CHAPTER III
ECSTASY IN RICHARD CRASHAW’S POETRY: (1613-1649)

“Live Jesus, Live and let it bee,
My life to dye, for love of thee.”

With this motto Richard Crashaw wrote his sacred poetry. Crashaw was a convert from Protestant to Catholic; the son of a Puritan preacher, who published the first volume of his work in 1634 when he took his bachelor’s degree. In 1633, George Herbert published his Temple, which fixed Crashaw’s line of thinking and there appeared Epigrammatum Sacrorum Liber, a year later when Crashaw was twenty-one. The book, a volume of Latin verses included the poems written even while at the school. Crashaw came under the influence of Nicholas Ferrar and frequently visited him at Little Gidding. But later on in 1645, he embraced Catholicism and composed Steps to the Temple in 1646. These poems are the steps leading towards heaven. Steps to the Temple, the title suggests that he was deeply influenced by George Herbert, appeared in 1646 and enlarged in 1648 included his major poetry. Crashaw’s poetry exhibits other influences of Marino and the baroque poetry as well. Richard Crashaw inherited asceticism and love for poetry writing- from his father, William Crashaw. Richard
Crashaw also had “warm and reverent affection for the niece of Nicholas Ferrar, called the Mother of Community”.

Crashaw’s heart was full of love for God and Christ, therefore “an essential aloofness of his spirit” is noted in his poetry, and naturally his poetry shows “no reference to his early London house or to his family”. Crashaw was acquainted with the metaphysician, Abraham Cowley during his Cambridge years when Crashaw had acquired “his titles to permanent fame”. Crashaw’s excellence made Cowley to memorialize him in one of his finest elegies.

“His faith, perhaps, in some nice Tenets night
Be wrong; his life, I’m sure, was in the right:
And I, myself, a Catholic will be,
So far at least, dear saint, to pray to thee.”

Crashaw wrote both the secular and the religious poetry but his fame entirely rests on his religious poetry. Among his secular poetry ‘Music’s Duel’ and ‘Wishes to his supposed Mistress’ deserve praise. His _Delights of the Muses_, includes a nightingale’s song entitled ‘Music’s Duel’

“Never did English show more virtuosity than when Crashaw analyzed the bird’s trills. The extraordinary wealth of his vocabulary is as astonishing as his infinitely subtle observation of every change in the bird’s ‘quick volumes of wild notes’.”
‘Music’s Duel’, is a duel between man and a nightingale, it turns good of the same in her voice because what mystery dwells in her soul, none can tell.

“Her little soule is ravish; and so pour’d
Into loose extasies, that shee is plac’t
Above her selfe, Musicks Enthusiast.”

The same jollity is painted in ‘Out of Virgil’ the poem which is sung in praise of the Spring season which is the symbol of the world’s emergence out of chaos. And thus the poem ‘In Praise of Lessius his rule of health’ narrates that the good health is the result of happiness of soul.

As these poems expose a happy state of mind, Crashaw tackles the theme of love in a vivid form in his secular poetry. The poem ‘With a Picture sent to a Friend’ asserts that a picture painted by a person or a poem composed by him may prove ill but not his love expressed in it. Crashaw deserves praise for his poem ‘Wishes To his (supposed) Mistress’. The poet loves his supposed mistress and prays God to offer full glory to her and his wishes may prove her real story. All the same Crashaw’s poem ‘Out of Catullus’ celebrates his secular love with its multiplication to lose themselves “in wild delight;”. Crashaw’s ‘Loves Horoscopes’ points out Loves destiny as it
depends on Beauty. Brave is the elder Brother, while Heart is the Mother, who inquires Love’s horoscopes to stars. Beauty has taught Heart new astrology that Love’s death or life depends on Beauty’s anger or happiness but in total contrast Mother finds a way to make Love eternal: while Love is thus entombed in Beauty, Love lives, although man dies. Crashaw’s short poem ‘Out of the Italian’ focuses “The exatasie of a delight” of a lover. The poet narrates how a Lover loses his physical and mental consciousness. The same love theme is handled in the poem ‘Out of the Greeke Cupid’s Cryer’. Crashaw speaks of the erotic love in a negative way. The whole poem centers round the idea that beware of the snake and though Love shines, its fire will ravish. Crashaw’s non-reciprocal love is the theme of his many poems. The poem ‘Out of the Italian- A Song’ focuses such love yet with much positivity regarding life and death.

“When my dying
Life is flying;
Those sweet Aires that often slew me;
Shall revive mee,
Or reprise mee,
And to many Deaths renew mee.”

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Crashaw’s another poem ‘Out of the Italian’ handles the same non-received love theme where he suggests either to reconcile his twin concepts of heat and light or else partake the flame of Love and burn both together.

In secular poetry Crashaw handles the theme of death in different ways, presenting Death itself as a mystery for example in the poem ‘The beginning of Heliodorous’ Crashaw suggests that odor of the frightened souls should spread everywhere before they die and war devours them. Crashaw’s another secular poem on the death theme is ‘Upon the Death of a Gentleman’ which expresses condolence where compassion is so intense that words are not uttered by mouth, instead eyes and tears become vocal. In the poem ‘Upon the Death of Mr. Herrys’, Crashaw imagines that this gracious plant has grown on the ground where Mr. Herry was entombed. The plant is of noble origin, fair son of Spring. It shelters Angels while they sing, so to pay homage, Crashaw appeals to shed a tear here to water the plant. Death itself is a mystery. In ‘Upon the Death of the most desired Mr. Herrys’ Crashaw is presenting a pattern of perfect creature where all virtues are congre gated, ultimately it tries to soften Death’s cruelty. The poem ‘Another’ glorifies death and someone’s mourning, whereas a totally
contrast picture is presented in ‘His Epitaph’. Crashaw begins the poem ‘His Epitaph’ with the description of the tomb. According to him, Death will be known as the killer. Travelers who visit the tomb come to know Love’s flaming sacrifice and thus he is entombed in their hearts. The picture of death is a novelty in the secular poem ‘An Epitaph’ where Crashaw paints that Death can separate body and soul but not husband and wife. Death weds them and when they would come to life after this dark night of death, it would be eternal day. Similarly in the poem ‘An Epitaph-Upon Mr. Ashton a conformable citizen’ Crashaw very significantly depicts a life of “a truly honest man” who practiced before preached. Mr. Ashton’s death is not woeful but it gently broke “the thread of Life.” Thus his epitaph is that his life is still kept alive in us. In the poem ‘On the Front piece of Issacsons- Chronologie explained’, Crashaw gives an Egyptian Pyramid’s Theory in two terms that is the world’s morning is there where her midnight is. In other words where there is the end, there is the beginning. Death theme includes water element in ‘Mr. Herry’s’ poem where a shed tear supplies water to the plant. This is a metaphysical conceit. In mysticism a drop of water has life sustaining energy therefore the poet shows the metaphysical meaning of water. When tears are shade profusely the poet feels there
will deluge. In ‘An Epitaph-Upon Doctor Brooke’ water is honored and loved as a flood and Muses dwell upon and when his loved bank becomes dry, the Muses supply water to the quiet passage with their tears.

Virtues and vices play vital role in spiritual life. Ego or pride is known as a sort of vice and obstacle in the spiritual journey of human life. Crashaw’s poem ‘Upon Mr. Staninough’s Death’ is an occasion of the funeral ceremony of Mr. Staninough where Crashaw rebukes Man’s pride at the zenith of material prosperity which is mortal. To praise God is spirituality where as the following panegyric of human being is a vice because virtues are gifts of God to human being. God is the giver, man, the receiver. Man when goes on praising a human being or a material thing forgets God which leads man to become vicious. Crashaw’s poem ‘To the Queen-An Apologie for the length of the following panegyric’ is a fine example of it.

