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THE LOVE ELEGIES OF DONNE AND JONSON:
A CRITICAL STUDY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

William Evan Warren, B.A., M.A.

The Ohio State University
1972
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INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this study is to offer a detailed critical treatment of John Donne's Elegies as a group, no such study having as yet appeared in print. The point of this critical analysis will be to show how Donne manipulates the personae of these poems in order to present a vision of a corrupted world of human relationships. Through these dramatic performances, Donne looks at love from various angles, some of which are cynical, some libertine, some plaintive; but in most of them the speaker suffers some distortion of vision. My secondary purpose is to study the elegies of Ben Jonson, which have been given even less attention than Donne's. Jonson's poems are of considerable interest in their own right, but I shall use them also to gain perspective on Donne's use of the elegiac mode. It should become apparent that Jonson, himself a great dramatist, did not exploit the dramatic possibilities of the form, choosing to use it instead as the medium for a more expository performance of wit.
I. Context and Theory

The elegy as a literary mode was created by the Greeks by the eighth century B.C.¹ With the Greeks as with the Romans later, the term elegia denoted a verse form, not a particular subject matter. The form was the elegiac distich: a dactylic couplet consisting of a hexameter followed by a pentameter line. In the period of what has been called the Old Elegy (7th-5th century B.C.), the form could encompass a wide variety of subjects, including historical writing, military exhortation, and lament. With the New, or Alexandrian, Elegy (ca. 400-100 B.C.), in the writings of poets such as Callimachus, the theme of love began to figure prominently. Love became the dominant subject of the first-century B.C. Roman poets. First Catullus, then Propertius, Tibullus and Ovid wrote a highly subjective poetry in distich form which dealt frankly with their own love-lives. The Roman elegy seems to have come to an end with Ovid's exile in 8 A.D. and was not revived until the sixteenth century, by Marot and then Ronsard in France. The classical elegy has been dealt with in very competent fashion by Archibald Day² and Georg Luck,³ whose works should be consulted for a detailed treatment of the subject.

Two studies have been made of the elegy in Renaissance France, and it is clear that some of the conclusions they draw in reference to the French elegy also apply to the English. Robert Hallowell and Christine M. Scollen have
shown that the revival of this classical genre in sixteenth-century France was fraught with confusion. 4 Clarence Marot, who published the first elegies in French in 1533, instituted the practice of using the framework of Ovid's *Heroides*, not his *Amores*, for the elegy. He confused the elegy with the *epitre amoureuse* and limited his content to that of love epistles and threnodies; his attitude toward love is that of the Petrarchan and medieval courtly traditions. Marot's practice was followed by many minor poets, by Ronsard, and by poetical theorists of mid-sixteenth-century France. Hallowell examines five poetic treatises published between 1548 and 1561 in France, including those of Scaliger and Du Bellay, and shows that their definitions of the elegy are contradictory and ambiguous. In general, they assume that the form's origins were threnodic and that some kind of transition had taken place from the sorrows of death to those of love. Hallowell believes that the source of their confusion is their "attempt to define solely on the basis of content a genre, which according to the ancient conception, was determined principally by its form." 5

It is clear that this same confusion followed the genre into England. F. W. Weitzmann, the only critic to attempt to sort out the enormously different conceptions of the elegy in Renaissance England, has identified eight different uses of the word. 6 It needs to be understood that Weitzmann is interested in the uses of the term
itself, not necessarily distinguishable poetic types. Therefore his categories, while clearly distinct, overlap in poetic practice. Three uses of the term "elegy" relate to love poetry: an epistolary poem, usually of love and/or complaint; any love lyric, but most commonly a plaintive one of the Petrarchan type; a love poem of a pleasant or erotic nature. Four other kinds of poem sometimes labeled "elegy" are the funeral verse (the best known type), general lament, didactic poem, and epigram.

