. draw . . . but stop
25. rage and mutinous conspiring
26. leaves . . . and . . . confines

27. lighter frame and spungie mold
    streets and out-wayes
28. thinne and light
29. hard and drie
30. dirth and hardness
    smooth and pliable
31. shut and open
32. fall and rise
33. name and place

[65]Peacham, p. 162.

[66]The same view is expressed throughout the poem; it is one Fletcher repeats in other works. In Elisa, I, 42 he complains: the world is a place "where even kings most serve by reigning; where men get wealth, and hell, so lose by gaining."

[67]See I, 56, 58, 1, 13, 32, 36, 41 and 49; also III, 19, 26; IV, 16, 27, 26, for instance, illustrating the frequency of paradoxical assertions. The passages appear in almost every stanza.

CHAPTER III

GENERAL ORGANIZATION AND IMAGERY

Fletcher's paradoxical statements focus the reader's attention upon the poem's images, and subsequently upon its content or thought. A reader may at first be confused by Fletcher's juxtaposition of images because of the poet's curious presentation of them. Yet with a closer look at the poem's structure and at the images Fletcher employs, one sees the technique and meaning clearly identified through structural arrangement of the images despite temporary confusion resulting from apparently disparate images. The poem's unity strengthens the poetic statement and enables one to note Fletcher's effective handling of the thought.

The formidable array of images initially overwhelms modern readers, yet Fletcher's basic concept of design and his reliance upon figurative speech are not peculiar. Not only is the entire poem a single allegory; it also depends for much of its structure on the recurrence of symbols and transitional metaphors. The Purple Island is composed of allegorical images and they are what we must deal with, recognizing, however, that they are not ends in themselves, but only means to an end. Maurice Evans, in reviewing Spenser's imagery in The Faerie Queene, comments relevant to metaphorical style: "Spenser would not have equated the image itself with any prose 'meaning' which we may extract from it; but he would have recognized that the image began with a prose concept

which the rhetorical 'colors' of poetry intensify and make universally applicable."[1] Such a statement is true also of Fletcher and other allegorists of the age.

One of the first considerations of an effort to evaluate imagery of The Purple Island must be, then, Fletcher's general prose concept. He proposes to lead his reader through self-knowledge to knowledge of God. The curiously logical structure of rhetorical extended metaphors entails an initial distinction between the idea and the image, but an eventual convergence of the two after a sufficient period of parallel development. Such unity may result from employment of the metaphysical conceit which begins with a simple comparison between apparent dissimilars but ends in a fusion of the two. The well-known lovers and compasses of Donne's poem develop logically, revealing more and more points of contact as the description continues. So it is with the allegory of Fletcher. The presentation of the images affect the reader's total impression of the ideas: patterns for the poetry are additional keys to understanding.

If the poem exists as only a series of distinct stanzas or cantos, then it is certainly a failure. Undeniably the individual stanzas of certain cantos do have some autonomy; the prosodic variations in meter and pattern among them tend to suggest some distinctiveness. Many of the cantos seem to make fresh beginnings; several evolve with a certain spontaneity.[2] But to say this is not to admit that the relationship between the cantos or between stanzas within the cantos is factitious. The balance and architecture of the parts, the calculated progression of feeling, the movement forward to the culmination presented in Canto XII, all impress the sensitive reader. Through the eleven cantos

Fletcher inconsistently moves his narrative forward to its climax. The pace is sometimes slow, sometimes rapid as the tale unfolds.

As a pastoral allegory of great length, The Purple Island is, of course, different from shorter works in structure. And, although such works as The Pilgrim's Progress have journey organization, the length and diversity of his poem forced Fletcher to find a more flexible design than the pure epic structure or travel-time sequence. In this work Fletcher is faced with the complexity of the island-warrior-art which his subject is. In confining the familiar imagery of Puritan warrior-pilgrim with his island "topography," he must have realized that poetic order might be less coherent than one might anticipate. The magnitude and complexity of the poem are unusual for pastoral poetry.[3]

Fletcher's turning to a combination between the pastoral and the epic reinforces his attempt to unify the poem. That he saw metaphor as a means of approaching a new design is evident in his comment of introduction--suggesting that the likeness between the body and the unknown island is of paramount notice. The Purple Island is consequently the expression of Fletcher's extended metaphor technique, defined above in Chapter I. The "design" of the poem comprises the poet's intimate interpretations of life, made concrete through images, scenes, events, and characters--all elements juxtaposed with some conventional time sequences and space sequences. These, then, are the subject of concern here. In addition to understanding the effects of prosody and word schemes on the communication, one needs clarification of what Fletcher was about and how he set forth his poetic thoughts; then he may gain an understanding of the images through analysis.

One part of the structure through which Fletcher projects his images seems to have been derived from Spenser's basic aesthetic concept. As such, it relates substance and expression, holds that ideas and story should receive the fullest possible embodiment or adornment both in detail of narrative and picture and in patterned verse.[4] The disciple in this case does not imitate his master precisely; their purposes as well as their subjects are different. In many ways, however, it is true that The Purple Island is, as Strathmann asserts, "an excellent foil to the study of Book II" of The Faerie Queene.[5]

The purpose of Spenser's narrative is to follow the path of development of the knight morally, as he becomes strong enough to act on his own in fighting evil. Such is directly related to the purpose of Fletcher's poem, although the latter aims for a more general effect from its single allegorical story. With his own style, Fletcher does, of course, differ from Spenser in the simple narrative passages. The more direct didacticism (evident in the marginalia) of Fletcher appropriately leads one through the study of the physiological composition of man. Nevertheless, Fletcher's methods seem, as Strathmann says, "wooden" by comparison to Spenser's. Spenser's lines and story flow smoothly, compounding description and action effectively in most passages. Fletcher's elaborate explanations, necessitated by his "scientific" description of the body, slow his readers, indeed hinder the progress of the narrative. Overall, Spenser's general structure appears to be more effective than Fletcher's highly tedious description of disparate details in the tour of the body and in the preparation for battle.

Another model for the order of the poem could have been readily

available to Fletcher from his religious prose works, as noted above. Allegory appearing in sermons employed imagery and technique which appear in this poem and certainly many sermons of the day shared Fletcher's ultimate purpose. The preacher did not frequently let his imagination run at length upon any one figure, but the temptation to do so marks a number of sermons. Illustrations from daily life utilized to explain doctrine to laymen were popularly received, especially when some narrative feature was also given. The development of sermon style, particularly among Puritan preachers, followed several logical steps. Familiar pictures were used as striking features; then relevant analogies were included; then related analogies were interwoven; then the form was mostly narrative with a moral.[6] Such is broadly Fletcher's style in The Purple Island.

To be sure, neither common sermon style nor Spenserian epic parallel Fletcher's poem precisely. Yet the poem's complexity can be clarified by further analysis. In adopting pastoral styles, Fletcher inherited also its problems, and the reader must judge how he works these problems out to meet with success. After Spenser's examples, Fletcher employed not only pastoral effects, but also a division within those effects, as a means of portraying and exploring a conflict of values. The tradition Fletcher inherited possessed definite continuity in imagery, but was divided in the conception of the ideal of pastoral life. This division has been defined by Patrick Cullen in the terms "Arcadian" and "Mantuanesque," terms appropriately denoting the contrasts here.[7] The division is manifest in what modern writers judge inconsistencies in Spenser and in Fletcher: but for the Renaissance poets, the dicotomy usually serves to unify design. Fletcher has three major motifs

to blend: his allegorical handling of the physical body parts which include the Island's features and localities (Arcadian elements mingled with Mantuanesque); his pastoral framework for telling the story (primarily Arcadian strand); and his allegorical statement of the spiritual body parts, including the Island's inhabitants (primarily Mantuanesque elements).[8]

In reviewing the organizational technique of Fletcher's structure one may note its circular pattern—a pattern employed by Spenser in The Faerie Queene. In beginning and ending with the selection of the May king, Fletcher brings his poem full circle. Fletcher's song, however, has supplemented the experiences of the shepherds, so that in gaining knowledge, they undergo some change within their characters. Fletcher also employs a direct line from beginning to end, following the travel motif through the battle victory. In this regard, the battle scenes and the deus ex machina victory parallel not only Spenser, but also the medieval English morality play structure.[9]

By extending his examination of the allegory's structure, one discovers the complexity of its design. Fletcher builds his framework throughout the first canto, gives his description of the island in Cantos II through V, and introduces his inhabitants in Canto VI, providing a transition to the later cantos. In the last six cantos (VII-XII) he presents the opposing forces and the battle allegorizing the moral struggle man faces in the world (virtues and vices fight for possession of his soul). These sections of the poem are each significant to the whole, but they are not evenly handled.

Specifically one may note the following passages indicative of Fletcher's achievements and problems in unity of images. In I, 34

Fletcher connects his tour and his shepherds--Thirsil declares that his inspiration is to sing about man. "An isle I fain would sing, an Island faire . . . neare as our selves yet farthest from our care." Something of the allegorical meaning is also suggested with the onset of the literal. Fletcher later expounds at length on the lack of care which allows the Island to be attacked.

I, 43-45: These stanzas continue to build the condition of the literal story and foundation for the allegory.

> Now when the first weeks life was almost spent,
> And this world built, and richly furnished;
> To store heav'ns courts, and steer earths regiment,
> He cast to frame an Isle, the heart and head
> Of all his works, compos'd with curious art;
> Which like an Index briefly should impart
> The summe of all the whole, yet of the whole a part.
>
> Then plac't it in the calm pacifick seas,
> And bid nor waves, nor troublous windes offend it;
> Then peopled it with subjects apt to please
> So wise a Prince, made able to defend it
> Against all outward force, or inward spite;
> Him framing like himself, all shining bright;
> A little living Sunne, Sonne of the living Light.

The description of the body as an island is the most tedious part of the poem. Fletcher's notes do not in every instance clarify his allusions, yet some passages would simply not communicate to twentieth-century readers if no marginal were given; and doubtless these aids served to enlighten or inform many of the seventeenth-century readers who were unfamiliar with scientific terms designating body functions and parts. The total effect of the lengthy descriptions and notes is that the allegory loses its impact through disunity. There are several reasons, perhaps, yet only one is pertinent to structure and will be discussed here.[10]

One must admit that Fletcher's structure for the whole Purple Island is divided; but this supposed defect is not unusual. To pastoral had gravitated many of the crucial and unresolved conflicts of Renaissance thinking: nature and art, other-worldliness and secularism, Christianity and paganism, reason and emotion. Not only was pastoral a vehicle for such divisions in thinking; it was itself marked by that division, as noted above. This lack of unity appears problematic in Fletcher's poem, however, because he integrates his divisions only superficially. His structure ineffectively presents the problems of man and poet: some passages read clearly, others too obscurely.

II, 14 identifies part of Fletcher's order succinctly--here the section denoting the Isle's parts:

> The whole Isle, parted in three regiments,
> By three Metropolies is joyntly sway'd;
> Ord'ring in peace and warre their governments
> With loving Concord, and with mutual aid:
> The lowest hath the worst, but largest See;
> The middle lesse, of greater dignitie:
> The highest least, but holds the greatest sovereigntie.

One might expect the tour of the island to be well-coordinated, easily directed, as this passage suggests. The descriptions which follow bear out the suggestion; ranking of the island's features continues throughout. All the body is inter-related in Fletcher's description, and the structure indicates his philosophy and psychology by his positioning of the parts as high or low in importance to the whole island. Of the heart, for instance, he says in IV, 15:

> In middle of this middle Regiment
> Kerdia seated lies, the centre deem'd
> Of this whole Isle, and of this government;
> If not the chiefest this, yet needfull'st seem'd.

> Therefore obtain'd an equal distant seat,
> More fitly hence to shed his life and heat,
> And with his yellow streams the fruitfull Island wet.

Seeing a place and rank in all parts, Fletcher praises the qualities of the third precinct, described in Canto V as ranked "best and chief of all." Everything is positioned according to importance. Within this part, too, the senses are given a hierarchical structuring; Fletcher's notes clarify the order. "Hearing is the second sense, lesse noble then the eye, more needful" (V, 38, n.). A dominant feature of his descriptions, then--a belief that order is beneficial, indeed best, for life--echoes throughout the poem. These references indicate, with some lucidity, a general design or "path" by which man comes to knowledge of himself and of God's purposes for him.

Despite the clarity of such passages as these, however, many of the lines apparently confuse the structure and meaning for modern readers. The Purple Island is explored with great difficulty, even though notes attempt some direction. II, 12 exemplifies a problem resulting when readers must associate the stanza's physical descriptions with both allegorical and geographical meanings. Fletcher describes the third stream of the body which "give to this Isle his fruitfulnesse and being." This third is

> The last, in all things diff'ring from the other
> Fall from an hill, and close together go,
> Embracing as they runne, each with his brother;
> Guarded with double trenches sure they flow:
> The coldest spring, yet nature best they have;
> And like the lacteall stones which heaven pave,
> Slide down to every part with their thick milky wave.

Fletcher's note reads: "A nerve is a spermaticall part rising from the

brain and pith of the backbone, the outside skinne, the inside full of pith, carrying the animall spirits for sense and motion and therefore doubly skinned as the brain: none of them single but runne in couples." The passage follows the descriptions given for the first stream (vein) and the second (arterie). Even though Fletcher gives a clue that this stream is unassociated with blood flow (it differs "in all things" from the other two); generally speaking, a reader might have assumed several meanings for Fletcher's descriptions, none of which may have corresponded exactly with the interpretation given in the note. A reader unfamiliar with the anatomical structure of the body or the composition of neurological parts may be duly confused by the stanza and the note as well. Furthermore, many of Fletcher's notes are of such technical description to make the poem highly specialized and difficult to follow. The narrative structure is lost. The technical interpretation of Fletcher's lines, though not retained throughout, directs the reader away from continuity for the moral interpretation of the allegory, which Fletcher's preface and earlier stanzas indicate to be the reader's task to follow.[11] Because the notes interrupt the flow of thought and also because the "locale" visited is oftentimes so obscurely, or oppositely, so literally described, the total effect of the notes is to weaken the poem's appeal.

Finally, because the tour through the body Island is not parallel to the tours of other popular poems, even though it shares some of their descriptions, it may seem confusing. This tour is arranged, in part, like Spenser's House of Alma, and like many epics, too, when Fletcher begins description of the inhabitants. Despite some complaints which center on distractions caused by Fletcher's technical

details, The Purple Island retains some order and design. Following somewhat weakly Spenser's technique, Fletcher's cantos have, as do Spenser's books, characters which carry out the logic of human behavior as they represent man collectively. Spenser's poem finds more unity by fuller treatment of character. Fletcher's technique does not accomplish the same integration. As Evans notes, "By means of his story line, Spenser anatomises the human mind and reveals, with what seems [to the modern mind] an extraordinary penetration, the physical and psychological springs of human action."[12] Fletcher deters his reader by many windings in the story. The reader who approaches Fletcher's poem deficient in self-knowledge, surely will not leave the poem without having gained some understanding of human motivations and capabilities, but he may have less coherent understanding than he could have.