With death, Crashaw handles the theme of birth. In his poem, ‘Upon the Duke of Yorke his Birth- A Panegyricke’, Crashaw heightens the level of joy that each year and each month become joyous to prove their ancestry of joy. In the same, he equals the Duke with the Kings James and Charles; and with the Sun, the Deity and the Queen
and prays God to provide fire to his rural wreath that is his poetry from his eyes. Crashaw’s secular epigram suggests that one seems two what is Love’s sacrifice is in fact broken heart.

The essence of the spiritual and virtuous life is ecstasy. Not only religious but Crashaw’s secular poetry too bubbles with joy. For example, the Earth is clothed in gladness and universal smile in the poem ‘on a foule Morning, being then to take a journey’. The same happy note is sung in the poem ‘To the morning. Satisfaction for sleepe’. The poem is Lark’s anthem at the ‘Dayes Nativity’ which closes ‘Nights dying eyes’ and opens the poet’s. At the same time he denies to be a votary of God of sleep. The poet is delighted to have a Muse to wait on him and his fancy works on like this about the morning as pious, holy heat, an anthem at the Day’s Nativity. Hating sleep, the poet revives himself to acknowledge the power of the morning’s life giving force. The morning as the fountain of life force rids mankind from life’s suffering and torture and provides a ray of light according to the saying every dark cloud has a silver lining. Crashaw sums it up with the function of the morning, tears “shut in” and miseries “shut out”.

Crashaw began his poetic career with humanist and amorist verse in Latin. The word “humanist” was used for the first time in the
sixteenth century for a person who worked in the field of humanities. Humanities denote grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy but it excludes the subjects like mathematics, natural philosophy, and theology. The Renaissance humanists enriched educational, moral, and political subjects. Their works are based on Aristotle, Plato and Cicero. The word ‘humanism’ was introduced in the nineteenth century and used to the ideas and views of the humanists much resembling Renaissance humanists.

The special characteristics of Renaissance humanism are that man is in the centre of all developments in the universe. Humanism promoted classical literature as opposed to natural science; moral as opposed to aesthetic values; human reason as opposed to wild nature. Humanism stresses development of human powers. Renaissance humanism initiated in Florence in the fourteenth century. It rooted in Europe among intellectuals, to rediscover Latin and Greek classical literature. Later on includes grammar, rhetoric, moral philosophy, poetry and history. Humanism emphasizes significance of human being in the universe, highlighting beauty as paving the path towards God. It opposes Scholasticism in the universities of Italy, Paris, Oxford and elsewhere.
The origin of Renaissance humanism was found in the preface of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola’s ‘An Oration on the Dignity of Man’, which was a worthy document of humanism. The text discusses man’s powers derived from God and potentials to be developed. Later on Petrarch became the father of Renaissance humanism who followed Cicero and practiced classical Latin, opposing Medieval Latin. Humanism believes that man has the power either to descend or to ascend to become divine.

Renaissance influenced English literature and life very slowly. Certain reasons are responsible for this, like English was not used for writing literature. The reformers were protesting against images. Though humanism was introduced in English life more early, it showed no effect on English prose and poetry for a long time. Latin was still used for writing literature. Literature in the last century didn’t become a direct medium of expression of national sentiments; instead English literature was prominently translations of French literature. Though borrowed, English literature preserved her vogues to be “regardful of the masses”, “the vogue of the ballads” and the rise of patriotism.
The period of the beginning of English humanism is 1490 to 1520, some thirty years period when English humanism blossomed. It was brought in England by some Greek refugees. John Colet (1467-1519) who preached “purified Christianity” based on the New Testament. He founded St. Paul’s School “the first model for a reformed secondary school”. For this William Lily (1468-1522) and Erasmus (1466-1536) contributed to write and to revise a Latin grammar.

Erasmus when became “dissatisfied with Paris”, started “profound study of Greek” for which he frequently visited England. Besides he was in search of a smooth life, the mission brought him under the influence of Colet who made him more religious. Erasmus and Colet undertook to work for the reform of Christianity “by persuasion, knowledge, and the purification of morals, without a break in unity.” Erasmus is, thus, known as the “prince of humanists” who exemplifies his pagan philosophy and Christian doctrine in The Epicurean. Erasmus’ love “for antique thought and form” is evident in his Adages, while his wit in his Praise of Folly.

Erasmus was reflected in Thomas More’s Utopia, “the masterpiece of English humanism.” Thomas More was the only English
humanist who had gift of creative writing when others were scholars and educationists. But he wrote his Utopia in Latin instead of his mother tongue. The theme of the book is derived from Plato’s Republic. More opposes scholasticism and established ideas in every field. He is “against the spirit of chivalry.” He upholds communism and opposes “the acquisition of property.” He contradicts asceticism, justifies all religions as equal and supports toleration. In fact this supporter of toleration and asceticism was a fervent Christian, submissive Catholic and an ascetic.” He died “a martyr to his faith.” Apart from all these things, his Utopia presents “England’s literary contribution to pure humanism.”

Renaissance humanists were religious Christians and received their values from pagan religion with the rejection of asceticism and withdrawal from the world. Such type of Christian humanism was reflected in the writings of Sidney, Spenser and Milton. This Renaissance humanism was also inherited by Richard Crashaw in his secular as well as religious poetry. Humanism expressed in Republic or Utopia, is evidently a “dream of an ideal state”, and a reaction “against the stiff, inert conception of society” which Crashaw tried to depict in his poetry. Thus Earl Miner justifies that the private
mode of Metaphysical poetry is a humanist poetry. Humanism was at the root of Renaissance. The tendency continued in the seventeenth century and permeated in the metaphysical poetry of the era. Humanism is, therefore, defined as

“that deep and searching study of the nature of man, as revealed in his thoughts and his works, both past and present---. For the humanist, man was man whether he lived two thousand years before in ancient Athens or Rome, or lived in contemporary Paris or London.”

And according to this, the aim of the human life is ecstasy. So the note of “ecstatic rapture” is in the centre of the poetry of Richard Crashaw. His entire poetic work is full of the praise of Christ, the saints and the ritual celebrations. William Winstanley remarks in this regard that

“Richard---a religious pourer forth of his divine Raptures and Meditations, in smooth and pathetic Verse---; such rich pregnant Fancies as shewed his Breast to be filled with Phoeban Fire---.”

His peculiar style in religious poetry can well be judged in his poem ‘the Hymn to Saint Teresa’. Not only in the secular poetry but also in his religious poetry Crashaw uses the worldly vocabulary and the worldly experiences to praise God as well as for meditation. Naturally it becomes the vigor of the metaphysical poetry that these
poets empower their meditations with their worldly experiences. It is true that the words and expressions in metaphysical poems sometime dig out new meanings of the conventional terms whereas sometime the same terms seem to imply more meaning than we can interpret. Helen Gardner calls it “hammering it out,” and “shutting it up”. And that many metaphysical poets wrote “poetical meditations.” For example

“Welcome, all WONDERS in one sight!

Eternity shut in a span.

Summer in Winter. Day in Night

Heaven in earth, & GOD in MAN.

Great little one! Whose all-embracing birth

Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heav’n to earth.”

Crashaw’s poems are celebrations of Catholic rituals; they sing love for God and sacrifice of Christ.

“If Herbert can be related to the popular sermons and the morality play, then Crashaw must be related to Catholic rituals and the masque. Thus Epiphany, ‘A Hymn, sung as by the three Kings’, with three solo parts and chorus, is quite operatic in form.”