In order to put Donne's Elegies into their Elizabethan context, it is first necessary to recognize the extremely eclectic nature of the poetry of the 1590's. It is a critical commonplace that the poets of this period enjoyed experimenting with various classical and traditional English forms. Hallett Smith shows how the mythological material of Ovid's Metamorphoses, which had a substantial tradition in English verse, was combined by these poets with a tradition as different as that of the Mirror for Magistrates. Lodge, for example, in his Scillaes Metamorphosis (1589), includes complaints like those of the Mirror, but he does not moralize, as medieval and Renaissance poets had traditionally done when using Ovid. Instead, the Ovidian mythological material is indulged in for an erotic and pictorial delight all its own. Other writers such as Chapman, however, in Ovid's Banquet of Sense (1595), were capable of using the mythological Ovid for philosophical purposes. Chapman uses neoplatonic
doctrines very like those elucidated in Book IV of The Courtier to raise the love of the senses to love of the soul. Donne's use of Ovid—the Ovid of the Amores—has affinities with the practice of both Lodge and Chapman. Donne recreates the eroticism of Ovid, yet his poems also have serious implications. He is clearly conscious in the Elegies of the Petrarchan and neoplatonic traditions in which human love enables the lover to ascend to a knowledge of divine love. But love in these poems is not, as it is in some of the more idealistic poems of Donne's Songs and Sonnets, "an exquisite passage from profance to sacred."10

In his Elegies, Donne makes use of the essential features of two literary forms which had just become popular in the 1590's: the dramatic form of the complaint and the eroticism of the epyllion. The tremendous vogue of the formal complaint, on the model of Ovid's Heroides, a series of complaining epistles by famous lovers, was created by Daniel's "Complaint of Rosamond" (1592) and enhanced by Drayton's England's Heroicall Epistles (1597, 1598, 1599). Such poems established the popular conception of the lyric or dramatic Ovid—as opposed to the narrative Ovid of the Metamorphoses—as the author of plaintive love epistles. Donne would turn to his own uses the general concept of these poems: the disillusioned lover speaking directly to his listener, usually in the attempt to analyze the causes of his misfortune. Daniel
significantly refrained from having his Rosamond moralize upon her actions—as had her counterparts in the Mirror for Magistrates didactic narratives; her tragedy was a result of her youth and, perhaps, sexual naïveté. Donne refrains altogether from moral discussion and makes his poems more fully dramatic. Even though the complaint figures speak in monologue, the chief interest of these poems is decidedly of a narrative character. For his tone and subject, Donne drew, of course upon Ovid’s elegies, and perhaps upon those of other Roman elegists and those of his contemporary, Thomas Campion; but he was also probably attracted to the erotic material of the epyllion. This long narrative love poem, which had its roots in the mythological love stories of Ovid’s Metamorphoses, became popular at the same time as did the complaint. One of the finest of such poems, Marlowe’s Hero and Leander, would seem to have little in common with Donne’s Elegies except its eroticism. But if what C. S. Lewis says about Marlowe’s work be accepted, they share something much more basic, a similar tone in their treatment of that eroticism:

In reading Venus and Adonis we see lust: in reading Marlowe’s Sestiiads we see not lust but what lust thinks it sees. We do not look at the passion itself: we look out from it upon a world transformed by the hard, brittle splendour of erotic vision.

.......
Licentious poetry, if it is to remain endurable, must generally be heartless; as it is in Ovid, in Byron, in Marlowe himself.11
Donne is therefore adapting Ovid's elegiac form to his own aesthetic purposes. The *Amores* were apparently designed to be iconoclastic in their effect. Helen Gardner notes that they had offended the Roman sense of *gravitas* at the time of their publication. Most critics who have dealt with the *Elegies* state—often they simply assume—that Donne is attracted to the libertine, amoral poses of the *Amores* and takes intellectual delight in defending outrageous propositions. I think, however, that Donne has undertaken the interesting experiment of using the elegiac form—and the assumptions operative in Roman elegiac love poetry—to investigate the ethical complexity of the love relationship. To call his purposes "moral" would be misleading: Donne does not create another "Ovid moralise." He does not recreate Ovidian stories and provide them with a didactic overlay, as had been the custom in the poetic use of Ovid's mythological tales. He uses Ovidian poses, refurbished with sixteenth-century English settings and details, and explores the problems of love dramatically.

That the *Elegies* are dramatic in nature is central to my assessment of them; I shall indeed refer to them as "dramatic monologues." My use of this label in reference to the *Elegies* is not original, but some justification of the critical assumptions implied in the term would seem to be in order. Robert Langbaum dismisses the tendency to define the dramatic monologue according to the four strictly
formal characteristics usually ascribed to it: a speaker other than the poet, a listener, an occasion, and some interplay between speaker and listener. He points out that some of the finest dramatic monologues, such as Browning's "Childe Roland" and "Caliban," have only the speaker and perhaps an occasion. Donne's Elegies sometimes include all the formal characteristics: in "Jealosie," for example, a young man-about-town is speaking to his married mistress on the occasion of her husband's increased suspicions, and speaking in response to fears she has concerning the possible consequences of her husband's jealousy. More often, however, his poems lack at least one of the formal characteristics. Langbaum argues convincingly that the more meaningful way to distinguish the genre from other dramatic modes, such as soliloquy, and from lyric and narrative poetry, is to consider "its effect, its way of meaning . . . ." Its method is to "give facts from within," to establish a sympathy with the speaker which causes us to willingly accompany him as he makes his case, even though it may be--and it is very likely to be--reprehensible. It creates a "tension between sympathy and moral judgment." It needs to be stressed that there is a standard judgment at work in such poetry:

It can be said of the dramatic monologue generally that there is at work in it a consciousness, whether intellectual or historical, beyond what the speaker can lay claim to. This
consciousness is the mark of the poet's projection into the poem; and it is also the pole which attracts our projection, since we find in it the counterpart of our own consciousness.

This consciousness is, I believe, as strong in the elegies of Donne as in the monologues of Browning, though it is perhaps less apparent in Donne's work. That it should be strong is not particularly surprising in an age which tended, as Sidney's Defense of Poesy makes clear, to see poetry as serving some didactic purpose. The chief value of the dramatic method is for Donne precisely what it is for Browning:

The use of the speaker enables him to dramatize a position the possibilities of which he may want to explore as Browning explores the "impossible" case. The speaker also enables him to dramatize an emotional apprehension in advance of or in conflict with his intellectual convictions . . . .

The dramatic nature of Donne's Elegies is not as apparent at first glance because there is not as great a "disequilibrium between sympathy and judgment" as there is in Browning's monologues. The distortion in point of view is not so great; the attitudes of the speaker are often familiar to us from traditional love poetry. Therefore it is somewhat more difficult to catch Donne in his manipulation of his character.
It is in the nature of the dramatic monologue as a poetic mode to be, in Langbaum's phrase, a "poetry of experience." Donne's *Elegies* reflect the view, which had been articulated so well by Montaigne, that if the world is to be comprehended it must be comprehended on the level of experience. To stress the experiential nature of these poems is not to commit oneself to a view of them as autobiographical. It is true that the elegy was regarded as one of the most personal of literary forms in classical times. No one doubts that the elegies of Ovid, Catullus, and Propertius have a basis in the personal lives of the poets. Thomas Campion's Latin elegies, *Poemata*, may allude to personal friends and experiences. Earlier critics such as Sir Edmund Gosse assumed that Donne's *Elegies* were also autobiographical in nature.\(^{20}\) It is, of course, virtually impossible to tell whether Donne is using actual personal experiences as the basis for the situations in the poems. But I think that internal evidence will show that Donne is detached from his speakers. For Donne's interest is in the, not necessarily his, experience of love. The *Elegies* show us individuals at various stages of this experience. Wilbur Sanders, in a recent book on Donne's poetry, points out that in his early prose (*Paradoxes and Problems*) Donne maintains a very unorthodox view: "Reality—Donne is quite clear about this—is not to be located in some invisible, spiritual world, but in the visible physical one."\(^{21}\)
Sanders explains that Donne turns Platonism upside down, showing that physical appearances are true, that ideals are always in flux. Sanders does not apply this observation to criticism of the poems; to do so is to see that Donne does not rest with that conclusion, but explores it. In the Elegies, Donne clears the world of love of ideals, but he goes on to show that the life of the senses is itself maddeningly unstable. We see a series of lovers liberated from ideal preconceptions of love, but forced to resort to various ruses in order to maintain a semblance of control over their world.

II. Marlowe, Campion, and Jonson

The latter part of this study will be devoted to Ben Jonson's elegies, with special reference to the contrast they offer with Donne's. Before indicating what direction that contrast will take, I need to make clear the relation of Donne's Elegies to the two collections which were written and published in closest proximity to Donne's own.

Marlowe's translations of Ovid's Amores, published at about the time Donne must have been beginning his elegies (ca. 1595), were probably of importance in stimulating Donne's interest in this kind of poetry. But, beyond this, there is not a great deal to be gained, for the purposes of this study, from an examination of Marlowe's translations. One can easily see, by contrast, how
vigorou s and dramatic Don ne's Ovidian poems are, for as A. LaBranche has stated:

Marlowe's Elegies are uniformly pedestrian exercises, always rendering flatly the more delicate dramatic turns in Ovid's psychological portraits. . . . Marlowe has a knack of transmuting dramatic self-expostulation . . . into a set-piece . . . .