The following summary identifies important links in the poem's structure, while also acknowledging the defects which becloud the unity. For Fletcher, Canto VI is important to the whole, as it directly connects the parts of the allegory. Thirsil tells his audience:

> Deigne gently heare this Purple Islands nation,
> A people never seen, yet still in sight;
> Our daily guests, and natures, yet unknown;
> Our servants borne, but now commanders grown;
> Our friends and enemies; aliens, yet still our own.
> (VI, 6)

The canto continues with a review of the former estate and cause of the plight of the current island people. Stanza 20 anticipates the next cantos:

> But let my lighter skiffe return again
> Unto that little Isle which late it left
> Nor dare to enter in that boundlesse main,

> Or tell the nation from this island raft;
> But sing that civil strife and home dissension
> 'Twixt two strong factions with like fierce contention,
> Where never peace is heard nor ever peace is mention.

The identification of the Island's prince (28) and "president" (32), the "all-seeing Intellect" and his counsellors is traditional. The focus upon knowing and understanding is related directly to Spenser's view, as Fletcher himself records in 51:

> But let my song passe from these worthy sages
> Unto all the Island's highest sovereign; [his note identifies this as the Understanding]
> And those hard wars which all the year he wages:
> For these three late a gentle shepherd swain
> Most sweetly sung, as he before had seen
> In Alma's house: his memory, yet green,
> Lives in his well tun'd songs; whose leaves immortal been.[13]

The canto serves as a short summary of Christian life--from the Fall through Christ's redemption. The keys to the next cantos are provided in the story of the Fall and rise of the prince and his bride.

The final six cantos give symbolic description of vices and virtues and their fight for control of man. In Fletcher's narrative they are opposing warriors, both groups living on the island. The battle and characters involved in it are typical of the one-for-one allegory of many sermons and of morality play figures. Fletcher classifies the vices into clear categories of sins: Unchastitie, Unrighteous, Intemperance. The warriors, nurses, paramours, sisters, brothers, etc. are introduced logically related to the class in which they are placed. Canto VIII lists even more of the evil forces, all related to Mammon--sins of the world, from Mistake to Impudence. Although not every morality play contained all of these characters, and although Spenser did

not extend his House to include them all, Fletcher did not restrict himself to what had preceded him. Their relationship appears logical in view of Anglican and Puritan theology of the times. Fletcher's organizations for these warriors essentially echoes the concern of the preachers around him.[14]

When Canto IX introduces the "heroick band" opposing the dragon, Fletcher echoes Revelation 21:1. The members of the band are led by Spirit and Heaven, with virtues of Knowledge and Faith moving among the first to battle to save the Island.[15] These figures integrate Fletcher's concern with bringing man to self-knowledge and thence to knowledge of God. Finally, Canto X groups virtues related to Love, equally powerful in dispelling the opposing forces. The image becomes also a unifying factor for Fletcher's purpose.

What is most notable about the stanzas is not perhaps their structure because the descriptions are smoothly presented in a logical order. The allegory wears thin, however, and this is offensive to a reader. The didacticism is overbearing, the symbolism and imagery too heavy. The abstract descriptions are readily recognized as traditional and are so greatly contrasting the difficult and specialized passages of the earlier cantos that the reader feels insulted with the superficiality here.

The final two cantos record the war. In epic poetry this action consumes the main efforts of the poet; Fletcher gives it minimum space. The actual opposition begins in Stanza 19 of Canto XI and ends in Stanza 66 of Canto XII. The battles are not so emphatically recorded as in Spenser or Milton, but echoes of Spenser appear frequently in the passages. Also among Fletcher's battle descriptions are lines which

suggest phrases for Milton's great poem on the Fall. The handling of the skirmish as Fletcher presents it reflects also a conservative though Puritan interpretation of man's relationship to God. The destruction of the Dragon and the scattering of his forces is effected in XII by the Savior (Stanzas 54-57), and the end is achieved as had been predictable from the onset of the poem. The work concludes its narrative structure by again returning to the shepherd swains and Thirsil's singing, the framework put around each canto. The shepherd who continued his song for seven days and nights, who kept up his herding as well as his singing is at last chosen as the prince of May and "all the yeare." His selection marks his victory over the foe.

An analysis of structure thus reveals several defects in Fletcher's style. He does not carry his technique of allegory consistently. To be sure, the definitions and examples he imitated did not require a rigidity in style. In fact, the division of pastoral allegory he inherited led him and his readers to expect some shifting in allegory of lengthy poems. Even though called a "continued metaphor," allegory was still, at that time, a loosely arranged form. One must be careful to avoid applying twentieth-century structural standards to such works as these, constructed by other designs. Fletcher unifies his poem rather by an insistence upon image and metaphor. Not that he speaks through only one, but through the many. His poem is teeming with similes and metaphors, which he regarded as fitting his mode. Metaphors particularly were lauded as poetic: they were defined by Quintilian and accepted by Renaissance writers as

> The commonest and by far the most beautiful of the tropes . . . . For if it be correctly and appropriately applied,

> it is quite impossible for its effect to be commonplace, mean or unpleasing. It adds to the copiousness of language by the interchange of words and by borrowing and succeeds in the supremely difficult task of providing a name for everything . . . . Metaphor falls into four categories . . . one living thing is substituted for another . . . inanimate things for inanimate, or inanimate for animate . . . or animate for inanimate. If we introduce metaphors is one continuous series, our language will become allegorical and enigmatic.[16]

Fletcher's allegory is thus fittingly filled with metaphor. Several examples indicate the range of allusion he brings into his poem: IX, 20 describes man's changes as similar to those of the little lionet who newly whelpt is weak and tender, but who later "waxen great." XI, 25 compares man to a "gentle greyhound" who, when he is bothered, "can catch and tear up with his fangs" anything he wishes. In XI, 35 Fletcher speaks of the beauty of woman who has "a bed of lillies flower upon her cheek." In XX, 35 he compares the operation of the digestive tract to a pot on a fire. In XX, 38 he explains the structure of the stomach, as it curbs the flow of food out, comparing it to the condition of life Erisicthon mythologically led. Apparently Fletcher adopted figurative language as appropriate to his allegory: it marks an aspect of style described as "copia" by Erasmus, a "plentitude of thoughts and words . . . speaking most fully, enriching its matter with as varied an ornamentation as possible, expanding the subject until nothing can be added to it."[17] Purney's critical analysis expands an opposite view. "Swains are not suppos'd to retard their storeys by many of long Similes; their Talk comes from the heart, Unornamental; but Similes, in Pastoral, are for Ornament." He continues to note that the similes necessary and appropriate to pastoral should be after the manner of Theocritus, only three to four words long. In choosing to

combine the simple and plain style of pastoral with the copious style of allegory, Fletcher has selected necessarily contrasting components. Purney's critical assessment centers on the problem resulting from the combination: "Let all judge of Allegorical Pastorals as they please, but in my opinion, they are not consistent with the Simplicity of that Poem."[18] One must review the figurative style of pastoral and general allegory to evaluate the total impression of Fletcher's language.

Throughout The Purple Island Fletcher inserts a variety of images, but he handles them with unequal effectiveness. He follows the pastoral minimally, expanding his allegory with diversity of imagery. Instances of images may be categorized as follows, according to their technique.[19]

1. Decorative (least veiled)

In passages such as this reference to the original sin and deceit, Fletcher employs an open metaphor.

> So Sodom apples please the ravisht eye,
> But sulphure taste proclaims their roots in hell
> . . . . Such is hypocrisies deceitful frame. (III, 36)

The language is hardly metaphorical to the readers because the description of hypocrisy was one familiar to the English churchgoer. Another familiar image is written in I, 43 and V, 8, where Fletcher refers to the microcosmic view of life accepted by many of his contemporaries. In defining the complex and contradictory being that man is, he notes that clues may be found in the "Index" (the heart and head of man) where is "the summe of all, the whole"; and indeed these parts together become symbols for the two forces controlling human motivations. More specifically Fletcher notes that "on the face he [God] wrote the Index of the minde."[20]

2. Sunken (obscured)

Fletcher writes several obscure lines; particularly difficult to picture from the description given is the beauty of Parthenia as figuratively presented in X, 31. (The description covers Stanzas 27 through 40.)

> Upon her forehead Love his trophies sits,
> A thousand spoils in silver arch displaying;
> And in the midst himself full proudly sits,
> Himself in awfull majestie arraying:
> Upon her brows lies his bent Ebon bow,
> And ready shafts; deadly those weapons show;
> Yet sweet that death appear'd, lovely that deadly blow.

Problems arise with an association of the warrior imagery to the beauty it is supposed to describe; the arrangement of all the equipment of triumphal parade is, after all, obscurely drawn.

3. Violent (blood and guts)

Perhaps Fletcher is most unlike Spenser in his avoidance of long violent images. Although he has few gruesome passages, XI, 3 exemplifies well the effects of the startling figures:

> Freshly these Knights assault these fresher bands,
> And with new battell all their strength renew:
> Down fell Galoios by Encrates hands,
> Agneia Maechus and Anagnus slew;
> And spying Methos fenc't in's iron vine,
> Pierc't his swoln panch: There lies the grunting swine,
> And spues his liquid soul out in his purple wine.
>
> As when a greedy lion, long unfed,
> Breaks in at length into the harmlesse folds;
> (So hungry rage commands with fearfull dread)
> He drags the silly beasts; nothing controlls
> The victour proud; he spoils, devours, and tears:
> In vain the keeper calls his shepherd peers:
> Meanwhile the simple flock gaze on with silent fears:
>
> Such was the slaughter these three Champions made . . . .

4. Radical (conceit)

In explaining the sense of sight, Fletcher employs the following conceit, one of many in the poem extending its imagery full scale:

> The outward light by th' first walls circle sending
> His beams and hundred forms into the tower,
> The wall of horn, and that black gate transcending,
> Is lightned by the brightest Crystalline,
> And fully view'd in that white nettie shine,
> From thence with speedy haste is poasted to the minde.
>
> Much as an one-ey'd room, hung all with night,
> (Onely that side, which adverse to his eye
> Gives but one narrow passage to the light,
> Is spread with some white shining tapestrie)
> An hundred shapes that throng flit ayers stray,
> Shove boldly in, crouding that narrow way,
> And on that bright-fac'd wall obscurely dancing play.
> (IV, 202-213)

The comparison is appropriate for his intended meaning; the startling image of the dark room's rays of light gives the reader direction toward understanding. Fletcher's figures are generally effective in appealing to the imagination of the reader, as is done here.

5. Intensive (ritual and pictoral art associations--feelings of dignity)

Two examples illustrate the scope of Fletcher's techniques in allusions and figures which may be classified in this category (which, in fact, overlaps those above). IX, 6, one of Fletcher's most euphonous passages, combines several images:

> So choicest drugs in meanest shrubs are found,
> So precious gold in deepest centre dwells
> So sweetest violets trail on lowly ground
> So richest pearls ly clos'd in vilest shells, . . .
> The highest highly loves the low, the loftie hates.

XI, 47 provides another illustration:

As when a stone, troubling the quiet waters,
Prints in the angry stream a wrinkle round,
Which soon another and another scatters,
Till all the lake with circles now is crown'd:
  Also the aire struck with some violence nigh,
  Begets a world of cirlces in the skie;
All which infected move with sounding qualitie.

Sound waves are only difficulty explained today; Fletcher's simile clarifies the movement for both his comrades and modern readers.

6. Expansive (wide ranging, either beauty or terror)

In I, 37 Fletcher writes a comparison common among his contemporaries:

How like's the world unto a tragick stage!
Where every changing scene the actors change
Some subject crouch and fawn; some raigne and rage. . . .

Another illustration of his ability to change the mood or frame of reference for the imagery appears in XII, 3 where he alludes to the Serian worms "that with their thread / Draw out their silken lives," and to the fleecy covering "Not in that proud Sidonian tincture di'd." In describing the humble existence of the shepherd, Fletcher distinguishes an irrelevance of those articles of apparel which are associated with nobility. His imagery here is appropriate in developing the contrast the poem is expected to express. Throughout the stanzas, however, Fletcher is not restricted to the language of contrast only; he reaches into many branches of knowledge--science, religion, literature, as well as common daily life for his images. He seems to talk as easily about the pot of boiling water as of the myth of Euridyce, and inserts the references as effective aids to the reader.

7. Exuberant (energetic impression)

VIII, 17 exemplifies Fletcher's rare expressions of excitement:

As when a fierie courser readie bent
Puts forth himself at first with swiftest pace;
Till with too sudden flash his spirits spent,
Alreadie fails now in the middle race:
   His hanging crest farre from his wonted pride,
   No longer now obeyes his angrie guide;
Rivers of sweat and bloud flow from his gored side:

Thus ran the rash Tolmetes, never viewing
The fearful fiends that duly him attended.

True to the style of allegory, Fletcher's poem is thus laden with figures--of varying effectiveness, it must be admitted.

Yet Fletcher is careful to build his poem to a climax, blending his major images together with the culmination of action. In review, one finds that unity is gained by imagistic motifs which recur frequently enough to be significant. Fletcher adopted conventional images, extended and modified them, and added original inventions of his own to form patterns of description and allusion. His mastery here appears partly in the pastoral scenes, suiting of sound to mood at each hour of the day, in the choice of images which echo but also help to create some personal emotion. That is, the metaphorical language of the poem extended throughout it, and the allegory, as Fletcher understood it (and as we must ultimately judge it for this poem) was just this--an extension of metaphor. The major imagist motifs which turn one's responses to his thought later are these: conflict between humility and pride; contrast between light and darkness, an antithesis associated with other antitheses of day and night, seeing and not seeing, ignorance and knowledge, acceptance and rejection of truth--that is, the full nature of the battle for man's soul.

One group of major images to consider is obviously pastoral. It is true that pastoral passages provide rather weak connections if one

considers only the amount of space they occupy. Yet Fletcher does integrate his poem through pastoral imagery. It has been mentioned that pastoral imagery marks the structure of the poem as circular. The choosing of the May king is only one pastoral feature of many devices he employs: others blend to support this one. Besides providing some mechanical transitions through his pastoral images and symbolical metaphor of sunrise and sunset, Fletcher uses his pastoral images to interrelate all parts of the poem to provide richer implications than any few lines can show. Because of the recurrence of allusions to images as well as of the images themselves, many assume qualities of "symbolic metaphor"--they have no exact, definable meaning, but they carry multiple suggestions.