Crashaw commemorates the coming of The Magi to Jesus Christ on 6 January i.e. Twelfth Night. It was the occasion when the three wise men from the East brought offerings to the infant Jesus. Now in this poem
Jesus is compared with the sun and proved superior in all respects. Lord God is described as King of loves, King of lights and King of joys, “The world’s great universal east.”

Crashaw’s love for Christ is expressed in a number of poems. For example in ‘A Hymn of the Nativity, Sung as by the Shepherds’ Crashaw meditates that the Shepherds are blessed creatures to have a glance at Christ. They are so delighted souls interpreting what they have watched, and coming to the conclusion they offer

“To thee, meeke Majestie! Soft Kings
Of simple Graces and sweet Loves,
Each of us his Lamb will bring,
Each his payre of Silver Doves,
At last, in fire of thy faire Eyes,
Wee’l burne, our owne best sacrifice.”

Crashaw celebrates Christ’s incarnation on the earth; similarly his crucifixion imbibes the assured faith that each human being, in his turn, will offer himself as a sacrifice in the altar of God for the transformation of the world.
Another poem ‘On Our Crucified Lord Naked and Bloody’ focuses on the purple color symbolizing blood and passion in which Christ has dressed up for his crucifixion.

“O never could be found Garments too good
For thee to weare, but these, of thine owne blood.”

The poem ‘Our Lord in his Circumcision to his Father’ is addressed to God on the occasion of the rite of circumcision of Lord Christ which is known as blood ceremony because according to covenant Abraham had to shed blood to become the friend of God. Crashaw interprets this ceremony as a tinge of Christ’s crucifixion.

“The day of my dark woes is yet but morne,
My tears but tender and my death new borne.”

Crashaw uses pearls and rubies as symbols for tears and drops of blood for example in the poem ‘Hymn for the Circumcision’; Crashaw refers “Christ’s drops of blood as rubies”. Similarly the tears of Magdalene are mentioned as sorrow’s “richest pearls”. Mary Magdalene, the prostitute who reformed herself after her encounter with Jesus, later became his follower. Mary Magdalene has captured the imagination of artists, painters and poets because of her transformation from a sinner to
redemptive grace. Her tears of repentance are alluded to pearls in the poem.

“If, in Gospels, water changes to wine and wine to blood, Crashaw was but imaginatively extending this principle when he turned tears into pearls, pearls into lilies, lilies into pure Innocents.”

Jesus Christ’s first miracle was to change water into wine at a wedding feast at Cana in Israel. Crashaw gives a poetic expression to this extraordinary miracle. Thus “The water saw its water and blushed”. Later in mysticism the water blushing foretells Christ’s blood on the cross. Crashaw experiences joy of having God as a Lover in the poem ‘On a Prayer book sent to Mrs. M. R.’ Crashaw narrates the fight of the pious soul with the evil nature. The soul fights with the love’s great artillery and the armory of light that fortify the chaste heart. The friend, which is prayer fights for you, and thus when the soul wins in this fight, experiences the sweetness of sacred stores in the still voice. According to Austin Warren,

“Metaphysical poets take for granted that the aspiration for the love of God is equivalent, as an emotional experience, to the aspiration for the love of woman.”
It suggests that Crashaw completely devoted himself to God. Regarding his devotion Austin Warren says that in his religious poetry, Crashaw shifted his object from his “Supposed mistress” to God, but his passion remains the same. He was an ascetic who denied all the pleasures of the senses. Yet every now and then his secular poetry peeps in to religious poetry.

“Happy soule shee shall discover,
What joy, what blisse,
How many heavens at once it is,
To have a God become her lover.”\textsuperscript{14}

Crashaw uses “the language of sexual love to the higher spiritual ecstasy.” Joseph H. Summer in his article ‘A Foreign and a Provincial gentleman: Richard Crashaw and Henry Vaughan’ points out that the sexual images are found in ‘on a Prayer book sent to Mrs. M. R.’ and “Crashaw’s strain of love” is observed in ‘A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable St. Teresa’.

Patrick Grant picks up transcendent mystery in Crashaw’s erotic ardor. He points out the difference between Milton and Crashaw that the religious theme of Milton’s poetry was temptation where as Crashaw focuses on the cross.
“On the other hand, Milton’s contemporary, the Catholic Crashaw, made of the cross something shocking and sensual. Swooning Magdalenes lick the mouths and eyes of Christ’s wound in erotic ardor, as tears fall like pearls and blood like rubies, until in a daze of interpenetrating substances the mind surrenders to the rapture of the cosmic ocean in which fleshly contours are absorbed.”

Milton’s direction and target was “the horizontal and historical; Crashaw’s the vertical transcendent mystery.”

Crashaw wrote both secular and religious poetry but he is widely known as a metaphysical because his poetry is largely in the form Hymns, Psalms or Prayers. And it is concerned with rituals, the “public occasions of religions.” A. Alvarez in his article ‘Metaphysical Rhetoric: Richard Crashaw’ indicates that Crashaw can not be classed as a metaphysical but when there is no other way to group him, he is included in metaphysical poets. But he accepts Crashaw as “the only devotional poet among the metaphysical.” Crashaw’s devotions are public. When Donne, Herbert and Vaughan note “their personal relationship with God”, Crashaw is concerned “with public occasions of religion, with its topics.” Crashaw’s poetry doesn’t reflect inner conflict or his personal experiences regarding meditation. He never becomes
upset for his sins or urges God to purify him. Though a convert, it never
shades his poetry, he just gushes over rituals.

“Instead once he had caught the appropriate, almost
heroic, note of passionate concern, his business is to
maintain and amplify it. He is, in a sense, ritualistic
poet. It was not for nothing that he was a convert to the
Roman Catholic Church.”

It is said that Crashaw was a Catholic but Chaucer was
also a Catholic. And if Crashaw was rhetorical, then Milton being
Protestant was also rhetorical. Crashaw admired Donne but lacks his
“dialectical discipline”. Crashaw uses extravagance, in showing
“Magdalene’s weeping eyes” as “Portable & compendious oceans.”
Donne uses hyperbole in showing his lady “more than Moone” which
appeals to a dramatic, Crashaw’s to a purely emotional justification.
Crashaw makes use of different colors, liquids, solids, animals to
symbolize variations in human moods.

“There are things red-fire, blood, rubies, roses, wine-
and things white- tears, lilies, earls, diamonds: symbols
of love and passions; symbols of contrition, purity, and
innocence.”

Austin Warren makes distinction between red and white
color symbols used by Crashaw into two meanings only: passion and
purity. In his ‘Language of the Metaphysical Poets’ Frances Austin
notes symbolism in Crashaw’s poetry. In fact every color in Crashaw’s poetry suggests something. Most of the times they interpret the conventional meaning yet at times they imply totally uncommon, unknown things.

“An effective juxtaposition of the two sacramental colors is found in sequential stanzas of ‘A Hymne of the Nativity’;--- “The opposition of the ‘whitest sheets of snow’ and the ‘rosy fleece of fire’, both offered as a bed for the infant Christ, is neatly resolved by his choice of his mother’s breast;”\(^{18}\)

Crashaw uses color adjectives frequently in his poetry specifically the color red occurs with variations symbolizing associations with blood. He rarely refers the word blood instead it is implied through other expressions as “the purple wardrobe” or “this red sea of thy blood”. Blood in Old Testament refers “the life principle in either animal or vegetable.” For example it suggests “the blood of man or the juice of the grapes.” In New Testament the word blood denotes “the blood of an animal, the atoning blood of Christ” And the word blood, in both Old Testament and New Testament refers “in a figurative sense for bloodshed or murder.” In course of time instead of human blood, animal blood was to shed and then “shedding of blood by Christ Himself”, is must. Later in the Old Testament “blood” suggests “the
juice of grapes”, a symbol to substitute “the drinking of blood”. The custom of drinking wine and eating bread signifies Christ’s blood and flesh according to his “pledge of eternal friendship.”