But as Marlowe's recent editor, Millar Maclure, points out, this unsatisfying quality of Marlowe's verse is not so much the result of any "knack" of his own as it is of the difficulty he set for himself. He points out that translating Latin elegiacs into heroic couplets is not "the diversion of an idle hour, and Marlowe carries it off with remarkable success." William Bowman Piper, in his encyclopedic study, The Heroic Couplet, is even more appreciative of Marlowe's achievement in this form.

Marlowe translated the closed elegiac distichs of Ovid's Amores . . . into almost exactly corresponding closed heroic couplets. And he was able, by doing so, to duplicate in English much of his Latin model's balance and precision.

He accords Marlowe's elegies a significant place in literary history:

These practices by which Marlowe transferred Ovid's Amores into his own Elegies helped lay the foundation on which the closed couplet would develop.
Although, as the two latter critics point out, Marlowe came up with some ludicrous readings because of his need for rhyme, his elegies on the whole read very smoothly, and if one could not know Ovid except through these translations he would still find him a witty and entertaining poet. Donne would, of course, have known Ovid in the original, but Marlowe provided him with the verse medium for his work in the elegiac mode. For though Donne may have known Campion's elegies, Campion wrote his in Latin quantitative meter, which Donne realistically did not attempt to carry over into English. The racy, conversational qualities of the elegiac idiom attracted Donne, and he emphasized them in his verse, whereas the qualities of balance, antithesis, and grace (all those traits we associate with the Augustan couplet) had attracted Marlowe. Not bound by the limitations of translation as Marlowe had been, Donne incorporated into the heroic couplet, which Marlowe had shown to be an effective English equivalent of the elegiac distich, the emphatic speech rhythms for which he has become famous. Thus Piper assigns Donne an important role in "this revolutionary intercourse between the Latin elegiac distich and the English heroic couplet, which resulted in the English closed couplet . . . ." Using abundant illustrative analysis, Piper shows that "Donne, then, responded to virtually every aspect of the heroic couplet which his age had discovered," and, even more
importantly for our interests, "Donne's English always smacks of talk—even if it is the snappy talk bandied between unbearably clever young dandies." 30 Donne, with Marlowe as intermediary, re-adapted the poetic mode of the poet who has been called the Alexander Pope of Latin poetry31 into a form which has much of the fluidity we associate with blank verse. The language of the Elegies is colloquial, yet capable of accommodating a high density of figures of speech. The qualities we associate with "metaphysical" style are blended into an enjambed couplet form that can sustain long syntactic periods, replete with exclamations, asides, and rhetorical flourishes. In short, with Donne the elegiac-turned-couplet has become a thoroughly dramatic mode of expression, one which can convey the rhythms of human speech and thus serve the needs of the dramatic monologue.

It is difficult to assess the relationship between Donne's Elegies and the poems with which they have the closest literary kinship, Thomas Campion's Poemata, 32 a collection of Latin elegies published at about the same time (1595) Donne was writing his. This difficulty is not diminished by my poor Latin and the fact that I am largely dependent upon rather literal translations which have been kindly provided for me by a colleague, 33 who has protested that he makes no claims for their adherence to the literary spirit of the originals. But it becomes
apparent upon even a superficial reading of these poems that they are of considerable literary interest. They are, I believe, unique among Renaissance collections in their close adherence to the form and spirit of their Ovidian models. In using the original language and quantitative distich meter, Campion is obviously indicating his intention to be as faithful as possible to the classical form. As Donne does, he retains the Ovidian erotic material and includes a funeral elegy in his collection. But unlike Donne and very much in the Ovidian manner, he maintains a homogeneity among the poems by, for instance, carrying the same love affair over a number of poems. He also focuses on a central female figure, as Ovid had his Corinna and Tibullus his Cynthia, so Campion has his Mellea, though in Campion's poems, this sensual figure shares the stage with the cold-hearted Caspia. Perhaps the most striking difference between Campion's practice and Donne's, and again a mark of the former's close imitation of his originals, is Campion's pervasive use of mythological allusions, especially references to Cupid-worship. This Donne eschews altogether. The three modern critics who mention (very briefly) Campion's elegies all assume them to reflect the poet's own experiences during his Gray's Inn days. One of the basic assumptions in the Roman elegy was that the poet-lover addresses his reader in a confessional manner, speaking candidly of his own sexual
experiences. I have seen no authority cited to prove that Campion's elegies are personal in nature, but if they are this would set them apart from Donne's. There is no evidence that Donne's have any autobiographical basis. Though Campion differs from Donne in his closer adherence to the conventions of Roman elegy, his work is remarkably similar to Donne's in a number of ways. They proceeded to use the elegiac form with the same working assumptions.