In the first canto Fletcher's singer presents external descriptions in pastoral, phrases at once both literal and figurative, phrases also interspersed with expressions of subjective feelings. Mingled are both secular and religious pastoral images.

> Sing what thou list, be it of Cupids spite,
> (Ah lovely spite, and spitefull lovelinesse!)
> Or Gemma's grief, if sadder be thy sprite:
> Begin, thou loved swain, with good successe.
> Ah, (said the bashfull boy) such wanton toyes
> A better minde and sacred vow destroyes,
> Since in a higher love I setled all my joyes.
>
> New light new love, new love new life hath bred;
> A life that lives by love, and loves by light:
> A love to him, to whom all loves are wed;
> A light to whom the Sunne is darkest night:
> Eyes light, hearts love, souls onely life he is:
> Life soul, love, heart, light, eye, and all are his:
> He eye, light, heart, love, soul; he all my joy, & blisse.
>
> But if you deigne my ruder pipe to heare,
> (Rude pipe, unus'd, untun'd, unworthy hearing)
> These infantine beginnings gently bear,
> Whose best desert and hope must be your bearing. (I, 6-8)

In expanding pastoral imagery beyond the mere gathering in and leading out of the sheep, Fletcher analyzes the virtues of humble life. The position of shepherd is one Fletcher praises. He follows Mantuan and others in relating metaphorical passages of shepherds and sheep to the "great Prince of Shepherds" mentioned in the Bible.[21] His synthesis of the two pastoral moods gives primacy to the serious concerns of man. Throughout The Purple Island the strands of romantic pastoral are the weaker of the two threads. Yet some passages record the mood clearly:

> The Shepherds to the woodie mount withdrew
> Where th' hillock seats, Shades yeeld a canopie;
> Whose tops with violets di'd all in blue
> Might seem to make a little azure skie:
> And that round hill, which their weak head maintain'd,
> A lesser Atlas seem'd, whose neck sustain'd
> The weight of all the heav'n, which sore his shoulders pain'd.
>
> And here and there sweet Primrose scattered
> Spangling the blue, fit constellations make:
> Some broadly flaming their fair colours spread;
> Some other winkt, as yet but half awake:
> Fit were they plac't and set in order due.
> Nature seem'd work by art, so lively true
> A little heav'n on earth in narrow space she drew.

The lines reveal a pervasively held view of life. The praise of the natural scene was a most significant purpose of pastoral, which Fletcher knew from his sources and employed accordingly.[22]

Further, Fletcher's description of the fair maids echoes the glorification of shepherdesses in precedent pastoral poetry. Because his ultimate interest in women in The Purple Island is not one of romantic love, rather a higher one, Fletcher's allegory differs from the emphasis of many short pastorals, and indeed his own. The "warlike maid" Parthenia is one whom Fletcher describes through hyperbole. He calls

her

> Choice nymph, the crown of Chaste Diana's train,
> Thou beauties lilie, set in heav'nly earth,
> Thy fairs unpattern'd all perfections stain:
> Sure heav'n with curious pencil, at thy birth,
> In thy rare face her own full picture drew:
> It is a strong verse here to write but true:
> Hyperboles in others are but half thy due. (X, 30)

He continues his descriptive praise for several stanzas, echoing the best of his predecessors: her eyes are "radiant starres," her brows, "two Rainbows," "a bed of lilies flower upon her cheek," and "Her rubie lips lock up from gazing sight a troop of pearls," etc.[23] Petrarch, Spenser and Sidney had employed such descriptions of women earlier. Fletcher's magnified praise is not fresh nor unusually striking, yet he turns these descriptions toward a focus upon his religious concern for man.[24]

Fletcher's most significant picture of woman associated with the pastoral imagery is written as transitional passages between the major thoughts of the poem and the general pastoral motif. In I, 29 he suggests his connection. The pastoral ideal of the Christian minister is one who accepts the challenge to "feed the lambes" for the Great Prince of Shepherds. The shepherd of Fletcher's poem sings of his "lovely mate" who accepts the responsibility to "tend my sparing stock" and "nurse my little ones with pleasing care." For both the shepherd and his wife, humility reigns. Their life is unpretentious, without personal ambition. The essence of pastoral life outlines points of virtue upon which Fletcher directs his reader's focus. Innocence and humility are to be desired.

These virtues are further identified in other pastoral images

describing the male worker. A shepherd of pastoral verse is typically part of a contrast or conflict in life styles. The poet juxtaposes the choices between pride and humility, with the rewards going to the shepherd who remains true to his simple life. As innocent as his simple sheep is the shepherd Fletcher describes:

> His lambes warm fleece well fits his little need,
> Not in that Proud Sidonian tincture did'd [does he dress]
> But sweet content exiles both miserie and spite. (XII, 2)

In I, 24-25 the singer is advised against being upset if the "vulgar" do not praise him; any praise should be "enough for thee." If high praises come, such could be considered as heaven. The description is of the position most fitting of the shepherd Thirsil.[25] In "To Thenot," e.g., Fletcher describes the shepherd's life as lowly, yet attractive. In The Purple Island, the shepherd finds a "humble dale" to be his "proper place." The lofty hill is "not rightly fitting."[26] In his preface to the allegorical poem, Fletcher humbly calls his work a product of his "unripe youth." He expresses surprise at any acclaim given the poem. Even if the view is one of his later years, looking back at his earlier works, he presents at this time a consistent conviction to humility--and this view is supported and suggested also by the imagery in the poem.[27] Within the poem, Fletcher's shepherd Thirsil maintains his simplicity and humility from the apology for his "rude pipe" in Canto I through to his election as May king at the end of Canto XII. In XII, 4-5 he presents a long description of the Kentish dale, a place of sweet song, a place of peace and happiness that is a religious conviction as well: "Pleas'd & full blest he lives, when he his God can please." The shepherd's task is one here identified as

virtuous.

As the pastoral images introduce the virtues of humility, they necessarily appear as antithetical to the sin of pride. The struggle of the passions within the heart of The Purple Island is noted in this second group of images.

Leading the reader through the body, Fletcher exposes the nature of the Isle, informing him that the struggle against pride which overtakes the heart may be won by valiant efforts. In identifying pride as a sin, Fletcher employs a familiar image, derived from the Bible.

> Yet that great Light, by whom all heaven shines
> With borrow'd beams oft leaves his loftie skies
> And to this lowly seat himself confines.
> Fall then again, proud heart, now fall to rise:
> Cease earth, ah cease, proud Babel earth, to swell:
> Heav'n blasts high towers, stoops to a low rooft cell
> First heav'n must dwell in man, then man in heav'n shall dwell.
> (IV, 26)

Throughout the allegory, Fletcher repeats this image. The Tower of Babel identifies both the height of aspiration and the greatness of the fall of a proud man. Pride misdirects man's aims; man must be humble to rise from earth to heaven. In VI, 49 Fletcher clarifies his attitude toward the aspiring mind. Violations of natural order bring disaster. Babel's pride dared "the lofty skies." The reader is cautioned to curb ambitions; pride ever opposes the heavens because it is too far-reaching and the reader will fail in any opposition with heaven.[28] In VII, 36 Fletcher directly states:

> Babels glory is but Sions taint
> [Pride is] Religions blot, but Irreligions paint.

As Fletcher brings his allegorical journey through man to an end, he

describes the traveller as having gained in knowledge about life and man, thus forming a new view. There at last, the poet foretells the fall of pride in the tower--"Babel, great Babel lies as low as hell . . . Babel, proud Babel's fall'n, and lies as low as ground" (XII, 56). Just as Ignorance helped build the tower, Knowledge seems to be a chief factor in bringing it down. The allegory was undertaken to enable man (as reader) to know, and the knowledge proved to be a strong step in building a relationship with God, one that unifies all the efforts of man into a Christian life of service directed by one master.[29]

The conflict between humility and pride, while common in pastoral and chosen by Puritan leaders as an important focus for preachers, is worked well into the overall purpose of Fletcher's allegory because he utilizes a variety of images from the two divisions of pastoral, yet realizes some unity through the pattern of antithesis. His images contrasting the proud warriors with humble shepherds and princes are necessary to the theme of self-knowledge. Man's growth in knowledge allows him to admit his weakness and his need to rely on God, as the prince does in Canto XII. The following passage emphatically presents the images of the conflict:

> The parting sunne (man's state describing well)
> Falls when he rises, rises when he falls:
> So we by falling rose, by rising fell. (VIII, 59)[30]

Fletcher asserts that it is the Christian alone who can truly find joy in life; he can be content and unshaken in paradoxical situations of tribulation or affliction. Particularly in his last works, Fletcher expressed significant indications of his faith in this belief. In The Purple Island the imagery focuses upon the humility and real concern

of the characters; this is what Fletcher appeared to live as well. The point of contrast between pride and humility through the pastoral imagery is one Fletcher acknowledges in his preface and carries through the poem.

What large structure coherence the poem achieves, comes through patterns of metaphors in a type of theme-and-variation structure. Especially notable are passages of antithetical or paradoxical statements. Those expressing contrasts between light and darkness are more numerous than those contrasting the effects of pride and humility. Within the major theme the antithetical images of day and night, seeing and not seeing, ignorance and knowledge are related.

Imagery of light is ubiquitous. Making up the third category of images, references to the sun, as well as to the moon and the stars, recur repeatedly. The sun is associated with brightness, with beauty, with joyfulness; it presides over the wakefulness and activity of the day. The sunlit day is the time of social joy, ritualistic joy; the night, a time of danger to the flock, when protection must be built.

Fletcher's group of light images indicates the destructive features of unethical conduct and evil forces of the dark contrasting the fruitfulness, happiness, and strength of the light. Paradoxes, antitheses, abound in descriptions of the days and nights, for life as Phineas Fletcher chose to show it is best revealed in rhetorical devices distinguishing the complexity of the struggle between good and evil.

> Flashing eyes make all the world afeard:
> Light with dark clouds, waters with fires are meeting.
> The sunne but now is rising, now is setting;
> And findes west-shades--east, and seas in ayers loct. (VII, 72)

So the world reflects the unrest in man; echoes of life are interrelated with the problems of all creation since the Fall. Fletcher later particularizes meaning with light signifying knowledge of Truth and also indicating a Christian's conversion or change from not knowing right to an awareness of the ways of God.

The whole of The Purple Island, as a microcosmic tour of life, presents very clearly this point of view. Most cantos begin with the sun rising, bringing as the singer notes, "new light" to the world. The light coming from the Great Prince of Light is necessary for man to proceed on this journey. The cyclical pattern for the action--morning/noon rest/night rest--is realistic yet also helpful for relaxation of the heavy allegory. With many cantos ending with the sun setting and the need of the flock to be home for rest and care, the focus on the lack of opportunity or lack of safety of the night is enhanced.

Through repeated statements of light imagery Fletcher emphasizes the impact of the light in the world. The purple island which he tours is both an allegorical image of the microcosmic man and literally the world (any place) in general. The prince as ruler is the potential to which man can develop with the help of the Spirit, and the Great God of Christianity as ruler and creator of man and the world as known to Fletcher. Light images suggest this by his repetition:

> The Island's Prince . . . Is rightly call'd th' all-seeing
> Intellect,
> All glorious bright . . . [he is] sparkling light
> He cleares [the Island's] duskie shades, and cloudy night . . .
> As when the Sunne restores the glitt'ring day,
> [to] The world late cloath'd in nights black livery. (VI, 6)

Light is used to begin seven of the cantos, as mentioned above,

and the coming of darkness marks the end of the seven days of the journey. This pattern of days and nights distinctly terminates with the climax of the battle; the study of man appears complete both in time and effort. The urgency of protecting the flock against the cold and hazards of night gains emphasis for Fletcher because the themes interrelate with the whole light imagery, mingling throughout the poem with the imagery suggesting a presence of knowledge and hope.[31]

Such metaphorical meanings are reinforced by other passages within the pattern of light imagery. The connection between God and Light is a basic one and must be understood in any consideration of the total impression of the metaphor. Fletcher employs the associations in many of his works. In The Way to Blessedness, for instance, he states clearly: "The Lord created bodily light . . . spreads over the world a general brightness . . . also a spiritual light . . . spread over mankind and by tradition and especially by Prophets, Patriarchs, inspired scriptures."[32] In the same work he later says that the Bible is considered "a light to be taken by apostles all over the earth." The light is for Fletcher everywhere symbolic of God and Knowledge of Truth: the point is an important one.

Oppositely the images of blackness and evil are interrelated. Ignorance, Superstition, Error--all beings which Fletcher names as evil--are dark colored in armor, physical features or attire.[33] Sin is described obliquely in The Locusts I, 12-15 as "black and like a devil." In The Purple Island, Fletcher completes the picture. Sin is feminine--and attractive enough to dupe the unwary: yet as a monster she is also quite dark, ugly and thus emblematic of her evil nature. In describing her Fletcher identifies the attractive part first, then

> the rest (though hid) in serpents form arayd,
> With iron scales, like to a plaited mail:
> Over her back her knotty tail displaid,
> . . . the end was pointed with a double sting . . .
> The creature Hamartia [sin] was foul, deform'd-- (XII, 27, 28)

In addition to this bleak figure, Fletcher describes the companion:

> The second in this rank was black Despair,
> Bred in the dark wombe of eternall Night;
> His looks fast nail'd to Sinne, long sootie hair
> Fill'd up his lank cheeks with wide staring fright . . . .

Darkness indicates evil because it hides the Truth, keeping one from seeing the opposition or danger lurking in the blackness. It symbolizes the distance of evil from the light of Truth as well--the Light of God who sheds his light on all who move into his spheres is defined as effecting growth of knowledge within the recipients of light. Throughout the passages detailing the opposing forces, Fletcher delineates the differences between the two. It is a matter of dark/light conflicts which helps clarify the direct contrasts between the forces; Fletcher achieves emblematic effectiveness.

In order to accomplish the purpose of the allegory, Fletcher synthesizes his images. The shepherd's humility which was praised repeatedly is ultimately related also to the light imagery. The shepherd operates by knowing the dangers of the literal night and depending in his humility upon the true light for safety and security. The light of his day symbolizes in his world and in the allegory the Light of the World; the shepherd can know of the Light through his learning of nature's light.