In Crashaw’s poetry Biblical references are used everywhere. They are extracted either from Old or New Testament. For example in ‘On the bleeding wounds of our crucified Lord’ Crashaw describes the blood as-

“This thy Bloods deluge (a dire chance Deare Lord to thee) to us is found

A deluge of deliverance,

A deluge least we should be drown’d.”

Christ’s love for mankind is exemplified when he addresses the cross as “Large throne of love” in the poem ‘Vexilla Regis’. Christ is the Lamb, whose innocence is sacrificed at the altar of righteousness for the salvation of believers. Mystics are fascinated by the purity of the unblemished Lamp that was offer as sacrifice in the old testament. Thus this became metaphor for Jesus who crucified and sacrificed by evil and malicious. The Lamp of God-Jesus Christ is symbolic of goodness, love and innocence and the cross becomes a symbol of mans ingratitude, evil and murderous intent. Christ was
killed by the power of the Romans and the greed of the Priests in power. Therefore the cross becomes symbol of freedom from worldly power and sin. Blood is the life plasma without which human life is non-existent. Christ shed his precious blood for the salvation of souls. A beautiful hymn ‘Wash me in the blood of the Lamb, I shall be whiter than snow’ will illustrate this.

Frances Austin analyses the colors of sin as “red without & pale within,” which symbolize “the inner death” of the individual. With this, Crashaw uses white and purple colors with their different shades to signify the redeeming power of Christ and sins. To suggest this, in ‘Charitas Nimia’ Crashaw points out “the white Lamb’s bosom” and “The purple name of my sin’s shame.”

Crashaw’s poetry is symbolic. In his book Image and Symbol in the Sacred Poetry of Richard Crashaw, George Walton Williams exposes layers of meanings implied by colors, but at the root the thinking line is of Austin Warren. Symbolism in Crashaw’s poetry has still various dimensions yet to be revealed. Crashaw is still widely known as an emblem and baroque poet. Brijraj Singh has very well explained this nature of Crashaw’s poetry. To appreciate Crashaw’s poetry one needs to know two trends in poetry: emblem and baroque. In
the sixteenth and seventeenth century, emblem books were widely used for private meditation. Emblem books represent pictorial ideas in Christianity, particularly in Catholicism because Protestants and specifically Puritans oppose idol worship so emblem books were used among Catholics. Protestants though rejected Catholic principles used emblem books. Francis Quarles, the most popular emblem maker was the Protestant and George Wither was the Puritan. Donne, Herbert and Crashaw used emblem books for their imagery. Crashaw’s “vivid and sensuous images”, “extravagant embellishment” and “his detailed and elaborate descriptions” are rooted in the emblem books.

Varma R. S. in his book Imagery and Thought in the Metaphysical Poets defines the term ‘baroque’ which is used for “a general European movement in art- architecture, sculpture and painting”. The period can be determined from 1580-1725, i.e. after the Renaissance and before the neo-classical age. The movement was “a revolt against classical serenity and repose.” It witnessed incessant “activity and motion” In this regard William Fleming notes:

“The angel and bird motifs become prominent in the visual arts. Sculpture flies, architecture grows wings, paintings seem hardly to stay on the wall, and even buildings seem to soar.”

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The term ‘baroque’ was not welcomed much warmly in England. No metaphysical poet tended towards it, because the term ‘metaphysical’ was well developed in England that it didn’t need any sort of “replacement”. Of the metaphysical poets only one poet used the term ‘baroque’ for his poetry, he was Richard Crashaw. It has been observed that baroque art flourished in the fertile soil of Catholicism. Richard Crashaw, being a Roman Catholic poet used baroque art in his poetry which opened a gallery for the study of critics. “T. O. Beachcroft in Criterion xii (1934), 407-25, George Williamson in Donne Tradition, Helen C. White in The Metaphysical Poets and above all Austin Warren in Richard Crashaw” has studied Crashaw as a baroque poet. They think that Crashaw sings “the ecstasies of Saints and mystics like Teresa, the tears of Mary Magdalene, the bleeding wounds of Christ on the Cross, and so on”. Crashaw, therefore, presents the English aesthetic. Thus Crashaw’s poetry becomes a combination of “counter-reformation and baroque” trend. Crashaw in his secular poem uses the baroque element very significantly. When he proves Death as the criminal and tomb on the earth shifts into the heart, flight of his imagination seems astonishing.
“This stone will tell thee that beneath,
Is entomb’d the Crime of Death; ---
(Passenger, who e’re thou art)
Is entomb’d, but in thy Heart.”

Crashaw’s poetry is recognized as the baroque poetry. It is “European influence” to be noted in the works of nearly all metaphysical poets. Helen White has traced the features of the baroque poetry. According to her the metaphysical poetry is generally characterized as baroque poetry. The term baroque has “many widely divergent meanings.” Helen White notes three meanings “to define seventeenth century poetry.” The first meaning is “broken and multiple curves and waved lines” denoted “the weaving and striving of sensibility”. An example is given of Crashaw’s ‘Hymn to the One Name’ in which he uses “varied line-lengths,” to parallel “to that art and architecture”.

The second meaning is regarding content of the baroque poetry. The baroque poetry notes human nature of Christ and people around Him. At the same time divinity in man and heaven on earth are depicted. The baroque poetry presents lives of the Saints and the martyrs and “the allegorical interpretations of Canticles figuring
heavenly love with the symbols of earthly”. Most of Crashaw’s themes are based on the lives of Christ, Saints and martyrs. Helen White gives “the third meaning of baroque” as an “artistic ornament.” The baroque poetry uses “the heroic symbols” to designate “the pomp and circumstance of the man”.

“The second term is Marinism. Giovanni Baptista Marini, the Italism poet, was a master of subtly refined sensuality and sentiment---. His sensuous symbolism and refined impression are his own. How they contribute to the baroque in literature is obvious. There are many translations of minor pieces of his in the seventeenth century, as well as probable influence through the French poets, besides his major influence on Crashaw.”

Crashaw’s ‘Sospetto d’ Herode’ is a fine example of this influence. It is the translation of the first canto of Marini’s poem containing some 528 lines. It is said that T.S. Eliot thought of writing a book on The Fruitfulness of Misunderstanding. The intention of this book was to point out that when a writer attempts to imitate another writer “through misunderstanding of his model or models” invents something genuine. Eliot names it “the fruitful misunderstanding”. Eliot gives example of Crashaw that he imitated Marino and other Italian poets but his creation was “something different from and in some
respects better than his models;” thus Crashaw’s admirers survive in the living tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth century English Poetry.

“Crashaw often repeats an image in different ways, so that his poems seem to be far more static than Donne’s. Donne’s images can be elaborate and extended, but Crashaw’s are far more exaggerated and extravagant. One reason for this difference lies in the fact that Crashaw is a more baroque poet than Donne.”