(1) Love is primarily an affair of the senses and is thus not to be idealized. The praeeceptor who appears in several of these poems preaches a pragmatic, no-nonsense doctrine. In Elegy Four, for example, he explicitly advises his listener not to expect too much of love; it involves as much unpleasantness as joy, though the pleasure of sex make it worthwhile. Don't indulge your mistress, he urges, and accept the fact that she is going to be imperious toward you much of the time; don't let it bother you so long as you still make love well together when night comes. We shall see that, in contrast, Jonson never commits himself to this cynical position and never indeed uses really erotic subject matter.

(2) Both Donne and Campion assume that love involves a struggle of wills, that it is a conflict in many of its manifestations, and can even elicit cruelty. This cruelty is distinguishable from that hyperbolic variety which pervades the Elizabethan sonnet sequences, a cruelty which
the lover suffers with a certain wistful pleasure. In the latter part of Elegy Four, the speaker delights in the element of conquest in love, conquest of both one's mistress and one's rivals. He takes as his ideal, Paris, a man who took what he wanted without regard for others.

Odi quod nimium possim, trucventa sit opto
Dum mea formosa est, dummodo grata mihi.
Turbato quot apes furem sectantur ab alveo
Tot mihi rivales displicuisse velim.

Spartanae nomen tantem famamque secutus
Primus apud Graios asus amare Paris;

Illi vel fratres talem invidere, sed illi
Suave fuit, quod res invidiosa fuit.
0 foelix cui per tantos nupsisse tumultos
Contigit, & dignum bello habuisse torem;
Ut tam pulchra meis eedant quoque praemia ceptis,
Optarem pugnas, & tua fata Pari.

(I hate because I can hate much, I wish her to be ferocious
While she is my beautiful one, so long as it suits me.
As often as the bees harry the thief from the over-turned hive
So often I wish that rivals distress me.

Great Paris dared to love among the Greeks, pursued
So great a name and fame of the Spartan woman;

His brothers envy him such a woman, but
It was sweet to him, because it was enviable.
0 happy the man to whom it befell to have wed through so great a tumult,
And to have possessed an ornament worthy of war.
That such beautiful prizes might fall to my lot,
I would wish for battles and your fate, Paris.)

(Poemata, IV. 35-8, 43-4, 55-60)
(3) Campion resembles Donne in his use of the egotistical speaker. In Elegy Eight, the speaker laments his having been made to look foolish and, as Donne's young men do, adopts an inflated pose in order to regain a sense of mastery over the situation.

Cassibus exibit foemina nulla meis.
Candida seu nigra est, mollis seu dura, pedica
Sive levis, iuvenis sive adeo illa senex;
Qualiscunque datur, modo sit formosa, rogare
Non metuam, & longa sollicitare prece.

... ........................................
Iamque nova incedo mactus amator ope;

(No woman will escape from my snares.
Be she white or black, soft or hard, chaste
Or light, young or though she be old;
Howssoever she be endowed, however beautiful
she might be,
I shall not be afraid to ask, and to solicit
her by long prayer.

... ........................................
And now I the glorified lover proceed in
new power;) (VIII. 38-42, 50)

It seems apparent that Campion uses such a figure, as
Donne does, with some irony.

(4) Campion seems as disinclined as Donne to observe the Renaissance standard of decorum in these poems. He includes coarseness of imagery and sentiment in his love poetry. Again we can see the contrast of both poets with Jonson, who observes decorum in all of his elegies; in "Let me be what I am," he uses grotesque images, but that poem is really a satire and is thus properly rough in its treatment of its subject. Campion's Elegy Five bears some
resemblance to Donne's "The Anagram" and "The Comparison" in that it dwells upon the ugliness of its female object. Fanny's charms have diminished with age, but she is still a wanton. Her ardor, and her desire to use it profitably, accord ill with her features.

Labra sed incultis asperiora rubis,
Vel nulli, vel sunt atri rubigine dentes,
Iamque anima ipsa stygem, & busta senilis olet.
Forsitan ingenium quod amabile ducis amanties;
Hei mihi quod nimium est haec quoque cassa levis.
Sit tamen ampla satis per se; tibi nulla fuisset;
Qui nihilo plus quam magna crumena sapis.