After guiding the reader on the tour all over the island, the poet returns in Canto IX to discuss the Prince's allies. Among them is

Knowledge, by description clearly associated with the Prince: his glittering armor "shin'd like burning day,/ Garnisht with golden Sunnes, and radiant flowers . . ." (Stanza 11). Another ally is Gentlenesse, described in XI, 18 as "glitt'ring" and able to turn darkness into light for the benefit of all. That the action and descriptions of the warriors suggests the effects of man's development of self-knowledge and knowledge of God is obvious. Fletcher's images are here effective in indicating to his readers a way to follow.

The light imagery is certainly not unique--Fletcher consciously employed that which was set down by others before him, or by himself in earlier works. Its import is to be realized, however, by the reader's consideration of it from the perspective of the whole. Fletcher did not insert isolated images into the poem as such. Each appears to have various expressions which must, in final analysis, be understood as interrelated.

The fourth group of images through which Fletcher considers directly man's condition in the world includes references to eyes. Used to depict the true nature of any individual to be noticed, they are directly alluded to as windows of the soul, revelations of the inner person.

Even in his early poetry such as Venus and Anchises, Fletcher alluded to the eyes of the lovers to present to his readers the feelings of the characters he wrote about. Some of the references are, of course, strictly traditional in phrasing, but Fletcher goes beyond the mere cataloging or topical references which were conventional for verses on pastoral love. Stanzas 5 and 7 are representative of the traditional phrasing: "His smyling eye with single truth was stor'd/

If eyes the index be where thoughts are read,/ A daintie playfellow for naked love . . ."[34] The "index" to inner, unexpressed feelings and thoughts are the eyes. The depth to which man feels or thinks is thus always exposed to the one who knows where to look or what to interpret. The shell of man put on as an external covering to meet the forces of the world cannot hide what the eyes reveal. Indicating what man is truly like inwardly, the eyes become all important.[35]

The Purple Island is marked with recurrent references to eyes. They abound as both subject and object of a search for truth. They can be used to view something or to perceive truth within another person; they can also disclose or project what a person harbors within himself. They are always a source of revelation of the inner man. Fletcher repeats that man's character or feelings flash "first in the eyes," so he cannot hide anything from the perceptive viewer (XII, 72 and XI, 10-12).

Some emphasis is given to the eyes of Parthenia as "seeing Starres," "Two fair Sunnes" or as "matchlesse starres" (X, 33). Such references appear to have some basis in Platonic ideas about eyes. These seem significant as Fletcher presents his work in the tradition he learned to follow as in V, 24, particularly related to classical and mythological allusions. Yet, in passing, Fletcher attaches more meaning to eyes, a meaning which fits into his broad theme and imagery.

The importance of eyes lies primarily in their double character. They afford true sight of the world and disclose truth of inner man as he relates to the world. Linking inner and outer realities, they indicate Fletcher's valuation of things. In his dedicatory piece to The Purple Island he writes an analogy between "optic-glasses" and an eye looking through affection. Both can lessen or increase the quality

viewed--affection doubles good of a friend and it extenuates what is amiss. What is within the man determines how he reviews the image received back inside the eye. Yet what is within the viewer is what the others can distinguish in what is reflected out from his eyes and what is revealed in his other reactions.

There may be a point of fault which lies in vision of the viewer; but man in knowing himself and his body rightly can overcome any possible defect. The fullest description of eyes appears in Canto V, 22-25:

> At the base of the forehead are two watching towers,
> Whence hate and love skirmish, with equal powers,
> Whence smiling gladness shines and sullen sorrow showers.
>
> Here sits retir'd the silent reverence;
> And when the Prince, incens'd with angers fire,
> Thunders aloud, he darts his lightning hence;
> Here dusky-reddish clouds foretell his ire;
> Of nothing can this Isle more boast aright;
> A twin-born Sunne, a double seeing light;
> With much delight they see, are seen with much delight.
>
> That Thracian shepherd call'd them natures Glasse;
> Yet then a glasse in this much worthier being:
> Blinde glasses represent some neare-set face:
> But this is a living glasse, both seen and seeing:
> Like heav'n in moving, like heav'nly firing
> Sweet heat and light, no burning flame inspiring
> Yet (ah!) too oft we find they scorch with hot desiring.[36]

The important truth about the eyes is that they reveal the individual paradoxically: they clearly expose both hate and love within the individual.

Fletcher's picture notes that man is a fallen creature and thus impaired in all his senses; sight is the best or noblest of all these, but it too cannot give man completely reliable vision. Man sometimes tries to see on his own, in his weakness, and this is one of the problems Fletcher acknowledges as indicative that his readers need to

learn more about themselves and thus the proper way to God. "Why do we . . . grope in darkness for so clear a light? . . . clearest eye and perfect sight/ could every natures difference descrie . . ." In asking such a question Fletcher admits that the "overcast" eyes of man have imperfect vision (VI, 65).

The conflict which appears in man's heart between evil and good (any of the sins and virtues); the contrast in life between the forces of light and darkness are related to this problem of vision, too. Explaining the world as affecting man, Fletcher notes, "Earth seems a molting hell, men but ants to be/ Teaching proud men, that soar to high degree/ The farther up they climbe, the lesse they seem and see." (IX, 2). Moreover:

> All so who strives from grave of hellish night
> To bring his dead soul to the joyfull skie
> If when he comes in view of heav'nly light
> He turns again to hell his yeelding eye,
> And longs to see what he had left: his soul
> Grows desp'rate, deeper, dead lies than afore:
> His help his hopes much lesse, his crime and judgement more.
> (V, 68)

As viewed by Fletcher, man is tainted by sin, does not see everything rightly, cannot detect the best path to follow. "It is as though the wanton heart he vails with dewy eyes/ So oft the world, and oft himself deceives" (VII, 36). Fletcher's poem is intended to aid the reader in amending the defect.

In the allegorical battle for possession of man's soul, virtues and vices are both exposed by Fletcher's analysis of eyes. He uses his eye-imagery to identify characteristics of both good and evil. Evil exhibits a prevalence of deceit or signals of inner corruption. One

should note that in every description of allegorical evil figures, Fletcher is careful to point to the truth as revealed first in their eyes. They expose themselves to another because they cannot lie; continually perceptive eyes judge them well. Daedal, for instance, is crafty, has a cunning hand the perceptive person notes, yet Fletcher refers to his "eye-deceiving frame" (V,45). Hatred, too, is deceptive.

> Fair weather smil'd upon his painted face.
> And eyes spoke peace, till he set time and place:
> Then poures down showers of rage, and streams of rancour base.
> (VII, 46)[37]

There are many more passages identifying evil through the eye descriptions: Idolotatros has "flaming sight/ like Blazing Starres," and thus is noted as dangerous. Ignorance is "dull and beetle-eyed" whereas Superstition is "owl-eyed" (VII, 29, 41). Still other major sins have focus given to their revealing eyes: Envie has "squinted eyes . . . each eyes through divers opticks slily learn/ Which both the sight, and Object self belie," and those people in general with carnal ears also have squint eyes. Mammon has "dimme beetle eyes"; Cowardice has "doubtfull eyes" (VII, 66-67; VIII, 5, 10; IX, 28).[38] The purged eye of a beholder can see through any veil another would place over the object of sight; the true light within them exposes deception of error and sin. Fletcher employs his imagery well to further his theme. It is with help of the pure eyes (noblest sense) that the fallen man can learn to look for what is true and good, to discern the right. ". . . leave some touch-stone erring eyes to guide, And judge dissemblance; see by what devices/ Sunne with fair glasse our mole-ey'd sight entises,/ That vices vertues seem to most; vertues, vices" (VII, 8). The

saved or restored sight is indeed precious--and is to be sought after.

Thus eye images merge with other images. Fletcher uses his appeal to the muses for one prayerful request to have the "light" (X, 16). It is the light which can be shared that man should desire; it is the one which helps him to know others, to know himself and all of life. In fact, it is that which brings him to contentment--even in the midst of the struggles of the world. Because he understands what life is like, he can endure without the fret and instability of the sinner. To know himself is to know the path to God and that is Fletcher's message.

Fletcher gives all the personified virtues characteristic eyes--they reveal the happiness and quietness which comes from knowing the God of love and peace. Gentlenesse (or Courtesie) has "calm eyes"; Temperance's eyes reflect "watchful care" and Chastitie has a "thousand Graces" moving in her eyes (X, 16, 23, 25). Penitence's eyes give us a clue as to what man must do to have a Christian eye--his are turned from sin toward God. This allegorical figure has "cloudie dropping eyes," indicating his unhappiness with the sight of himself. He then looks outside himself for strength and help. This is the action suggested above as appropriately distinguishing the humble person.

Fletcher continues to interrelate his imagery:

> We beholding with immortall eye
> The glorious picture of thy heav'nly face,
> In his first beautie and true majestie,
> May shake from our dull souls these fetters base,
> And mounting up to that bright crystal sphere
> Whence thou strik'st all the world with shudd'ring fear,
> May not be held by earth, nor hold vile earth so deare. (VI, 75)

Fortitude has courage undaunted; he is described as having "furie eyes" of tempered rage (VI, 75; XI, 9). Although one might first regard such

description to indicate a character not completely virtuous, in the further disclosure, one learns that he has a unity of purpose and can direct all his efforts to his goal, which is always one consistent with his position as a warrior defending right. Conscience, the guide to others who have erring sight, is herself called "synthesis of nimble sight." Fletcher thus indicates that man may rely on those bodily and spiritual parts most affected by faith.

Other eye references are significant in pointing out that eyes function for the individual by helping him to see and react to his surroundings:

> Then when the eye through Visus jettie ports
> Lets in the wand'ring shapes, the crystall strange
> Quickly it self to every sort consorts
> So is what e're it sees by wondrous chang:
> Thrice happy; then, when on that mirrour bright
> He ever fastens his unmoved sight,
> So is what ever he views, divine, full, glorious light. (VI, 56)

One reaction is that the person can recognize his errors and thus is saddened by his knowledge. In XI, 31, a reference to the "cloudie eyes" which man has before death indicates such--he is sorrowful and tearful that he has not been perfect in life. The "sonnes of day" once claiming relationship to the light, flee from darkness and night, feel joy only in the light. "Knowledge soon began a way devise/ To bring again the day, and cleare their eye" (XII,23). Thus it is that vision is made accurate and consistent. The influences are narrowed to the beneficial only. The source of light is always the Light--God. He is available to the inhabitants of the island even though their world is overcast.

> Through those clouds would shine so glorious bright [the light]
> That every eye did homage to the sight,
> Yeelding their captive hearts to that commanding light. (XI, 6)

Fletcher adds a warning to this, "too glorious is the sight for our dimme mortall eyes." In their present state, man's eyes are weak. "For when his bright eye full our eye opposes,/ None gains the glorious sight, but his own sight he loses" (VI, 39-40).[40]

Fletcher leads his readers along the path they must go. He continues his explanation: the same Lord has a "sweet and gracious eye" and can cast his "gentle sight on our sad miserie." Fletcher describes man as responding penitently in tears when God's love is received.

> Life this watrie eye
> This eye which thou so oft in love has prais'd,
> This eye with which thou wounded oft didst die. (XII, 47)

The tears mark man's turning; they are the means of his clearing his sight and indicating what strength and quality he has in new vision. He continues to describe the cleansing characteristics of the tears:

> These cordiall drops, these spirit-healing balms
> Cure all sinfull bruises, cleare eyes
> . . . Whereby one sees, loathes, mends former waies,
> So when the light is repaired, restored, the life is changed.
> The tears are said to wash the guilt away. (IX, 48)[41]

Thus it appears that Fletcher's images are all interrelated, indeed culminated in the treatment he gives eye imagery. Humility, daylight--sight--Knowledge--all are symbolic of the working of God in man, allowing God to reign over the Island. The combination of images in the allegory leads the reader along the path Fletcher wanted the flock to know. The references to eyes is by far the most significant part of

the imagery Fletcher uses in his poetry. The sheer repetitiveness of the word "eyes" makes one note that some value must lie therein as a key to understanding the total meaning of his works. As the images fit in with themes concerning man's need to know himself and have faith, they become paramount. Through his passages relating the meaning and function of the eyes of an individual, Fletcher ties together his poetic thoughts.

It is, thus, a logical extension of Fletcher's didactic function as pastor that produced his complex allegory. Since on the level of nature he accepted the theologian's stand that God was to be approached only obliquely, through a reading of signs, as pastor-poet, he draws on available forms of allegorical interpretation to assist him in his task. He shifts from pagan to Biblical mythology, from medieval allegory to Renaissance prophecy, because he, like many of his contemporaries, pursues a truth that is not assigned compartments or categories. To seize upon it, he uses every avenue of approach available to him. Classical mythology, for example, is for Fletcher as much a part of that language through which God speaks to man as any of the other allegorical frameworks he uses, for he viewed it as a link between the revealed truths of scripture and the physical truths of nature (the works of God), of which the myths are in part allegories.

There are, indeed, portions of the poem which are not vital--which are, so to speak, excrementitious. The definition of allegory implies narrative, but the agents and the adjuncts will include images, personifications, types, symbols. By this means, the mind, which can seldom apprehend anything not first well presented to the sense, will grasp the writer's conception far more strongly than if it were stated

directly, but in abstract terms.

In an allegorical narrative every detail will not necessarily have itself an allegorical significance. This point should be remembered in judging the consistency of Fletcher's work. It should not be held against it that there are some unrelated sections or phrases (at first glance). In a short poem, the expression of a moment of lyrical excitement, a single line, a single word which is not vital, destroys the integrity of the piece. But a poem which has taken into itself a wide scope and many years of a writer's life cannot but be like a wide landscape that includes level with rise, and sandy patches with green tracts. It seems inevitable that in such comprehensive works as Spenser's Faerie Queene, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and Fletcher's The Purple Island the stream of pure imagination should sometimes well out of rocky masses of intellectual argument or didactic meditation. For Fletcher, the dullest portions of the poem are admittedly those in which he works with most self-consciousness, piecing together definite meanings to definite symbols; where his love of beauty slumbers and his spirit of ingenuity awakes; where his ideas do not gather themselves coherently together. The scientific knowledge is essential, however, to the framework of the allegory and the images ultimately bring the poem together for the total meaning.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Evans, p. 48.

[2]Consider Cantos VI and IX, e.g.

[3]Purney, p. 7, mentions that a true pastoral would be short—around 400 lines at longest.

[4]See E. K.'s commentary on the Shepherd's Calendar.

[5]Strathmann, pp. 469-470. Strathmann sees Spenser's narrative as set up in four major parts, as the Knight's action is reviewed:

1. The knight succeeds in several hard adventures.

2. He falls into difficulty from which Arthur rescues him.

3. He receives instruction by way of preparation for his final great adventure.

4. He goes forth to accomplish his mission.

[6]See Haller, "The Rhetoric of the Spirit," Chapter IV, particularly pp. 134 and 147-148.