Brijraj Singh gives examples of Epiphany and the hymn on the name of Jesus; and the hymn on St. Teresa and ‘The Flaming Heart’. In ‘The Weeper’ Crashaw makes use of the figure of Mary who, according to Bible, came from the district of Magdalene. She was the daughter of Syrus and sister of Lazarus and Martha. As she belonged to “royal descendents”, she inherited a large property. Her brother Lazarus joined military service while Martha became “a model of virtue and propriety” and accordingly ruled her property. Magdalene accepted free luxurious lifestyle. Martha scolding her for this free lifestyle turned her to spiritual life, to listen to the exhortations of Jesus”. The teaching transformed her till she was freed by Jesus from “the seven deadly sins”, which are called Gluttony, Fornication, Covetousness, Anger, Dejection, “Accidie” and kenodocila. Biblical teaching goes on like this that Magdalene was trapped by the seven demons which were, in fact,
the seven deadly sins from which Jesus saved her. They are the pleasures of the palate, Fornication, Avarice, Anger, Dejection, sluggishness, and ego. In ‘The Weeper’ Crashaw uses the baroque element in painting Mary Magdalene’s tears flowing heavenwards. At the same time, it has a Biblical reference that feet of Jesus Christ were washed by Mary Magdalene as repentance for her sins. Mary Magdalene is a metaphor for the sinner.

“We goe not to seeke
The darlings of Aurora’s bed,
The Roses modest cheeke
Nor the Violets humble head.
No such thing; we goe to meet
A worthier object, our Lords feet.”

The concept is familiar with baroque for it intertwined the erotic love with the divine. But the last conceit where Mary’s tears flow up heavenwards though seems grotesque, expresses ecstasy of human soul in the love of God. And on the whole

“Crashaw is concerned essentially with a celebration of God’s love. His poetry does not describe his own religious experiences; rather, his baroque tends towards an annihilation of the self, making the practitioner an anonymous figure, celebrating together with other celebrants.”
Dramatic element is an important feature of the metaphysical poetry of Donne, Herbert, and occasionally of Crashaw. The opening stanza of ‘The Weeper’ is a dialogue between the poet and the eyes of Mary Magdalene.

“Haile Sister Springs,
Parents of Silver-forded rills!
Ever bubbling things!
Thawing Christall! Snowy Hills!
Still spending, never spent; I meane
Thy faire Eyes sweet Magdalene.”

In this regard Helen Gardner says that Crashaw dramatizes “the story of St. Teresa” with the same force Magdalene presents her drama and Crashaw earnestly persuades the Countess of Denbigh. Earl Miner in his book The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley traces the dramatic qualities in the Metaphysical poetry. He points out that Donne who is the leader of the Metaphysical School used “the private mode” for his “finest poetry.” The other metaphysicals practiced this private mode and the “Metaphysical race” was annihilated when the private mode was ceased to be used. The audience in the religious poems is God, so in Crashaw’s poetry only the
speaker invokes, when there is no response from “the dramatic audience”.

“Look up, languishing Soul! Lo where the fair
Badge of thy faith calls back thy care,
And biddes thee ne’er forget
Thy life is one long Debt
Of love to Him, who on this painful TREE
Paid back the flesh he took for thee.”

Sometimes Crashaw’s style cannot be called either dramatic or narrative but it is quite an invention and can be explained as “the tame laws of Time and Place”. For example in ‘To the Name Above Every Name, the Name of Jesus’, Crashaw remains at the transcendent heights all the time. His problem is how to return to “the tame laws of Time and Place” after experiencing “ecstatic rapture”.

Among the metaphysical poets, Crashaw and Herbert; and Vaughan and Traherne not only followed asceticism in their personal lives, but they thought and articulated it in their poetry “the public world”. Earl Miner thinks that it is “one of its great strengths.”

“The metaphysicals were fond of making personal inventories of their inner conflicts, ---This is the poetry of reflection, meditation, speculation, and praise. But the typical Donneian dialogue of conflict, as in the
“Holy Sonnets”, seems to express a passion shared more by Crashaw and Marvell than by Vaughan and Herbert,”\textsuperscript{28}

When Edwin Honig states that inner conflict is expressed in Crashaw’s poetry, Brijraj Singh opines that Crashaw’s poetry is “an annihilation of the self”. In fact Crashaw’s inner conflict is seen in a number of poems where he repents for his sins and longs to become like Christ. Here is one example in the poem ‘A Hymn of the Nativity, Sung as by the Shepherds’:

“To thee, meeke Majestie! soft Kings
Of simple Graces and sweet Loves,
Each of us his Lamb will bring,
Each his paire of Silver Doves,
Till burnt at last in fire of thy faire eyes,
Ourselves become our owne best sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{29}

Crashaw feels the agony of Saint Teresa as if his own. St. Teresa who was born in 1515 and died in 1582 pointed “the way from outer turmoil to inner peace.” At the age of 16, she was admitted in a convent which she enjoyed for her growing love for God. She inherited piety from her father as well as love for romance novels and worldly pleasures from her mother. Therefore when the time came to choose between marriage
and religious life, it became difficult for her. She chose religious life to secure herself from committing sin. Once she dedicated herself to this path, she began to practice mental prayer. Meditation, she thought, is “an intimate sharing between friends.” In her path of meditation she feels that the thing of utmost importance is the desire to please God. Her conversation was with angels, and in due course of time, in every activity of her life God was given the highest priority. She faced difficulties in her life considering them “as good publicity.” St. Teresa tried to found a new convent but couldn’t succeed and in the efforts died on October 4, 1582, at the age of 67. Her canonization took place in 1622. A heart, an arrow and a book represent her symbol.

“She never undertook to know
What death with love should have to doe;
Nor has she e’re yet understood
Why to show love, she should shed blood
Yet though she cannot tell you why,
She can Love & she can Dy.”30

It is the inner conflict between material and spiritual where the soul strives to tread the path of the saints to become like God, to unite with God. Unless and until the soul doesn’t become like God, it
can not experience union with God. Crashaw’s experiences of union with God is strange for his love for God is like a baby’s love for its mother, a martyr’s love for the final spear-thrust. His love for God is like “a gaping wound and a voluptuous mouth, in sophisticated paradox and childish innocence”.

“The unity of opposites, of pain with pleasure, life with death, fruition with denial, assertion with surrender, is his favorite theme. It always involves a degree of incongruity, often of incongruity unresolved, a sense of strain and grotesquerie.”

Crashaw was a rationalist. Metaphysical poets graduated either at Oxford or Cambridge. Like other metaphysical poets, he graduated at Cambridge. They were not professional poets but amateurs “with public careers”. Except Crashaw nobody did publish their poetry in their lifetime. It was in manuscript circulated among friends. Thus even Crashaw’s Steps to the Temple was published when he had left England and Carmen Deo Nostro was published posthumously. The metaphysical poets not merely practiced meditation poetically but transformed their meditation into poetry. They tried to seek “verbal equivalent” to express their “state of mind and feeling.” It suggests “their maturity” and also proves their superiority to “later poets of certainly not less literary ability.” For example Crashaw’s ‘Saint
Teresa’ indicates “great speed” and “an ecclesiastical solemnity”.

“Love, thou art absolute, sole Lord

Of life and death.”

Crashaw uses the language of paradox in his poetry, particularly more clearly in his divine epigrams. About the language of paradox, Cleanth Brooks writes,

“Few of us are prepared to accept the statement that the language of poetry is the language of paradox. --- We are willing to allow that paradox is a permissible weapon which a Chesterton may on occasion exploit. We may permit it in epigram, a special sub variety of poetry; and in satire, which though useful; we are hardly willing to allow to be poetry at all. Our prejudices force us to regard paradox as intellectual rather than emotional, clever rather than profound, rational rather than divinely irrational.”

On the contrary to this prejudice, Crashaw’s epigrams are emotional with rational, having wisdom with depth, and intensely divine. They are woven well balanced suffusing maximum matter in minimum words like idioms and proverbs. Crashaw has very wisely used it to pour his ocean of thoughts in a four lined poem like this.

“Each blest drop, on each blest limme,

Is washt it selfe, in washing him:
This a Gemme while it stayes here,

While it fall hence ‘tis a Teare’.34

In Crashaw’s poetry paradox doesn’t mean only intellect but it is also an imaginative power of the poet. Cleanth Brooks justifies this, when he says that we must grant “the paradox of the imagination itself;” otherwise “Beautie, Truth, and Raritie” will not be revealed completely.