(Indeed you have rougher lips of a redness unintended.
Either you have no teeth, or they are black,
And now your breath itself smells like the Styx, and like an old corpse,
Perhaps you put off lovers because of this amiable trait;
Alas that this slight reason carries so much weight with me too.
But never mind how overpowering it is in itself, you savor none of it;
Wherefrom you smell nothing more than the great moneybag about your neck.) (V. 10-16)

Elegy Nine begins as what seems to be a sincere lament for Mellea, whose husband has taken her away into the country, but ends with a bawdy joke, in which the Lares (household gods) play a trick on the husband as he is making love to his wife.

Amplexumque meos cum se sperabit amores,
Stramineam pupam brachia dura ferant;
Aut tritum teneat cariosos pene Priapum,
Praeclare ut miserum rideat omnis ager;
Fabula nec tot crebrescat notior orbe.
(And when he hopes that he embraces my loves,
His hardy arms will crush a straw doll;
Or he may hold a worn-out Priapus on his
rotting penis,
Very plainly, so that the wretch may be
laughed at through all the fields;
A more noteworthy story does not grow in
the whole world.) (IX. 33-7)

(5) Finally, several of Campion's elegies are dra­
matic in the fullest sense. In Elegy Seven, for example,
the speaker is trying to comfort his hysterical lover.

Tene ego desererem? mater velit anxia natum?
Unanimen aut fratrem prodere chara soror?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Ista manus nobis aequalia foedera sanxit,
Quam tu numc lachrimis suspiciosa lavas.

(Would I abandon you? Doesn't an anxious
mother love her child?
Or would a dear sister betray the brother
of her soul?

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
This hand sanctified the mutual contract
for us,
Which you, full of suspicion, now wash with
your tears.) (VII. 1-2, 9-10)

The speech begins in medias res and includes dramatic
motions by the speaker, who gestures, for instance, toward
her eyes, hands, and breasts in the course of his argument.
In short, the scene resembles in every way the typical
Donneian interview.

All of this raises the question of literary influence,
a question which cannot be answered with any certainty in
this study. At a glance, it would seem that any influence
exerted would have been that of Campion upon his younger (by five years) contemporary Donne. Campion had become a published poet in 1591, when five of his songs had been printed in Thomas Newman's unauthorized edition of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*. He also composed at least one song for a revels, *Gesta Grayorum*, presented at court in 1594. It would, moreover, seem almost certain that at least part of Donne's elegies were written after the publication of the *Poemata* in 1595, when Donne may still have been at Lincoln's Inn. But there is always the possibility that both writers' elegies were circulating in manuscript before this time, in which case the influence could have been either way. And, unless a closer study reveals direct borrowing, it is possible that neither poet had any influence upon the other. It is entirely feasible that both writers, working in the same literary ferment of the 1590's, saw the possibilities of the Ovidian elegy in the light of the successful adaptation at the time of two other Ovidian forms, the mythological narrative and the love-epistle on the model of the *Heroides*.

Jonson's poems as a whole have not been given a great deal of critical attention, and his elegies have been dealt with almost exclusively in reference to the disputed authorship of four of them, which were printed in the 1640 edition of his works, but have often been attributed to Donne.
I would like to do a close enough critical analysis of Jonson's elegies to show, first of all, the degree to which he shares with Donne basic assumptions about the genre. His use of the mode is closer to Donne's than is that of any other poet. But it should be of even greater interest to see what different understanding of this classical genre is reflected in the poetry of Jonson, who was intimately acquainted with classical poetic theory and practice and wanted to imitate his models accurately. Both Donne and Jonson understand the kind of self-conscious posing Ovid is doing in his poems and present the speakers of their own poems in various stances. Donne, however, is more dramatic than Jonson; in a number of poems he creates an immediacy of setting not found in any of Jonson's elegies. Both poets are argumentative in their rhetoric. But in Jonson's arguments, figures of speech tend to remain illustrative rather than become "figures of thought"; that is, they do not show the actual working out of ideas so much as they simply illustrate already defined concepts. Both poets assume the language of the elegy to be more colloquial than that appropriate to the standard love lyric. Jonson, however, cannot resist the tendency to compose verse more mellifluous and regular in its rhythm than Donne's. Donne is writing very much in the conversational vein of his Satires, which were almost certainly written during this same period of his career, and is using the coarser
language Renaissance poets thought to be appropriate to satire. The differences in their practice should not be exaggerated; some of their poems are, after all, so close in appearance as to have been the subject of an authorship dispute. The chief end of this portion of my study is to offer some insight into the work of the finest Renaissance love elegist after Donne and thereby to provide a useful perspective from which to judge Donne's work.