[7]See Patrick Cullen, Spenser, Marvell and Renaissance Pastoral (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p. 20.

[8]See Greg, p. 21 for the variety within pastoral modes. George Puttenham, p. 117, notes the ambiguity of the mode, which enables the writer to utilize different images.

[9]On the circular structure for the works of Spenser, see Cullan, p. 121. Edwin Greenlaw, Appendix II, Variorum Spenser, discusses Spenser's structure as like that of the morality plays.

[10]The patterns for the images of the poem do not consistently follow those of a "typical" travel poem nor of a pastoral. To be sure, the initial patterns (Cantos II-V) escort the reader over the island, similar in ways to the tours through which writers such as Thomas More and Tommaso Campanella lead their readers. In both Utopia and The City of the Sun, as in The Purple Island, life is presented as highly ordered, contralized in its best state. Whereas Campanella has Hoh, Pon, Sin and Mor (Metaphysic, Power, Wisdom, Love) ruling his City-state, Fletcher has Intellect and Voletta (Will). The arrangement of

the Isle in low, middle, and high regions is another method of saying what More, Campanella or others of the age expressed--life is ranked. Campanella has seven rings; Fletcher has three levels with walls, rivers, guards, all along the way. Furthermore, Spenser's House of Alma is echoed in Fletcher's highest level; it is here that Fletcher theorizes on the function of the mind and senses which control the island. Even though it is true that Renaissance writers disagree regarding the classification and number of the internal processes of perception, all were concerned with the physiological and psychological constitution of man. Some conflict among the faculties of man was recognized and the superiority of one over another was often assumed to explain man's operations. Both Spenser and Fletcher ordered their commentary partially by the relationships they assigned to these faculties.

[11]See I, 57-58--although some notes do analyze the character of man. III, 15, for example, says this: "The first excrement drawn from the liver to the gall is choleric, bitter, like flame in colour; which were it not removed, and kept in due place, would fill all the body with bitterness and gnawing."

[12]Evans, p. 62.

[13]Fletcher gives guidance to his reader in several passages, admitting or denying similarity to ideas of other poets. In 57 and 58, e.g., where he introduces Voletta (the Will) he cautions the reader: she is "not that great Soveraigne of the Fayrie land/ Whom late our Colin hath eternized . . ."

[14]CF. Haller, p. 52.

[15]Fletcher distinguishes ranking among both the virtues and vices, as well as the parts of the body mentioned above. This emphasis on knowledge and use of the mind is conservative.

[16]Quintilian, VIII, vi, 4 ff.

[17]Desiderius Erasmus, The Colloquies of Erasmus, tr. by Craig R. Thompson (Chicago, 1965), pp. 11 ff.

[18]Purney, p. 54, 56.

[19]Labels are assigned in discussion by Henry W. Wells, Poetic Imagery (New York, 1961), pp. 29-34.

[20]Fletcher's images sythesize the focus of both Anglican and Puritan views by giving significance to both "heart" and "mind."

[21]See The Purple Island, I, 28-30. I, 55 presents an analogy between the skill of the fisher swains in catching unwary fish and effective Christian ministers. In the play Sicelides and in his piscatory eclogues, Fletcher varies his form more extensively. The humble life is one particularly urged by many Puritan lecturers and preachers of

seventeenth-century England.

[22]Grant, p. 117. When Fletcher moves his poem's sheep from sun to shade, he does so not just to continue his narrative, but in so doing, he duplicates the practice of shepherds and earlier pastoral poets:

> Upon this earthly heav'n the Shepherds play
> The time beguiling, & the parching light:
> Till the declining Sunne, and elder day
> Abate their flaming hat . . . .

In earlier pastorals, e.g., that of Titus Calpurnius Silcus (Eclogue 1), the shepherds Corydon and Ornytus took shelter under beech trees from the oppressive heat of the noon sun. Jacobus Suplerius also had his singer-shepherd pass the heat of noon in the shade, telling tales, in Eclogues I and V, e.g.

[23]Fletcher's handling of the imagery is here not consistently meaningful. In mixing his metaphors, he changes the pearls of teeth into a troop marching and then to mere bones.

[24]In passages like those quoted above, where Fletcher is apparently carried away with a description of virgin beauty, he seems to reflect here the general pastoral background influence, not the more restrictive manner of Mantuan. Mantuan, while not a misogynist, had a definite anti-feminist impulse throughout his poetry. In his Eclogue VII, e.g., the Virgin Mary reveals through a vision to Pollux the choice of paths he may take--that of pleasure, leading to Hell, or that of religion and virtue, leading to Heaven. Pollux rejects secular love (a part of the pleasurable life) as too dangerous in its relationship with women and dedicates himself to amor dei. He turns to the cloister. Fletcher appears to waver between the two extremes in attitude toward women--praise or glorification and condemnation. He pictures both virtuous and evil women as opposition during the battle.

Further, through personification of Chastity in Single and Married Life (Canto X), Fletcher presents ideal figures. In the earlier tour through the body, he also praises Thelu as fairer and better than Arren. Yet he also recognized the stigma attached to Woman-Eve, and accepts the status for woman as weak and tending toward evil, as in I, 55 and following stanzas.

[25]Because Langdale so strongly asserts that Fletcher was almost consumed with ambition to excel in poetry (p. 218) it seems difficult to picture Fletcher as less than a harried writer, grinding out his works, keeping one ear open to catch the praise coming his way. Yet so many images from both his early and late works indicate that Fletcher's voice is not ambition driven, one may conclude he was probably more in a state of indecision regarding his talent and his future than Langdale believes.

[26]Boas, II, 231. Fletcher includes Christian imagery of humility in other passages. Elisa I, 9, emphasizes the kneeling (humble) figure

in mourning who appeals to God for comfort, and receives ease because the trust in God as supreme is an honest one. Boas I, 262-63. Other aspects of the humble life which Fletcher exposes for the reader to learn are the shunning of honor and ambition: "As hell, he hates advancements woune with bribes;/ Him (as his Lord) contents a lowly room," IX, 15, explains. Indeed the emphasis Fletcher assigns to humility echoes throughout his poetry. In "Non Inviso" he petitions: "Let me alone enjoy my lone estate/ Safe in my humble cottage." (Stanza 6, Seaton, 31-32.) Prefaces of several of his major works offer additional examples of his concern that man learn humility, such as that for Joy in Tribulation: "It is good that man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord," he paraphrases Rev. 21:20, noting the virtues of patience and humility.

[27]In his preface to Way to Blessedness, Fletcher explains his personal feelings: "I have not fished for vain glory, or applause of men, nor used such trammels, as may enclose any such game." He declares that he is not ambitious for himself, only that Christ receive glory through his writings. Such is the character of the shepherd whose virtues parallel those of the Great Prince of Shepherds. Even though one must admit that traditionally an author's preface need not assert great things about a work, the humility of Fletcher consistently directs attention away from himself to God--away from his achievement to God's love and presence for all who will turn to him. The reflection upon humility within his works appears to be a dominant implication of Fletcher's own life.

[28]Fletcher condemns Pride differently than did the ancients. Both pagan and Christian views identify the danger inherent in pride, but for the Christian, pride does not stir jealousy within God, rather serves to keep man from faith in God for salvation. He rejects God's love by considering himself sufficient. Fletcher's emphasis on knowledge of man's weakness identifies the need to reject pride.

[29]"Know Thyself" as a Greek precept did not include a subjection of oneself to Divine Love as well as Supreme Justice. In the sense that Christ's act of salvation appears crucial to man's status, Fletcher's Christian work differs from earlier pagan epics.

[30]The idea that man fell through aspiring too high and that he can rise to that first state by falling low before God is also found in IX, 23 and in these other works: The Locusts, IV, 19 and V, 22; Eclogue III, 7.

[31]To protect the flock from the noon-day sun is as important as bringing them safely into the fold, avoiding the dangers of the night. The pastoral here adopts a literal action, not just an allegorical one. The lamb's coat prevents him from being able to withstand the heat of the full-shining sun.

[32]Fletcher, pp. 90-91.

[33]On monstrosity, too, Fletcher centers his condemnation.

Serpentine, misshapen, unpleasant personalities allegorize the Vices. Error and Sin are reminiscent of Spenser; both associate evil and distortion.

[34]Ethel Seaton, ed., Venus & Anchises (Brittain's Ida) (London, 1926), p. 4.

[35]As mentioned, sight is presented as a significant faculty of man. It may be that Fletcher was influenced here by a Pythagorian theory of sight by emission. In describing eyes of various figures, and particularly of the Isle which he is touring, Fletcher indistinctly describes the process involved. The eyes take part in both seeing and in determining what is seen behind them, as it were, or disclosing the person looking. The entire function of the eyes appears to have been obscurely understood by most readers as well. That there were many theories is of course as true of Fletcher's age as it was of earlier ones. John I. Beare in Greek Theories of Elementary Cognition from Alemaeon to Aristotle (Oxford, 1906, pp. 12, 44), identifies similarities between seventeenth-century ideas in psychology and biology, and those of the ancients.

[36]Fletcher's note reads: "Visus, or the sight, is the most noble above all the senses."

[37]Faces are in general considered as revelations of inner character, too. Fletcher most frequently just focuses on the eyes; yet in his description of Morositie, he makes the looser reference, "His face [is] a tell-tale to his foul intent" VIII, 51.

[38]Arrogance has eyes that are "too little or too much his own," Carro (the Flesh) is also very foul and deceptive as his eyes reveal him to be: "Yet seems (skin deep) most fair by witching gin/ To weaker sight, but to purged eyes/ Looks like(nay worse then) hells infernall hagges . . ." (VII, 14). Feritie is described as having "fixed eyes" working to effect a blinding, not a lighting of the eyes of the beholder (VIII, 56, 59).

[39]The Puritan emphasis on Conscience is reflected in Fletcher's appointing a superior position to it. However, his ideas are conservative insofar as the guide Conscience is of lesser power than Knowledge, for instance.

[40]Such is true regarding the literal world. One who looks upon the sun is blinded by the rays.

[41]XI, 32 also has the lifting up of eyes to heav'n for new comfort and strength: the eye there is described as "trimbling" in the humility felt.

CHAPTER IV

MOTIFS AND THEMES

The intensive and extensive images relay the thought of the poet to his readers, as responses within the readers involve first a feeling, then a reflection upon the experiences of the poem. From the patterns of Fletcher's images, his motifs, and his symbols, the major thoughts become obvious. This world's conflicts comprise his concern: man's self-knowledge involves awareness of his weaknesses as well as of his strengths. Fletcher identifies selfishness, pride, ignorance in opposition to love, humility, knowledge.

In picturing man as fallen, Fletcher's allegory makes use of traditional attitudes and descriptions, yet his focus and development of these ideas are contemporary. Fletcher sees man tending toward irrationality in selfishness, arrogance and anger--as described by Spenser and DuBartas, for instance. In extending this thought to his concluding purpose of leading man to God, Fletcher suggests that man must strive for charity and humility, relying in all things on a perfected understanding or reason. A Puritan emphasis on salvation thus makes the expression. The rise and fall of man, continuing throughout the poem as a reminder to the readers that they must know themselves--their true nature and limited capabilities--is not a new concern, yet it is freshly presented with Fletcher's combination of images and his variations on the theme. Unity of theme carries the poem effectively to its

conclusion.

One of the motifs through which Fletcher interrelates thought and image and thus unifies his poem involves identifying pride and humility in opposition within man. The true conflict between pride and humility is pictured most obviously in Fletcher's Tower of Babel imagery. He follows Judaeo-Christian writers in employing this allusion. The depth of faith is verified by the support of God upholding one group or set of points in contrast to the fall and crumbling of the high "proud" Tower.[1] It is significant, then, that Fletcher returns to the allusion of the destruction of the Tower of Babel in describing the battle's conclusion within his final cantos. Its being "laid low" and "crumbling" is a necessary part of the preparation within the person allegorically presented for salvation.

In choosing the theme of conflict between pride and humility, Fletcher relates one of the more familiar morality play themes. The constant battle between the vices and virtues of everyday life is no unique topic. Fletcher's combining his tour of the body, as a full investigation of motivations and capabilities, with the allegorical battle creates a different emphasis on the presentation of the theme than was developed by the dramatic performances. Drawing of characters and action for Cantos VI through XII has obvious parallels in the morality play tradition, however.[2] Lewis Ball does not extend his discussion to Fletcher's poem, but the observation appears to be relevant in this manner. The struggle for control of man's body is, for Christian theologians (including Fletcher), essentially a battle between the major tempations of the Devil, the World and the Flesh and the commandments of God advocating humility and charity on the part of the Christian.

Humility as one of the virtues fitting into the scheme of ideal life concerned many poets and philosophers before the Puritan Revolution. Even though Fletcher's contemporaries gave humility added emphasis, its value has not been disputed by earlier writers. Such a familiar topic given a fresh presentation enables a poet to give new insight to his readers, however. This is what Fletcher attempted to achieve in his approach.

One might note that Fletcher's idea of humility is similar to that which appears in The Faerie Queene, insofar as they both connote ideal qualities. Descriptions of outward appearance also seem similar, although the poets generally signify virtues through figures different in function (knights, dwarfs, maidens, etc. are not parallel). Spenser's major knights do suggest an idea which is Fletcher's concern as well, however. Both Sir Guyon and Britomart, and Fletcher's Island Prince, must learn temperance. Through exercise (trial or test and success) the self-mastered calm comes to the warrior even while he is encircled by many temptations and forces which would divert his efforts from the more prudent course. In Both Spenser and Fletcher the virtuous warrior must become humble and gain his strength (and thus his temperance and calmness) from God. It is after petitions for Divine aid are raised that the battle for possession of the Island goes to the Prince; it comes then because his humble prayers bring Divine strength and virtue.

Humility is thus paradoxically a source of strength and ultimate victory. The Prince, once aware of his own weaknesses, can accept the aid of Divine Power. In discussing Spenser's poem, Merritt Hughes asserts that Spenser's psychological theories focus upon a balance within

the person.[3] So it is with Fletcher, even more obviously a directive that the inner man must be known and controlled through that knowledge which can be gained. He must know he is weak, yet not despair. It is important that man not yield to emotional overrule; the knights of Spenser and Fletcher alike must gain their successes by operating rationally and faithfully.[4] Fletcher's poem deals less with a particular opposition of these abstractions than does Spenser's poem; however, the general division of forces delineates this opposition. It is the Island's Prince, aided by Spirit and Intellect and Knowledge and Love, that becomes victorious over Doubt, Ignorance, Jealousy, Anger and Hatred. Victory comes because the forces of Virtue were able to remain balanced and humble in their defense of the Island.