The subject of the metaphysical poetry is not “the doctrines of religion” but “man worshipping or man at prayer”. Helen Gardner thinks

“In all poetry which attempts to represent the intercourse between an individual soul and its Maker there is a conflict between the ostensible emotion-adoring love, absorbed in the contemplation of its object, or penitence, over whelmed by the sense of personal unworthiness.”35

Gardner states that the religious poet creates “an image of himself at prayer.” Without his own image the spiritual poetry lacks something and narrows the canvas of “our imagination of life”. In Crashaw’s poetry on the occasion of the martyrdom of Saint Teresa or the nativity of Jesus Christ one who agonizes or exults is the poet himself. The Nativity refers to the birth of Jesus Christ in Christian mythology. The
celebration of Christmas suggests that Jesus was Messiah. The New Testament narrates two records of Christ’s birth; one is of the Gospel of Matthew and the other is the Gospel of Luke. According to both Jesus of Nazareth was the son of Mary, who was engaged to Joseph. It is also asserted that Jesus’ birth is not “the result of marital relations but of the power of the Holy Spirit.” On the contrary, the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Mark remain “silent on the nativity”. On this occasion Jesus was acclaimed as “a savior” and “the Messiah, the Lord” by the angel and the shepherds. In the Gospel of Matthew the reference of Herod occurs, He tries to know the birth place of Jesus and when unable to do so, he orders “that all male children of Bethlehem under the age of two be killed, the so called “Massacre of the Innocents”. Thus either he rejoices or grieves but Crashaw’s poetry doesn’t give any sort of moral teaching.

“Not a preacher or prophet, Crashaw had no “message” to announce. He had suffered and exulted, in suffering; but his experiences did not tempt him to philosophy or other prose formulation. His was to be a poetry in which the rhythms and images would tell their own tale.”

There are a number of poems which present Crashaw expressing his faith in Christ or God instead of any message. For
example in ‘Why are yee afraid, O, yee of little faith?’ Crashaw states that there may be a storme, an unkind cloud, the black Water or the angry Wind, but one who has faith in God need not afraid. The person of little faith deserves his fear.

Here is another example in ‘On the bleeding wounds of our crucified’ where there is no message. Crashaw meditates on the wounds of Christ. Christ was smitten on His hands, head, the heart, the purs, His feet, bruises, his stripes. Jesus got wounds on his every limb and entire body but they have “significance in the life of a Christian.” The blood flowing from the wounds on His hands “heal the curse on the earth especially materially and financially.” The blood coming from “the wounds on His head” gives salvation. The blood streaming from “the wounds on the heart” purges sinners. The blood flowing “out of the wounds on the purs” offers grace. The blood coming “out of the wounds on His feet” controls satan under His feet. The blood flowing “out bruises” gives power to love in peace and rest. The blood moving from stripes causes healing. At last Jesus wore a crown of thorns on His head the symbol of “sin of man after his fall.” God cursed the earth “for the sin of man “and Jesus suffered for salvation of man. In the form the crown of thorns Jesus took this curse on His head and the executioners
of Christ thrashed him on the head. “The power of the precious Blood of Christ”, thus, gives solutions to “problems of mankind”, becomes a shelter for man and exposes mysteries. Here in this poem, the flowing streams of blood look like the purple rivers. In this flood, the feet swim, the hands lift to give gifts free and the heart strives to drown in torrents of its own.

“Nere wasn’t thou in a sense so sadly true,
The well of living Waters, Lord till now.”

Crashaw’s poetry is “archaic” and “artificial”. It is “religious, personal and introspective.” It proves itself “personal and often dramatic,” which are the characteristics of seventeenth century.

“Come away my Love,
Come away my Dove
Cast off delay:
The Court of Heav’n is come,
To wait upon thee home;
Come away come away.”

Crashaw uses wit but “in his enthusiasm for the martyrdom of ‘our crucified Lord Naked, and bloody,’ he allows heavy wit to destroy the credibility of the emotion:
Th’ have left thee naked Lord, O that they had;
This Garment too I would they had deny’d.
Thee with thy selfe they have too richly clad,
Opening the purple wardrobe of thy side.
O never could bee found Garments too good
For thee to weare, but these, of thine owne blood.”

Crashaw follows the lyrical address unique style of his own. “Verbal ingenuity, ideplay, wordplay particularly about serious subjects” are the striking features of Crashaw’s poetry. In the epigram ‘Samson to his Daliah’ Crashaw justifies that Samson’s physical love destroyed him. His first meeting with Daliah was the beginning of his ruin. Samson was the son of Manoah, an Israelite who had taken birth “to deliver the Israelite from the Philistines.” The boy was conditioned to abstain from “alcoholic beverages”, and “not to cut his hair”. Samson was born and brought up according to God’s conditions. When he became young, he fell in love with a Philistine woman Daliah. Philistine leaders offered Daliah a big amount to marry Samson to get known the secret of his strength. Samson, one day, told his wife the secret of his strength and accordingly she cut off his hair. As Samson
lost his strength, he was imprisoned and blinded. In due course of time his hair grew and he regained his strength and took revenge on Philistines.

“Could not once blinding me, cruel, suffice?
When first I look’t on thee, I lost mine eyes.” 40

In ‘Psalm 23’ Crashaw expresses his joy that God vouchsafes him. He rejoices that God has shown the ways of bliss, and that bliss is to the extent that when his breath is flying, God calls upon his soul. He doesn’t die instead goes home. Going home is a happy thing; on the contrary dying grieves the soul. The poet experiences that whenever he is in grief, God directs and defends him. Thus he is protected in life and while leaving the physical body he feels “Warmth into the Arms of Death”.

With this I quote Psalm 23 in Bible entitled ‘The Lord Is My Shepherd’

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
For his name’s sake.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

For you are with me;

Your rod and your staff,

They comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me

In the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup overflows.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life,

And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

Forever.

Crashaw uses symbols and images which are “the poet’s birthright”. Imagery defines symbolism to interpret the implied meaning in the concept. He uses symbols of colors, flowers, gems, liquids and “the Christian emblems of dove, lamb, shepherd cross”, Some universal symbols-like the plain, the mountain, the valley, the
ocean, the storm, darkness and light, are also found in his poetry. The flowers, gems and liquids are used to symbolize color contrast. For instance “lilies and roses”, “pearls or diamonds and rubies” and “tears and blood or wine”. With this, they also symbolize other angles of human mind and human life.

Ruth Wallerstein notices regarding Crashaw’s adjectives that Crashaw signifies something different through his adjectives. For example “soft” means “sentiment”, “white” intends “a sense of radiance or brilliance”, and symbolizes “exaltation.” George Walton William points out that in Crashaw’s poetry “snow, silver, milk, cream, crystal” are other white substances which are noted sufficiently in the poems themselves. William extends,

“there is fire, which is red only occasionally and which does not stand in color opposition. There is, however, one other thing white and red---- the blush; it neatly and appropriately combines the two colors which Crashaw uses to expand the pattern.”

Red, the color of blood symbolizes love and passion, and not violence. Though Christ is shown crucified, it is for the love of mankind. White is “the symbol of luminous purity” and exaltation. Black is the color “of sin”, “of finiteness, of mortality.” Among other colors blue symbolizes “the color of truth and of the Blessed Virgin”.

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The next color contrast occurs in Crashaw’s poetry is “the distinction between light and dark” which is found in the Bible. According to the Bible, God is recognized as “spiritual Light”, the “source of light and above all light” which eradicates ignorance and imparts bliss to the souls.