III. The Criticism

The finest assessment of Donne's Elegies to date is A. LaBranche's exemplary article "'Blanda Elegeia': The Background to Donne's 'Elegies'" (Modern Language Review, 61, [1966], 357-68). LaBranche sets out the theoretical background of the elegiac mode and shows how Donne's practice differs from that of the ancients. Some of his generalizations are so incisive that I am left only with the task of applying them. The article does not, of course, involve itself with analysis of individual poems (two or three are treated briefly as examples). Neither does it deal with the subsequent development of the genre in England, though it does make perceptive distinctions between Donne's use of the form and that of his contemporaries Jonson and Marlowe.

Several other critics provide useful tools for a critical study of the Elegies. Rosalie Colie, in her
Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, chapters 1 and 3) explains the language of paradox, an understanding of which is essential to any treatment of the technique of Donne's poetry. Rosemond Tuve's argument in Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947) clearly denies the validity of an approach such as mine to Donne's poetry. She regards such critical methods as anachronistic applications of the dramatic and psychological techniques of post-romantic poetry. However, her elucidation of the rhetoric of Renaissance poetry is invaluable to any student of Donne's verse. Essential as a guide to Donne's adaptation of elegiac versification is William Bowman Piper's The Heroic Couplet (Cleveland: Western Reserve University Press, 1969, chapter 10). On the philosophical level, Louis Bredvold's "The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions" (JEGP, 22 [1923], 471-502) offers useful background material for an understanding of the skepticism reflected in Donne's love poetry. Among the most informative studies of Donne's verse is Donald Guss's John Donne, Petrarchist (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), which reveals the importance of the "other Petrarchism." The European tradition of "extravagant" Petrarchism includes such typically Donneian elements as fantastic arguments, bizarre comparisons, and emotional extravagance. Guss's findings need to
be considered in any assessment of the love poems; they deny the critic the facile assumption that Donne is simply reacting against the idealistic (in Guss's term, "humanistic") Petrarchism of the Spenserians and sonneteers.

J. B. Leishman published the first substantial criticism on the *Elegies* in the third chapter of his *The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of the Poetry of John Donne* (London: Hutchinson, 1951). He does not analyze the poems in detail, but attempts to define their technique and attitude. He refers to them generically as dramatic monologues and explains clearly the difference between Donne's dramatic method and the more descriptive technique of Ovid, his model. Leishman's very useful commentary is perhaps directed, however, toward the wrong ends; for he is primarily concerned with refuting Eliot's pronouncements upon Donne's "metaphysical" (a term which chafes Leishman) style. Eliot had championed Donne's ability to effect a "direct sensuous apprehension of thought or a recreation of thought into feeling" ("The Metaphysical Poets," in *Selected Essays*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1951, p. 272). In contrast to the poetry of Dryden and Milton, with its "dissociation of sensibility," Donne's reflects a "unified sensibility" (p. 274). It seems to me rather easy to show that such remarks are erroneous if applied to the *Elegies*: the speakers of these poems have simply not gotten their sensibilities together. Leishman's
refutation of Eliot is in this case not incorrect, but merely irrelevant. It is difficult to believe that Eliot intended his comments to apply to such poems as the Elegies. He very likely would not have considered these erotic and cynical works to be among Donne's serious verse, and may even have regarded them as beneath his notice. Leishman's treatment of Eliot leads him to an extreme position: because they do not show the high seriousness implicit in a term such as "unified sensibility" the Elegies must be merely playful in nature. "His attitude is never wholly serious—indeed, in the Elegies, it is almost wholly unserious, is never more, one might almost say, than a kind of serious trifling" (p. 90). We shall see, however, that Donne uses his speakers, with their "trifling" wit, to explore significant questions of values, and often implies serious judgments upon the speakers. But Leishman is not to be undervalued; LaBranche regarded the chapter in The Monarch of Wit as the definitive treatment of the Elegies. He had not, though, seen the work of two more recent critics whose treatment of these poems in some ways supercedes Leishman's.

The thesis of Earl Miner's The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) is that the "private Mode" is the salient feature of metaphysical poetry. He shares with Leishman, and with me, an emphasis on the dramatic nature of the Elegies. Indeed
it is a corollary of his thesis that the loss of the dramatic setting in the poetry after Donne signals the decline of the metaphysical school. He points out that Donne, in poems such as "The Perfume," introduced into English poetry the figures of the rebellious lovers, who oppose their society and maintain their integrity by directing a satirical energy against it. Miner stresses the fictional nature of Donne's speakers and discusses the relationship between the speakers and the multiple audiences of such poems (the speaker as audience, the listener within, the reader).