Another of Fletcher's motifs centers on the virtue of love, a common theme of pastoral. Fletcher appears to follow Mantuan in his attitude that love, since it involves a loss of reason to the supremacy of emotion, may be regarded as an instrument of the devil, seducing man through woman-Eve and leading him into error and sin. Love, as a threat to the stability of man, allows sensus to overrule mens, and consequently man is led into sin, becoming a bad shepherd or a bad warrior. In the final action of The Purple Island, the Prince and his warriors ward off attacks which would destroy their rational judgment and good senses. They defeat the various dangers of love, such as perverted or excessive love, along with the other vices.

For Fletcher, a distinction exists between kinds of love and the effects they can have on an individual. Although Langdale asserts that Fletcher "made no attempt to describe the higher love," ideal beauty and ideal love are described in the early cantos where the reader

is given information concerning the "seat of true loving" and "tender loving." Importantly, Fletcher does not employ the term "idea" as do other Platonists: he does rather, as Harrison notes, "have the habit of thought identical with that of Spenser," in employing the style and thought of the ancients as a general intellectual framework for the poem.[6]

Since The Purple Island ends in marriage, love appears to be a major theme. This love is not that typically erotic nor is it a love which gives possession or dominance to one of the lovers. The definition which Fletcher gives in "To E.C." might be considered appropriate also to the love exhibited in The Purple Island.

> Love is not produced or penn'd in space,
> Having i' the soul his onely residence
> Love's fire is thought . . . (and thought is always gone)
> [Thus] where a love is deare,
> The mind in farthest distance is most neare.[7]

Love so expressed by the one in love is thus not destructive of either the lover or the beloved. It is not an overriding passion, but an extension of the rational nature, a balancing of soul and body. For Fletcher, love seems to focus on the religious love suggested in Christ's redemption, but the marriage of the Prince at the end of the battle brings in connotations of love within the physical world as well as those of Christ's love for the church.

In all, Fletcher's views are thus complex, a product of the many influences and styles of the times. In reviewing the total character of man for his readers, it is certain that he must define the important passions with which man must deal. Thus it is that he describes love in all of its complexity. By identifying the seat of "sure and active

loving" as Hepar--the liver, his note informs the readers of Plato's philosophy and of his own regarding the nature of love and implies its importance in self-knowledge:

> That affection whereby we do wish and do well to others, may seem to be better setted in the liver, then in the heart, (where most do place it) because this moderate heat appeares more apt for this affection; and fires of the heart are (as a Salamander) where anger lives, and seem not so fit to entertain it (Note to Canto III, 10).

The heart, as a seat of passions, houses lust and anger--but not the love of truth and stability. Fletcher's suggestion that the passions' rule is destructive to man is clarified by this passage.[8]

Ultimately it is this "higher" love which is advocated by Fletcher. Among the warriors aiding the Prince Intellect is Love, a virtue that Fletcher takes time to define correctly:

> Not that great Love which cloth'd his Godhead bright with rags of flesh, and now again above hath dressed his flesh in heav'ns eternall light; much less the brat of that false Cyprian dame Begot by froth, and fire in bed of shame, and now that burns idle hearts swelt'ring in lustful flame. . . . But this from heav'n brings his immortall race . . . (Notes to Canto IX, 32-33).

Fletcher illustrates the effects of love in the union of Electra and his Christ-figure. Literally, the marriage is possible because peace and harmony have come to the island. The allegorical meaning is based on the presence of this peace and unity. For such an allegory the poet found no authority in Spenser or any other specific model. His curious fusing of contemporary views of romance with ideal love appears to be an original contribution to the philosophy of love and beauty, for it also blends the Scriptural basis of the allegory with the classical one.

In giving the island's rule to Intellect and Heaven (Spirit) through the union allegorically alluding to the marriage of Christ and the Church, Fletcher suggests thoughts his readers must realize from their reading of Canticles, the Gospels, and Revelation. The Island being man, it is best controlled by an Intellect guided and sustained by Spirit and Truth. Yet these are in turn made strong only insofar as they emanate from God. The basis must be sure; then the features, qualities, and capabilities of man may be employed to rule effectively.

A third motif echoes this concern. Fletcher urges a self-knowledge which includes understanding the psychology of man. The "rooms" in the head of man, where all his faculties lie, are seen as interrelated in supporting the total balance of man's constitution. The understanding, the reason (logic), and memory are the major components to be described.[9] How these interrelate determines one's course of action. The mental attitude and aptitude of man become Fletcher's subject.

Fletcher is conservative in his statements. His audience could follow his allegory and the statements identifying the psychomachia of man whereas one may have some difficulty doing so now unless he is familiar with faculty psychology. Fletcher's allegory is a blending of early seventeenth-century knowledge of the physical and emotional and spiritual character of man.

Through the view of the body as a type of Island-state, Fletcher attempts to identify rather simply an interrelationship among the faculties and abilities of man. Man must understand his functions and "levels" to perceive Nature's purpose in him and God's plan for him. The study includes learning about man's psychological and physiological character. Senses are to keep watch defending the body from external

assault—and this point Fletcher makes in both parts of the poem. In the first, where his notes explain the allegory so tediously, the senses are called guardians with various functions and names, according to their position in the body-island. The eyes are "watching towers," and the nose a Tower among the suburbs. The ears are called a double cave "both which a goodly Portall doth embrace." The mouth is called a "cave" also. The senses are then noted as brothers who dwell within the confines of the towers, bowers or caves which Fletcher describes. It is the task of these senses to effectively ward off the attack that might be levied against the body. Only in victory or continual protective alertness might the body Intellect wed its intended spouse, the Spirit.

In these first cantos, the references to guards, walls, and protection against attack is a technical and specific concern of Fletcher. The position of the guards, the walls, etc. is denoted in his description of the island. In the second part of the poem, however, the abstractions of the functions are presented as part of the allegorical battle. Whereas in the first part Fletcher notes that the function of the epiglottis is to keep particles out of the lungs, he is referring to a literal and physiological function, truly important to life.[10] The allegorical indication that the "doors" protect or guard an important part of the island is based on the literal meaning directly mentioned by Fletcher. The second part of the poem does note some relationship between the body and its natural functions, yet these are vaguely projected and covered with the veil of general allegory and moral abstractions. The warriors are indeed fighting other figures, yet they too collectively represent the whole of the passions and vices

and waywardness of man. The shift in allegorical technique seems to leave some confusion in the minds of the readers regarding the ideas which Fletcher wants them to retain relevant to man's condition.

To understand Fletcher's connection of body and spirit, one can turn to his employment of certain common theories. The importance of faculty psychology--animal and vegetative souls controlled by rational soul--in the moral allegory of Book II of The Faerie Queene is commonly known. Fletcher's blending of Spenser's descriptions with his own may at first seem curious, but closer reading indicates that he extends Spenser's thoughts and actually clarifies some of the relationships through his personification of the conflicting passions. The inner senses of the sensible soul are three: 1. reason, 2. imagination or phantasy, 3. memory, as mentioned above. The brain was also conceived to be divided into three cells (also commonly called ventricles or wombs).[11] According to general belief, the cells each contained one of the human faculties. The structure and function of the brain were not, of course, well understood by Fletcher or even the scientists or medical students of the times. It was generally held that each faculty could pass ideas on to the neighboring faculty, and this is the idea which Fletcher makes use of in interrelating his faculty/warriors.

For Fletcher, his master Spenser, and Bartholomew some similarity in arrangements of the faculties may be found. Phantastes is in the physically foremost cell, differing in this placement by the three poets mentioned above from Burton, who assigns this faculty a middle location within the brain. The power or position given the divisions of the brain is significant to the whole interpretation of man's nature: it is important to note Fletcher's arrangement of faculties so

that the proper state may be imitated.

In Fletcher's analysis of the "chiefest and Best" region, he gives synthesis of so many contemporary psychological and physiological theories that his readers could hardly help learning about their world. Not only does he establish some organized review of the anatomy of man, he also analyzes man's emotional constitution.

As an immediate source for Fletcher's poem, Spenser's Castle of Alma then provides some key to understanding Fletcher's ideas. The body of temperate man with all three souls in appropriate positions and all under control of Alma (rational soul) depicts an ideal state to be attained. Spenser employs his comparison of body individualistic and body politic effectively. Fletcher extends the presentation further and achieves his success by clarifying through repetition and variation of his major theme. Krasis--the conditions of human existence on earth, a mixing, blending of elements--aptly describes the complex figure man was understood to be by both Spenser and Fletcher. In order for man to know himself rightly and thus to be able to follow the path to God, he must be introduced to this complexity in such a way he can sort through the difficulties.

Another of the motifs is related specifically to perception--development of knowledge. Fletcher's purpose to lead the reader through self-knowledge to knowledge of God cannot be accomplished without the reader's grasping his need to know and then his acquiring the acute sense of perception required. Ruth Anderson well notes the diversity in opinions classifying the number of external processes of perception.[12] Well-developed sense of sight, the reliability and accuracy of the faculty of perception were regarded as key functions for any

individual, but essential to the reader developing toward ethical maturity. One must realize this importance as Fletcher spends his time through the poem in referring to eyes and the sense of sight as the chief and best of the senses and watch towers for the whole body. One must "see" to know.

Memory is another factor of the learning process. Although Spenser gives memory steadfastness in retention, John Davies of Hereford says it "doth remember much, and much forget."[13] Fletcher seems to accept it as a positive quality as it is personified among the warriors who aid the Prince. In setting up his faculties, Spenser made reason the immediate member of memory. His ideas are here part unique and part traditional; and Fletcher's thoughts follow in complexity and peculiarity.[14] Spenser's memory grows better with the "aging" of the thought. Such an attitude directly opposed the concept generally held during the century that the older the point within the memory, the more faded it was. For this reason, most Elizabethans placed memory next to the Imagination, which becomes its custodian. Fletcher makes use of this relationship between Imagination and Memory because he establishes an alliance between Fancie and Eumenestes, for instance. For Spenser, however, there is no such thing as an interconnection between the master faculties, so Fletcher appears to be relying in his poem on both Spenser and the world around him.

Some of Fletcher's faculties thus depart from Spenser's. The true qualities of his style and the extent of his individuality can be best realized through one's awareness that Fletcher did not simply copy what his master had done. The Purple Island expresses throughout the ideas and attitudes of its author with the complexity of sources and influences

interacting upon him. Much of Fletcher's work, and this poem particularly, can be considered a synthesis and reflection of common thought, not the repetition of a single writer. The greatness of his ideas is thus not something for which he can claim credit or receive notice all his own; however, his collection of these ideas from his world and his synthesis of them into poetic statements are noteworthy.

What this means is that for modern readers, to comprehend fully Fletcher's man, is to have the keys to the whole poem and to realize its complexity. Such a task leads the readers again to the descriptions of the mind as Fletcher's poem structures it. "Common sense," which has a great amount of space devoted to its description, is similar to that which Burton identifies in his works. It is a kind of reason or judgment which is concerned only with things sensible as distinguished from the higher faculties of understanding. Fletcher notes for his readers the line which separates the lower and higher faculties of the reason, clearly emphasizing the importance of such lower faculties as this Common Sense because they are practical. In so doing, however, he does indicate that the wider ranging faculties and thus more powerful (or higher) are those which mark man's supreme efforts to attain control as a rational being.

Related to the body's ability to defeat agents which attack it is another thought Fletcher selects from tradition. Images of evil and weakness are depicted through references to sickness and disease or imbalance of humors within the body.[15] The idea that moral weakness is reflected in physical weakness was not new to Fletcher's audience; the idea that man must attain health in body and spirit jointly fits in with his overall theme of knowing one's self and being able to follow

the path to God. The notes which Fletcher inserts to explain his description of the island in the first cantos of his poem are particularly helpful in denoting for the reader the most susceptible parts of his physiology. Fletcher's analysis reveals that the spleen, the liver, and the heart all need to be guarded against attack, to be protected against a backflow of certain potentially dangerous excretions of fluids produced in the body, to be cleansed properly for best function--all these must be in harmonious operation for man to be healthy. Other body parts are described similarly and in their identification, Fletcher instructs his readers to keep them free of disease (and sin).

This detailed analytical tour of the body is thus an important step on the path to God, as Fletcher is directing his readers. He has chosen the body of man, a common topic of argument among early seventeenth-century doctors, because it is ultimately that which is the most common frame of reference he and his readers share. Curiosity regarding man's anatomical structure being raised, Fletcher did well to choose his tour to be written as it is. Anatomists dissected and demonstrated on corpses that had been executed.[16] With more studies of the body being made to complete a scientific search for knowledge, Fletcher turns his search to one for Truth which will enable man to go beyond his material and physical world to God. Fletcher has captured some of his contemporaries' interests and expounds them in utilizing form and technique from previous ages.

From his perspective as a clergyman, Fletcher accepted seriously the didactic function of poetry to mean religious instruction. Since on the levels of nature, God was to be approached obliquely through a reading of signs, Fletcher, as pastor, draws on every conceivable form

of allegorical interpretation to assist him in his tasks of leading his readers (Christians) along the paths that God wants them to follow.

Realizing that man is fallen, Fletcher necessarily begins his task to deal with man where he is--apart from the Truth. Fallen man is described as a paradox of feelings and actions, fitting into a world of antithesis which together give an accurate picture of the tainted life after the fall. For Fletcher, an existence of peace and happiness in this world no longer occurs spontaneously. It must be attained through changes. Thus he writes in such a way to give man a guide to life, encouragement to take comfort in his existence as it could be for him, not as it is in error and sin. In unifying his various motifs, he achieves some measure of success in communication with his readers.

First Fletcher acknowledges that he accepts the truth of life's hierarchical arrangement, and that man is a special unit within the whole. Although Langdale denies that Fletcher expresses a microcosmic view of man, Baldwin and others have appropriately noted the necessity and actuality of it in the poem.[17] Indeed the concept of man as microcosmic is the very essence of the poem and a point which Fletcher clearly has stated many times: "Thou . . . mad'st man a brief of all . . . A little living world," he writes in "An Hymen." The point is repeated and enlarged upon in other statements. He continues by identifying the parallels between the larger world and the world of man. They are constructed in such a way as to correspond in features and characteristics, he writes.

In more expanded passages, Fletcher asserts his belief in the relationship of all life.

> For as this Isle is a short Summarie
> Of all that in this all is wide despread
> So th' Islands face is th' Isles Epitome. (V, 8)

Not only is there analogy between the total picture of man and the universe, but there is also a corresponding analogy between body parts; the order is one which is retained in everything. Fletcher notes in this passage that it is important to read the face of man to understand his "true" nature. Particularly the eyes are regarded as the facial feature which discloses man's inner character. The same is true for the universe as Fletcher describes it; there is a key which must be found to unlock the truth and mystery of the whole.