With different colors and light and dark, Crashaw uses various animal symbols. Among them Crashaw frequently uses the Lamb regarding which, George Walton William reflects in his book *Image and Symbol in the Sacred Poetry of Richard Crashaw* that Christ becomes the Lamb whom God uses as the sacrificial animal. Crashaw is more attached with its religious significance. In the ‘Hymn for the Blessed Sacrament’ he is closely related with Aquinas.

“Lo, the full final, SACRIFICE

On which all figures fix’t their eyes.

The ransom’d ISACK, & his ramme;

The MANNA & the PASCHAL Lamb”. 42

Crashaw refers the story of Isaac, the Anglicized name, the meaning of which is “may God smile” according to the Hebrew Bible. Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah. According to the New Testament, Abraham followed God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, and
brought Isaac to Mount Moriah. He prepared to sacrifice Isaac by binding his hands and putting him “upon the altar as a sacrifice”. Abraham was ready to kill him with a knife in his hand; at the last moment the angel interfered to hold him. Later in place of Isaac, a ram was sacrificed. The early Christian Church justified “Abraham’s willingness to follow God’s command to sacrifice Isaac as an example of faith and obedience.” According to James this example shows Abraham’s faith and works. And “the release of Isaac from sacrifice” is viewed “as analogous to the resurrections of Jesus.” Miss Tuve notes the similarity of the types of little Isaac who carried his sacrificial wood and Christ who carried his sacrificial cross, and the Manna, the food provided by God for the Israelites during their forty years in the desert. Christ is figured as the Lamb who sacrificed himself for the love of mankind, but at the same time he also plays the role of a shepherd who tends his sheep.

Crashaw’s symbolism can not be summed up in one sentence as it has layers and worked up at different levels. A good deal of criticism is received on Crashaw by a number of writers. Crashaw is extolled by Cowley in his elegy ‘On the Death of Mr. Crashaw’.
“Poet and Saint! To thee alone are given
The two most sacred Names of Earth and Heaven.”

Cowley praised Crashaw seven years after his death as “refined witts” and ranked him with Bacon, Sidney, Ben Jonson, Donne and Shakespeare. Another critic upholds him as “the Darling of the Muses-charming the ear with a holy Rapture.” Though after a gap of a hundred years, Coleridge acclaimed Crashaw’s reputation as his combination of richness of thought and diction surpasses everything. Here again four lines from Abraham Cowley’s elegy ‘On the Death of Mr. Crashaw’ can be extracted to focus Crashaw’s worth:

“His Faith perhaps in some nice Tenents might
Be wrong; his Life, I’m sure, was in the right.
And I my self a catholick will be,
So far at least, great Saint, to pray to thee.”

Herbert Grierson applauds Crashaw for his “rapturous eloquence” in ‘Hymn to St. Teresa’. Crashaw studied “the flamboyant Neapolitan Marine” which inspired his tendency towards extravagance “happy fireworks”. Later on the Spanish mystics instigated his ambition so that it becomes his natural language of adoration. In course of time it
turned into “ludicrous conceits”. Conversion to Roman Catholicism changed Crashaw’s feeling of pain and all mental conflict.

William Crashaw, the father of Richard Crashaw was a puritan poet and a learned person. Richard Crashaw’s “bent towards religious poetry and his aptitude for learning” is his father’s inheritance.

A true Christian puts “to death the deeds of the flesh by the Holy Spirit” It means “not only exterior behavior” but internal behavior as well. It is purification of “one’s own imperfections and finiteness, followed by self-discipline and mortification.” Thus the Christian path leads to asceticism which Richard Crashaw accepted willingly,

“and the fact that he was appointed to a College Fellowship in 1635 (when he was twenty-two years old), and that he continued to prefer the monastic life, ‘a little content full kingdom’ as he describes it, suggests that he never seriously sought her. For Crashaw, as for Herbert, religion supplied the only outlet for an emotional nature.”

Crashaw’s epigram on marriage is well-known. He writes:

“I would be married, but I’d have no Wife, would be married to a single Life.”

According to Watkin, a spiritual form of poetry contains “virtue” that is “a mental quality, the attribute of a created spirit,” Crashaw is called “Poet and Saint”, who wrote sacred poems with
secular ones. His sacred poems were the steps “to climbe heaven” while his secular poems were “as sweet as they [were] innocent.” The title Steps to the Temple refers Jacob’s ladder “to climb heaven”. According to Biblical reference Esau and Jacob were twin sons of Rebekah and Isaac. Isaac felt a vision of God at Beersheba. Jacob pretended himself Esau to receive the blessings of his blind father. Later on Jacob went to Beersheba and then left it to go toward Haren. He reached to the place and halted there for that night. He went to sleep and dreamed that a ladder was set up on the earth, and the other end of it was reached in Heaven. At the other end God stood there to assure that God was with him and had offered him the vast land on which he was asleep. He realized the existence of God in that land and uttered that it was “the house of God” and “the gate of heaven”. Thus Crashaw’s steps refer to Jacob’s Ladder in Bible to reach heaven. His second volume of poetry Carmen Deo Nostro which was published posthumously in 1652 intended “to burne the hart with heavenly fire.”

“Thus the dulce of the secular poems was as clearly marked as was the utile of the sacred poems; where the secular poems pleased merely, the sacred poems purposed no less than “to measure the soule into that better world.” In terms of high purpose, sacred poetry was the chief of the delights of the muse of Richard Crashaw.”

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The bulk of his poetry prominently contains translations of “the Psalms”, “sacred epigrams” and “the hymns” in Latin and English.

Little is known of Crashaw’s life but that little too is essential to understand what the poet means. Richard Crashaw was born in 1612 but his mother died shortly after his birth. By the time he was seven years old, William Crashaw, Richard Crashaw’s father married for the second time but she died a year later. The child was therefore reared almost without a mother.

“To this Dr Praz ascribes the craving for a mother’s love, which for its satisfaction attracted the poet to his “mother” Mary Collet,”

“the mother of the Community” the niece of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding. In his magnum opus The Four Quartets T. S. Eliot has dedicated the fourth quartet “Little Gidding” to Nicholas Ferrar where he states that “Prayer has been valid”. In fact Nicholas Ferrar had remarked regarding Gidding that it’s a place where the devout would think and meditated upon God unceasingly. Crashaw speaks and writes with great reverence of Mary Collet, St Teresa and then of Mother Church.

Coming to Christian mysticism, it is observed that mysticism in Christianity is the realization of divinity, sacredness and
communion with God—the ultimate reality. Christian mystics through meditation and penance desirer to pierce through the material world of illusion to understand the unconditional love of God for human kind. Christ is the supreme example of selfless love for the sinner who must rise up above the ordinary temptations of life. Christ’s magnanimous self sacrifice on the cross is a redemptive at to bring salvation to the human soul. The mystics ponder deeply into the saving grace of the blood of Jesus Christ which is the covenant of the new testament for the forgiveness of sinners. Then Christian mysticism is followed through “prayer, fasting and service to others.” The first discipline, prayer is sung whole heartedly and with full throated in ‘A Hymne of the Nativity, sung by the Shepherds’

“Welcome to our wondering sight

Eternity shut in a span!

Summer in winter! Day in Night!

Heaven in Earth! and God in Man!

Great little one, whose glorious Birth,

Lifts Earth to Heaven, Stoops heaven to earth.”

Crashaw expresses his view about prayer in the poem ‘on a prayer booke sent to Mrs. M.R.’
“Onely bee sure,
The hands bee pure,
That hold these weapons and the eyes
Those of turtles, chast, and true,
Wakeful, and wise
Here is a friend shall fight for you,
Hold but this book before your heart,
Let prayer alone to play his part.”

Crashaw memorizing the martyrdom of St. Teresa invokes her. Mysticism can be pointed out in Teresa’s acceptance of life and death for the love of God. Diwan Bahadur and K.S.Ramaswami Sastri define mysticism as

“Mysticism is the flower that blooms on the tree of moral purity, whose sap is faith in God. It is not a mere intellectual attitude. It is an inner experience of seeing God and of union with God.”

It is the general concept of mysticism but when we come to the specific concept of Christian mysticism, Christian doctrine helps us. According to Christianity, God lives in all Christians and can be experienced through belief in Christ. Christian mysticism can be
understood through spiritual truths “by learning how to think like Christ.” Crashaw applauds Christ in the words:

“All hail, fair TREE.
Whose fruit we be.
What song shall raise
Thy seemly praise.
Who brought to light
Life out of death, Day out of night.”

And Crashaw, thus, bows before “Dread Lamb” meaning Christ because we love Him. About joyousness of religion Radhakamal Mukerjee states,

“One thing, however, is clear and that is that religious contemplation induces a feeling of joy that passeth all understanding, that can hardly be put into words. The mystic suffers from no inner conflict, and hence there is a tremendous outflow of the vital energy.”

Mystic experiences no confusion, no chaos but flooded rapture. It is noted in Crashaw’s poetry which overflows with rapture. For example;

That now dost shine,
Transcrib’d above
Into the land of light & love;
O let us twine
Our rootes with thine,

That we may rise

Upon thy wings, & reach the skyes.”

In another example when Jesus was crucified his ecstasy was significant. Jesus was condemned to the death sentence by the Jewish high priests for blasphemy. Before execution, Jesus was tortured publicly, wounded on his head, heart, hands and legs. Before death, he was hung on the cross for six hours. According to Christianity, crucifixion of Jesus Christ justified his death as it was his own authority to lay it down or to take it up. Above all, his crucifixion was God-the Father’s command. His crucifixion removed the curtain between Man and God through Christ so that man can reach “the throne of grace”.

“CHRIST when he dy’d

Deceived the CROSSE;

And on death’s side

Threw all the losse.

The captive world awak’t, & found

The prisoners loose, the Iayler bound.”

To understand Crashaw’s mysticism, an example may be given of the English visionary, Richard Rolle’s (C. 1300- C. 1349) life
and work. His work the *Incendium Amoris* clears “Rolle’s teachings on mystical experiences.”

“In chapter 15 Rolle tells, for instance, how he became aware of an interior ‘symphony of song’ which put him out of tune with the psalms he was trying to repeat, and how, through the interior melody, came a taste of divine fire: ‘Then and there my thinking itself turned into melodious song, and my meditation became a poem’.”

Crashaw’s poetry follows the pattern of prayer and meditation, hymns and psalms and turns out sweet and melodious. About Christ’s life and death he expresses his strange views vividly. For instance he says-

“O strange mysterious strife

Of open DEATH and hidden LIFE!

When on the crosse my king did bleed,

LIFE seem’d to dy, DEATH dy’d indeed.”

It seems mysterious when Crashaw speaks of Death’s death it means it is open death and hidden life of Jesus Christ which is celebrated as his resurrection. Crashaw’s another example regarding Christ’s crucifixion is-

“Then bowes his all- obedient head, and dyes

His own love’s & our sin’s GREAT SACRIFICE.”

One more example regarding Christ’s death is seen-
“So from his living & life-giving DEATH,
My dying LIFE may draw a new & never Fleeting
BREATH”\textsuperscript{59}

Thomas Hywel Hughes in his \textit{Philosophic Basis of Mysticism} writes that it is “The more explicitly the history of Christian religion” that every religious person remains “either a mystic or anti-mystic”. According to Hughes, Plotinus, the father of Western Mysticism rejects pantheism. Augustine justified Plotinus asserting the Personality of God, and then the great Christian Mystics realized that their experiences of union with God, the “moments of vision and ecstasy” were personal.

\textbf{SWEET NAME in Thy each Syllable}

\begin{itemize}
  \item A Thousand Blest ARABIAS dwell;
  \item A Thousand Hills of Frankincense;
  \item Mountains of myrrh, & Beds of spices,
  \item And ten Thousand PARADISES
  \item The soul that tasts thee takes from thence.”\textsuperscript{60}
\end{itemize}

The mystic aims “at its highest point of Union with God,” God, therefore, dwells in human being to bring him to God in Jesus Christ. In another example of Christian Mysticism, it is said that man is
crucified with Christ and now Christ lives in human being. In other words he asserts that we live this life by the faith of Christ who sacrificed himself for us.

Another example regarding Christian Mysticism is noted that we are the sons of God so when God will appear, we shall be like God for we will be able to see his real appearance. Here Crashaw appeals God-

“Hear, FATHER, hear! Thy LAMB (at last) complains.”

And then in another example, he longs-

“O my SAVIOUR, make me see
 How dearly thou hast payd for me
 That lost again my LIFE may prove
 As then in DEATH, so now in love.”

Spiritual life is divided into three stages: the “purgative”, stage, the “illuminative” stage, and the “unitive” stage. The purgation is asceticism which Crashaw had already achieved. He practiced celibacy and monastic life, devoted himself to the Spiritual path right from the beginning of life. “The cathartic discipline of the mystical Ethics”
includes the monastic ideal of asceticism. Purgation requires “a spiritual as well as a physical chastity.”

The second stage is illumination which means contemplation. The first result of illumination is knowledge through “revelation or insight or intuition” which can not be called “sense, reason and analysis”. Sometimes these ways of knowledge are criticized, as “blind guides leading to the morass of illusion.” Though criticized this knowledge is related with “the conception of a Reality behind the world of appearance and utterly different from it.” It is that Truth which treated with great admiration, and when “the poet, the artist, and the lover” try to seek this light, the mystic experiences “the full light of the vision.” At the stage of illumination, mystic reveals a knowledge which proves “all other knowledge” as ignorance. Crashaw identifies Christ as “Heire of fresh Eternity” and “the universall East” in the poem ‘Easter Day’.

“Rise, Heire of fresh Eternity,

From thy Virgin Tombe:

Rise mighty man of wonders, and thy world with thee

Thy Tombe the universall East,

Natures new wombe,
Thy Tombe, faire Immortalities perfumed Nest.”

The poem ‘Easter Day’ is an appeal to Lord Christ for the resurrection. Christ symbolizes “Heire of fresh Eternity” while his tomb symbolizes purity. And “the universall East” signifies the transcendental sun-rising, the day-time and the supreme light, all the same ‘‘Nest’’ for Crashaw is a symbol of perfect joy, ecstasy. In a general sense, ‘‘nest’’ symbolizes safety, peace, unity and happiness.

In another example Crashaw says-

“When Glory’s sun faith’s shades shall chase,
And for thy veil give me thy FACE”

There is one more example ‘The Himn- O Gloriosa Domina’ where Crashaw appeals the source of Day that is God who can enter our heart and provide life force.

“Hail, door of life: & source of day!”

In Christian mysticism two methods are practiced to realize God. One is to identify with Christ or to imitate Christ, to achieve a unity with God. Second is to seek a direct vision of God. Crashaw follows the first method of imitating Christ, besides he commemorates and invokes saints and martyrs, celebrates Christ’s nativity to experience an ecstasy. Crashaw doesn’t experience the third
stage of unification rather journey of his meditation reaches up to illumination where he realizes rapture through contemplation. Nowhere his poetry has flaws of melancholy or pessimism; instead it ever overflows with ecstatic rapture and exuberant living enthusiasm.

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