These concepts were not Fletcher's alone; they merely help classify him as definitely of his age. The allegory of mind and body as paralleling the larger world and reflective of it in nature and structure was commonplace. There were, it might be noted here, over fifty-five prose writers of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods who employed the imagery of the microcosm.[18]

In the universe at large were certain laws which were to apply to all life. An orderly existence was demanded and followed because that was the way the universe needed to be to function according to God's plan (harmoniously working)--and people were to accept this working order and imitate it in their own personal actions.[19] Things in their proper places made for happiness and peace, or "natural" existence untainted by the effects of the fall (man's influences uncontrolled). Any unusual combination of elements meant disruption of order, chaos, or unpleasantness. More clearly phrased, Fletcher, as others who shared the belief, regarded cosmic order, everything in place, as God's

rule for the world. Following it is a man's aim and duty in life. The consequence may be disastrous if he does not divert himself from the way he is now inclined to go (as fallen he has not the "natural" inclinations to truth and righteousness). The parallels between man and the world are clear: when earth aspires too high, heaven is heard to thunder; when the moon strays among "lesser stares" it is out of place.[20] Likewise it is with man; he is advised well to shun ambition, jealousy, and such qualities which would upset the fixity of life as it should be.

In A Father's Testament, Fletcher questions rhetorically "Can slaves advance?"[21] He provides an answer in The Purple Island: "Base Slave! how crawl'st thou from thy dunghill?" (VIII, 49) The ordering of life restricts even the animals, and Fletcher's analogy is clear in showing man he cannot improve his status by his own efforts:

> How shall a worm, on dust that crawls and feeds,
> Climbe to th'impyreall court, where these states reign . . .
> (VI, 9)

To find a fit place for himself, man, according to Fletcher, must then realize his position in a double vision of world order. The background for thought concerning existence was both classical and Judaeo-Christian. The medieval synthesis of Genesis and Plato handed down to the seventeenth century a vision of universe and man corrupted by the Fall, both winding toward an inevitable destruction, but with an order of the creation still held as an ideal. This is a heritage from such allegorists as Dante.

Yet the corruption in the world had an avenue for correction. Man simply had to find it and follow it, that is, to accept the pattern of life which is offered to him through Christianity. The religious

poetry of the age often chose to alert the Christian readers through a blending of the images from both views. Earth imagery, commonplace for the period, and expressed by poets such as Donne and Fletcher, still indicates the guide for man to be the operation of the universe--life in all forms.[22]

Fletcher apparently had few doubts that man was a complex through fallen creature. He believed that some change could result; that man does not have to remain fallen, for the task of a pastor and poet lies in his optimistic faith in the power of salvation. Certain alternatives lie open before man: as a rational soul, he can learn the importance of reasonable conduct even though his whole being was impaired in the fall and his native reasoning powers may be faulty. Through his acceptance of the direction of God in his life, through his humility in accepting the ordering of himself within the plan God has provided, man can ultimately become effective in ruling his life. He has options before him, and those are Fletcher's concern--he proposes to alert man to the dangers of electing the wrong course of action. Man can learn that nature's rules or laws for the universe and society are to hold for him, or he can ignore them and operate selfishly or ambitiously. He can be high or low in the chain of being, as he chooses to follow the life around him, or to follow God's will for him. Fletcher's conclusion is a warning to his readers: man who aspires selfishly is laid low by the outcome of the struggle in the world; however, the man who in all humility and sincerity accepts God's rules for his life will find the successes accruing to him well beyond his expectations and enduring beyond this world's time.

In realizing the complexity of man's nature and knowing that his

conduct and inclinations are paradoxical in their influence upon him, Fletcher cautions his readers to heed his advice. He alerts them to the fact that they must be prepared for the ever-present conflict within and without. This paradox of life is not a passing thing, for the conflict and antithesis of the world is something that continues from day to day, forever. Fletcher's tour of the body identifies the weaknesses and the strengths of the physiological man, at the same time also acknowledging the weaknesses and strengths of the moral figure. The uncertainty of the battle also notes for his readers the dangers inherent in the struggle; to resist is not to ensure victory. To rely on Divine assistance is the only way to attain it. Man's guide is thus important to him, for it keeps him directed rightly. He is never above and beyond the battle until he dies. He must be in the world and is a part of it as long as he is alive. The war for his soul goes on even when he seems most assured that he is saved. This subject made up the whole of Fletcher's Joy in Tribulation, and man's battle is the focus Fletcher draws his reader's attention to in the poetry of The Purple Island as well. That the outcome is dependent upon the Lord is a major point he makes.

Thus Fletcher draws together his various thoughts and themes in the major statement of the power of salvation in defeating all the attacks of the world, the devil, and the flesh which would divert man from the path to righteousness. In X, 14 he presents a clear picture of the redeemed Christian:

> His naturall force beyond all nature stretched;
> Most strong he is, because he will be weak:
> And happie most, because he can be wretched.
> Then, whole and sound, when he himself doth break,

> Rejoycing most when most he is tormented;
> In greatest discontent he rests contented.
> By conquering himself all conquests he prevented.

The ideas are not unique; they are throughout the poem quite traditionally presented. To trace them is not necessary; they are pervasively used by Fletcher as they were by his contemporaries and predecessors in the church. They belong to the Christian tradition and are tempered here only by Fletcher's preference for certain line beats and rhymes, perhaps. Within the Fletcher family itself are other expressions similar to these, but it is not to be asserted that these are Phineas' sources any more than the whole of his theological study and own perceptions were. An engraving for Joseph Fletcher's "The History of the Perfect-Cursed-Blessed Man" summarizes the point well:

> All spotless fair I formed was, but am by sin deform'd,
> yet trust ere long by death to pass, to Glorious life
> Conformed.

Fletcher and his contemporaries were all strongly affected by the ancient church father's interpretations of Scripture and man's relationship to God, it must be noted. Statements which Fletcher includes in his stanzas echo those which he read in his studies to become a clergyman; he passes along to his readers the knowledge which he synthesized for himself, as others had done before, too.

All the motifs culminate in Fletcher's projection of the major Christian theme: God is the power of salvation for all of mankind. A theme recurrent in all church literature, Fletcher's theme is familiar to his readers no matter what age they live in. Picking also well-known characters such as Ignorance and Knowledge from the morality play

tradition, the poet provides his readers with abundant keys to his message. Although he differs only slightly from his models Fletcher projects his thoughts in a new perspective and thus effectively.

To be sure, there are parallels between works which precede Fletcher and his own; and in some respects, his works suffer by comparison. Nonetheless, what he achieves is clear; his theme is one worthy of repetition and restatement. He believes that the daily struggle and the far-reaching implications of its success or failure constitute sufficient reasons for the poem. Echoing the morality plays and foreshadowing later Puritan epics, Fletcher set up the conflict within the soul as a battle between opposing powers. His handling of the allegory is often-times as shallow as that of the morality plays, and indeed not so well done as that of Spenser or Bunyan, for instance. Spenser, in allowing his hero to overcome the temptations of the world in Mammon's Cave, in drawing Arthur as victorious over the devil, in leading Guyon to contend with the sins of the flesh in Acrasia's Bower, spends time in creating characters with personality and being. Bunyan's Christian is also fully drawn; but Fletcher's figures are less embodied. True, it is the nature of Renaissance allegory to keep meanings from being too suppressed,[23] yet many of Fletcher's characters can hardly be regarded as complex at all, so directly indicative of their essence as they are. "One-for-one" allegory like this utilizes symbolic descriptions which are not difficult to perceive rightly. The difference between complex and simple allegorical techniques is summed up well in the words of Douglas Bush: The "catalogue and a battle of the vices and virtues . . . [are] a static mixture of decorative abstraction and satirical realism. While Spenser at his best can vitalize ethical and

religious ideas in his characters and action, Fletcher can only describe emblematic figures."[24]

The particular lesson that Fletcher chooses to teach is determined by a set of convictions and ideas that belong to his own commitment. His concept of the role proper to a Christian minister fosters his concern for the salvation of his fellow humans. Two things were necessary to one intent upon salvation: knowledge of God and self-knowledge (without which man cannot know what is expected of him or what the equipment is with which he has to proceed on his path to God.) Fletcher then chooses the poetic technique he regards as best suited to his task of acquainting his readers with the necessary facts. He wants a reader's moral and spiritual growth to be enhanced with the association of classical and Biblical myths by encouraging the judgment of oneself and determining the value of the lessons to be gained therein.

The areas of knowledge Fletcher emphasizes in his exploration of "the understood language of the Almighty" (or God-evidences in the world) bring the information and the reader into a realm whereby the Spirit of salvation may operate freely. Fletcher thus takes his duty seriously, and in directing his poetry to interpretation and explanation of God's language, is also working out his own calling to the ministry of God's people. In identifying man as a microcosm and even a microchristus Fletcher directs his audience's attention toward two planes of reality. His Island, once toured and reviewed, yields keys to unlock the universe and leads to the Godhead. The poem's ending, by unifying the Island's Prince and Voletta in marriage and by granting full possession of the Island to the victorious Prince, signifies the interrelation of the total body.

Significantly, Fletcher combines the roles of pastor and poet without violating the conventions of either role. Rather he achieves the highest aspirations of both. Given the didactic function of poetry and the contemporary views of the poet as prophet and of poetry, second only to Scripture itself, as a supreme source of information concerning divine mysteries and the virtuous life, the office of the one is often very nearly identical with the other. The main concerns of Fletcher's thought are obviously reinforced through his repetition, thus enriching his readers' knowledge accordingly. When Fletcher describes his inspiration from "heav'ns Dove, when high'st he flies . . . [flies with] heav'nly wings" of poesy, he guides his audience along the way, hoping to help him synthesize thoughts and attitudes necessary for a Christian to develop.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Evans, pp. 133-34, lists certain features of the particular imagery Spenser employed for The Faerie Queene, some of which are closely related to Fletcher's, e.g., the references to the height of the tower and the uncertainty of its position in aspiration. Other features of description are more specific in Spenser than in Fletcher, who is primarily directed toward generalities.

[2]Ball, p. 432.

[3]Merritt Y. Hughes, "Burton on Spenser," Appendix IX, Variorum Spenser, p. 459.

[4]The idea that man is staunchest in his defense when calm seems related to Burton's "Perturbations" in the passions, a warring against reason. It is characterized in descriptions which personify abstractions such as Jealousy and Love (antagonists) or of human vs. nonhuman parts of man.

[5]Langdale, pp. 83-84.

[6]John Smith Harrison, Platonism in English Poetry of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (New York, 1965), p. 97.

[7]In X, 35 he presents a sensuous picture of love-making (with the husband discovering the body of the wife as one does the particular beauties of nature--roses, pearls, heavens, etc.). He follows secular pastorals in such descriptions, with the ideas connected to beauty of body as identifying also a beautiful soul, an idea that pervades Western literature. The general love theme is not extended to great emphasis in this particular poem of Fletcher's; however, in other works, the focus is clearly and consistently more secular than religious. Venus and Anchises extends the description of love-making to a major theme; "An Hymen" declares that the life of man can be made joyful and meaningful only through love. In this poem, as in The Purple Island, Fletcher notes for his readers that love that is heavenly is indeed ideal. Lovers who "live in each other firmly loved . . . Moving like heav'n still in the self-same moving/ In motion ne're forgetting constancy" parallel that which is good. This love takes its form from the proper sphere of action or conduct, heaven.

[8]Passions are classified into two major groups the irascible and the concupiscible. Edward Dowden notes this division to be determined so as to suggest a theme on discipline and self-control. Thus the reader will find that Fletcher reinforces and repeats his ideas through

various parts and figures in his poem. The passions which must be mastered and controlled are presented throughout the second part of the poem in opposition to the forces of the Prince. It is in the defeat of the passions that self-control may be attained, again fitting together the battle for possession of the island the motifs which Fletcher employed from various influences and background around him.

[9]Fletcher's thoughts are presented in manner quite similar yet also dissimilar to Spenser's. Spenser's House of Alma arranges the human mind with ranked personification: Alma as queen; Imagination, Reason, Memory, e.g., as learned men, paramours, etc.; and Decoration, Digestion (body functions) as merchants and laborers. Fletcher's personifications do have some arrangements for denoting relationships, but overall they are not so clearly ordered as are Spenser's. Fletcher describes his Prince as the chief figure; he has a spouse, brothers, warriors, and families recognized among the relationships described, yet he has none of the allegorical figures represent low classes.

[10]His note in IV, 32 indicates to his readers how the epiglottis works.

[11]See Edward Dowden, "Elizabethan Psychology," Essays Modern and Elizabethan (London, 1910), pp. 394-96.

[12]Anderson, pp. 14-17.

[13]John Davies, The Complete Poem, I, ed. A. B. Grosart (London, 1876).

[14]Consider, for instance, one addition by Fletcher: Eumnestes' aide--Anamnestes (The reminder) is a new personification.

[15]References to sickness as related to sin are found also in Spenser, but Fletcher probably did not restrict his employment of the metaphor to his master as source, since the imagery is Biblical and thus pervasively used by poets of the times. See C. G. Osgood, A Concordance to the Poems of Edmund Spenser (Gloucester, Mass., 1963), p. 343.

[16]Wedgwood, Seventeenth Century English Literature, p. 12.

[17]Langdale, pp. 168, 170-71; R. G. Baldwin, "Phineas Fletcher: His Modern Readers and His Renaissance," PQ, XL, iv (October, 1961), 478.

[18]N & Q (February, 1960), p. 17.

[19]E. M. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1944), pp. 91 ff. discusses this plan for order and its effect upon the lives of the inhabitants of Renaissance England.

[20]Eclogue III, Boas, II, 190.

[21]"The Vanity of Possessions," II, Boas, I, 320.

[22]See Jonathan Goldberg, "The Understanding of Sickness in Donne's Devotions," Renaissance Quarterly, XXIV, iv (Winter, 1971), 507 for discussion of Donne's imagery.

[23]Herbert E. Greene, "The Allegory as Employed by Spenser, Bunyan, and Swift," PMLA, IV (1889), 149.

[24]Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660, 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 88-89. The label of emblematic poet is not one officially given Fletcher, yet is perhaps not unexpectedly affixed to a description of his style in handling the warriors. The effect of such descriptions might be anticipated to develop from his comraderie with Francis Quarles, even if it appears as a minor aspect of the overall style of the poem. The emblem, as generally published in the earlier seventeenth century and as made popular among the society of poets to which Fletcher and Quarles belonged, involved a symbolic picture with a motto and an exposition. Being one of the last European manifestations of a medieval habit of mind, it was altered to suit the intellectual framework of the Renaissance and handled somewhat differently with each poet's style. Relevant to Fletcher, the technique is one he found to be appropriate to his medieval theme of the "castle of the body." (See Powell, pp. 197-205)

CHAPTER V

EVALUATION

Phineas Fletcher delights few readers today. Modern critics often reiterate eighteenth-century reactions against seventeenth-century poets, attributing Fletcher's fame and position among his contemporaries to the fashionable taste for cold, clever, shallow verse during the early seventeenth century. Every student of seventeenth-century literature encounters Fletcher, yet few meeting him for the first time seek to improve their acquaintance because standard introductions seldom promise a rewarding friendship. Most commentators present him as an historical curiosity or a feeble transitional figure. They call him a "studied" man of letters (his model used was Spenser), exaggeratedly popular in his own day, whose reputation did not endure upon his death. Opinions also suggest that he was only a would-be imaginative writer, who surrendered his poetic spirit to the effort to be like his master, to the demon of science (whose imagination corroded and shrank in the prosaic atmosphere of mid-seventeenth-century rationalism and materialism) and to the didacticism of religion (encouraged by the rising Puritan influences on writing). The man and this allegory have through the ages both met with criticism as inconsistent as are the technique or style of the poem.

But those who thus reject Fletcher shut the door on a poet fascinating in his own right and nearly indispensable as guide and companion

into the new worlds of thought and art that he and his contemporaries explored. One who considers him utterly uninteresting will not fully understand the seventeenth century or derive the fullest possible pleasure from such writers as Spenser and Milton who also employed techniques of allegory and pastoral. No one seriously concerned with either seventeenth-century poetry or thought will find Fletcher completely shallow or unimaginative. He was indeed stimulated by the intellectual energy of the age; he assimilated much from his environment and made it more completely his own. He transmuted many exciting ideas and some interesting data into poetic utterance. Although he is not without weak stanzas and uninspired phrases, uninteresting passages or trite images, he does point to a new age in poetry to come, and in so doing is valuable as a spokesman for his age and that which preceded him. This one notes after full reading of the poem, even though the effort remains dubious through many stanzes of the poem.

Comprehensive evaluation of Phineas Fletcher's work is certainly not a simple process. The unevenness of such poems as The Purple Island, its sheer length and divided structure, and the complexity of its purpose all complicate assessment. R. G. Baldwin has aptly classified the focus of Fletcherian scholarship thus far as "piecemeal and superficial,"[1] resulting perhaps from an aversion for the copious style Fletcher employs. Twentieth-century revival of interest in the seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry of Donne, Crashaw, and Herbert, for example, has opened a new stimulus for study of Fletcher, yet he still does not attract enthusiastic readers.

To be sure, he enjoyed some acceptance among his immediate contemporaries, and praise duly given his great pastoral allegory by

Francis Quarles, A. Cowley, and E. Benlowes may be found affixed to the poem as prefatory works.[2] The poem did not retain its popularity, however, and succeeding ages have openly expressed amazement or distaste for its content or style. Repeating descriptions calling the poem "fantastic," "strange," "curious," etc., critics have apparently passed judgment without full analysis.[3]

The unusual content evidently stops some from understanding the poem fully: George MacDonald notes that there "never was . . . a more incongruous dragon of allegory" than that in The Purple Island: ". . . Of all the strange poems in existence, surely this is the strangest."[4] Later, Sir Edmund Gosse labeled the poem a "strange anatomical ditty" with a "theme of unusual ugliness and aridity" which ultimately discourages study.[5] Even more recent critics have rejected the poem as a "strange, perverted work."[6]

Perhaps most readers object to the overwhelming combination of unfamiliar topic and heavy style: as H. J. C. Grierson notes, The Purple Island is a "dreadful allegory of the human body" and particularly distasteful when wrapped in too much didactic style.[7]

Some views distract attention from the art of the poem to the content as an object of curiosity, implying perhaps some value to be gained from its uniqueness. White, Wallerstein and Quintana introduce the poem, emphasizing its scientific character: "The Purple Island describes Neo-Platonic philosophy in an allegorical account of the body so precise in detail of color and form that it seems based on actual anatomical dissections."[8] It is to be understood that Fletcher gathered his information mostly from reading on the subject he then described in poetry, but some familiarity with the structure of the human body no

doubt came from some acquaintance with scientists who were at the time learning about man's physiological structure through dissection. Langdale also pursues the concern with source of Fletcher's knowledge, but there is no proof anywhere that he actually dissected any corpses to learn what he includes in his work. The data are in fact general rather than as specific as assumed at first glance.

Frederick Boas, in carefully editing anew the works of both Giles and Phineas Fletcher, aptly explained the lack of topical appeal and some of the confusion The Purple Island has today. Its initial cantos are difficult because they set the framework for the unusual allegory, but particularly the copious marginal notes "have done . . . dire disservice to Fletcher's poetical reputation" (I, vi). Many readers are apparently stifled in their responses to the notes, not to the verse itself.

Yet even the insertion of the notes was to be anticipated to some extent by those who realized Fletcher's purpose as one of leading the reader through knowledge to God. An ornamentation of his lines would best provide the reader with lines of thought from which he could pass from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge, as is typical of his sermon style mentioned above.

The indirect style of moral allegory was a didactic statement highly regarded during Fletcher's period; he wrote as his predecessors and contemporaries, employing techniques through which his readers could unveil his themes. The primary aim of any Elizabethan poetry, and particularly any Puritan poetry, was not the spontaneous outpouring of emotion, whatever effects of simplicity, sensuousness, and passion may be found in its best products. It was a conscious art, rhetorical

in method, concerned above all to impose form and order upon experience, working equally through the senses, the emotions, and the reason, directed ultimately at the will. Although Fletcher may have heard arguments against ornamentation of style spoken by the Puritan writers around him, he remained committed to the more generally accepted literary style of late Elizabethan writers. He makes use of the most well known rhetorical devices, as noted above, to fill out his expression in statements which suit the purpose of allegory. Wit and the play of mind, argumentation, and logical development were not foreign to such a style or to the readers. Artifice and convention were accepted as natural and desirable; fluency, copiousness of language, and easy regularity of verse were positive virtues. Such an art has its notable successes where true feeling informs the idealistic conventions and the rhetorical craftsmanship, or where the stylization is related to a way of life. What seems to alienate modern readers is that the way of life for us today is so different, that it is difficult to comprehend the intellectual framework of the age which produced such a style and to accept those criteria for judging it accordingly. The style is unfitted for certain kinds of directness, economy, concentration, and realistic force, and for expressing the subtler kinds of introspection and psychological analysis which today's poet strives to achieve.

The poem's general style then diverts modern readers from a close study of Fletcher's poem, it seems, for complaints against the general form of allegory abound. "Our age is naturalistic and does not find allegory appealing—we want simplicity and directness in art," Edwin Greenlaw observes.[9] Like all sustained poems, The Purple Island necessarily suffers its length; and secondarily, it suffers additionally

from its allegorical technique. The modern attitude rejects allegory as "artificial formula" and as a crude and old-fashioned literary mode. It is thought too hortatory and prosaic for us.[10] Two central prejudices currently militate against it: as a philosophical or rhetorical weapon and as a form of literature.

Because readers approach the poem having preconceptions, though erroneous, of what allegory is to be, they often judge Fletcher according to standards of a form which had no validity during his time. Many critics since Fletcher's time see allegory as an inferior mode because it is a pragmatic device, compatible with a purely empirical cast of mind.[11] It abstracts certain qualities from experience, and then looks for sensible images, mere conventions of presentation, to bring them vividly to the mind of the reader. Most maintain that symbolism at least leads from sense experience to the ideal world more artfully; yet both symbol and allegory were methods Fletcher employed according to his readers' needs and expectations.

Other philosophical rejections of The Purple Island have been asserted: "The Fletchers demonstrated that Spenserian discipleship could not harmonize with the mental complexion of the Jacobean age" or any later one, George Williamson states in his review of the poem.[12] The failure to note the complexity of Fletcher's expression, to look beyond the cataloging of the body parts and the virtues and vices as battle opponents leads to quick dismissal of the poem by many critics. Admittedly the poem becomes tedious in repetition, yet Marjorie Nicholson is not completely descriptive in her comment that "a little of The Purple Island goes a long way . . . ."[13]

To reply to one of the critical stances, then, one may carefully

designate that the wit of antithesis, paradox and point were in the Spenserian school and thus appropriate to Fletcher's use. His extensive employment of rhetorical devices is characteristic of the style for all types of poetry, yet especially is it considered appropriate for allegory.[14]

Another critical position is less easily addressed, that which attacks the definite weaknesses of Fletcher's poem. H. E. Cory notes: "In The Purple Island the uniformly over-emphatic over-sensualized style makes it difficult for the reader to recognize and respond to the moments of genuine rapture and near rapture that do occur . . . ."[15] Such a critical position must ultimately be regarded as tenable; a change in emphasis on the faults will not remove them. Fletcher's style is not consistently good, one must admit, but passages of beauty and effective statement are noteworthy. Particularly those which are written into the battle conclusion express Fletcher's feeling strongly and clearly. The excitement of the poet can be realized and responded to in verses like these:

> With that a thundring noise seem'd shake the skie,
> As when with iron wheels through stonie plain
> A thousand chariots to the battell flie;
> Or when with boistrous rage the swelling main,
> Puft up with mighty windes, does hoarsly roar;
> And beating with his waves the trembling shore;
> His sandie girdle scorns; & breaks earths rampert doors.
>
> And straight an Angel full of heav'nly might,
> (Three several crowns circled his royall head)
> From Northern coast heaving his blazing light,
> Through all the earth his glorious beams dispread,
> And open laies the Beasts and Dragons shame:
> For to this and th' Almighty did him frame,
> And therefore from supplanting gave his ominous name.
>
> A silver trumpet oft he loudly blew,
> Frighting the guiltie earth with thundring knell;

> And oft proclaim'd, as through the world he flew,
> Babel, great Babel lies as low as hell:
> Let every Angel loud his trumpet sound,
> Her heav'n-exalted towers in dust are drown'd:
> Babel, proud Babel's fall'n, and lies as low as ground
> (XII, 54-56).

The poem does not appear so over-emphatic throughout as to becloud the energy and excitement of these passages, yet the poem is an evenly controlled didactic statement, unevenly sustained in allegory because the consistency was not expected. Berger well notes that Fletcher's allegory is a "more relaxed and intermittent way" of writing than many "modern interpreters would have us suppose."[16]

Final judgment might consider the following points of Honig: "An allegory succeeds when the writer's re-creation of the antecedent story, subject, or reference, is masterful enough to provide the work with a whole new authority, such an achievement draws deeply on the ability to project an ideal by manifold analogies in the larger design of the whole work."[17] Such is, I believe, the success which Fletcher achieves because he does effectively bring all his thoughts and images together in the conclusion, the culminating scenes of Canto XII. Those readers who endure to the end of the poem are duly rewarded for their efforts. They find the focus through the figurative description, through the rhyming patterns or stanza patterns, or through the repetition of themes and motifs concerning love, knowledge, and moral struggle--all finalized in the marriage of the Island Prince and Electra. Unification of the comprehensive symbols provides a satisfactory (and necessary) conclusion to the purpose of the poem.

Fletcher is in fact a conservative, practical, and steady voice from among his seventeenth-century contemporaries. His poem is a

handbook to the opinions of a period in the history of thought fast on the wane when he wrote, but nevertheless still valid to him. Fletcher mirrors some of the intellectual turmoil of the new age to come, but not as extensively as many critics hoped he might. The quality of his mind and his motives for writing are such that the Renaissance and Reformation commonplaces to which he responds, which provide indeed the grammar and vocabulary of this thinking, emerge in his poetry in a quite traditional form--in all areas of thought and experience: religion, philosophy, poetics, and even to a great extent in the realm of science.

To review Phineas Fletcher's The Purple Island thoroughly is to discover anew significant statements and techniques. Along with that discovery, however, the critic must honestly admit that disappointment and tedium are found as well. Yet what Fletcher does present to students of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England is notable. The pictures drawn of his family life, his education, his friends and associates, his religious work and secular verses, all are those which reflect the whole period. He thus becomes a spokesman to modern readers of the time in which he lived, the struggles which he, as those around him, felt. His themes are the themes of his models, of his contemporaries and of all times, perhaps, but this recognition of what is perpetually the condition of man or the problems of man makes him worth reading today or any day.

Although he did not transcend his times in the same way that Milton or Spenser do, he did work and struggle through them. Although not widely traveled, he was, nevertheless, widely read and revealed to his audiences the wonders, the knowledge, the literary techniques known

to his period. The Purple Island captures the spirit of adventure and experiment as well as that of tradition and authority. Because Fletcher was imitative rather than innovative, his works record the period in miniature. For this practice, he will be studied profitably; for his own emphasis on man's plight and religious solutions offered, he will be studied as representing the religious forces at work in the Protestant world in conflict with the temptations that are daily man's.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Baldwin, p. 465.

[2]See Boas II, 4 and 284, 285.

[3]See an anonymous author's comments in "Phineas Fletcher," TLS (Aug. 12, 1926), p. 535; W. J. Courthope, A History of English Poetry (London, 1903), III, 137 as representative of such critical opinions.

[4]George MacDonald, England's Antiphon (New York, 1868), pp. 155-56.

[5]Sir Edmund Gosse, The Jacobean Poets (New York, 1894), pp. 146-48.

[6]H. E. Cory, Spenser, The School of the Fletchers and Milton (Berkeley, 1960), p. 43.

[7]H. J. C. Grierson, Cross Currents in English Literature of the XVII Century (London, 1929), p. 68.

[8]White, et al, p. 183, Langdale, also notes the scientific tone as important, p. 261.

[9]Greenlaw, p. 138.

[10]See Honig, pp. 3-4, 6.

[11]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Appendix B to The Statesman's Manual (1816) and C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love on allegory.

[12]George Williamson, Seventeenth-Century Contexts (London, 1960), p. 261.

[13]Marjorie Nicholson, Breaking the Circle (Evanston, Ill., 1950), p. 29.

[14]See Williamson, p. 260 and Sidney Lee, "Phineas Fletcher," DNB, XIX (1889), 317.

[15]Cory, p. 6; see also Grundy, p. 184. Miss Grundy says that the style of Phineas Fletcher is difficult for modern readers because it is unbalanced, of the manner of the baroque.

[16]Berger, pp. 85-86.

[17]Honig, p. 13.

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