Miner makes the mistake, however, of not distinguishing the Elegies carefully enough from Donne's other poetry or from metaphysical poetry in general. Common to all metaphysical poets, he says, is the use of "the speaker to cut off from the world and superior to it in his integrity and the world of his experience. The private speaker is a norm of consciousness, of integrity in . . . a world corrupt" (p. 29). The speakers of most of the Elegies are not, however, norms of integrity: though they assume an air of superiority toward the world around them, they are thoroughly immersed in it and have been corrupted by it. They are themselves the object of the satirical energy of the poems. Another of Miner's generalizations is extremely incisive: "Most of the best-known metaphysical poems are therefore poems of a double energy: of lyric affirmation and satiric denial" (p. 165). But when he tries to apply
this observation to an elegy, in this case "The Comparison," he seems to go astray. He says that the speaker satirizes his listener's ugly mistress as he affirms his love for his own beautiful lady. It is clear, however, that the speaker's own lover is no more real than is his companion's; they are both mere subjects for his wit. Lyric affirmation is, in actuality, foreign to the Elegies. It is undeniably present in only three of them: "On His Mistress," "His Picture," and "His Parting From Her."

N.J.C. Andreasen's approach to the Elegies resembles in many ways my own. In her book, John Donne: Conservative Revolutionary (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), she places considerable emphasis on Donne's manipulation of his personae and his use of the monologue form. But she strains much too hard to demonstrate the didactic nature of Donne's love poetry. Her purpose is to define Donne's "philosophy of love," which she finds to be quite traditional. She thinks that his method is to present negative exempla in the cupiditas poems, which include most of the Elegies, and positive exempla in the caritas poems, which include many, if not most, of the Songs and Sonnets. The problems inherent in her method begin to emerge in her background chapter (II, "Varieties of Amatory Experience"), in which she attempts to show that Ovid's Amores are fundamentally didactic. She presents them as dramatic portraits exemplifying deviations from morality. It is
probably a serious mistake, however, to read Ovid according to later didactic theories of poetry and to equate his method with Donne's. As LaBranche and Leishman point out, Donne's method is quite different from Ovid's in that it is much more dramatic. Moreover, it is misleading to characterize the Elegies as primarily moral statements. Certainly Donne investigates the ethics of the sexual relationship, but he is working in what are best thought of as psychological rather than moralistic terms. His method is exploratory rather than didactic. To support her approach, Andreasen draws upon Donne's sermons, which are dubious as evidence, having been written later and from, presumably, a quite different point of view. She is equivocal in defending her practice:

That Donne later preached this point of view from the pulpit and that it was widely accepted when he wrote his love poetry does not, of course, necessarily prove that it informs his love poetry. But a close examination of individual poems confirms evidence from the history of ideas, showing that in his love poems Donne did draw on conventional beliefs about the nature and purpose of love. (pp. 78-79)

Of course Donne was aware of "conventional beliefs"; they are all, perhaps, that any writer can "draw upon." But it is very dangerous to use such beliefs as a gloss upon poems such as the Elegies.

I did not become aware of Gordon W. Rockett's fine dissertation ("Ovidian and Naturalistic Themes in Donne's
Elegies," Wisconsin, 1969) upon Donne's Elegies and their backgrounds until the present study was well under way. Had I known of his work at the outset, I would no doubt have proceeded differently, for our treatments of the poems overlap at many points. His work has a somewhat different perspective, however, and is more ambitious in scope, taking the reader into matters not covered in this study. He is concerned primarily with defining the "libertine" philosophy of Donne and thus spends a good deal of time examining various classical and Renaissance works which have a bearing on the philosophy of love which lies behind the Elegies. He is also concerned with Donne's use of the theories and devices of Renaissance rhetoric; he illustrates from the Elegies the use of many of the techniques defined in the rhetorical treatises of the period and in the process effectively re-examines Rosamond Tuve's judgments on Renaissance poetics. The present study is not devoted to establishing the relations between the Elegies and these philosophical and rhetorical traditions, however. Its primary contribution is intended to be in its full explications of the poems themselves. Its secondary contribution is its analysis of the elegiac technique of Jonson. The reader might thus regard it, on the whole, as a supplement to Rockett's study, and, in many of its parts, as a source of alternative readings to these often complex works.
A recent book has taken up in an idiosyncratic way an attitude toward the Elegies which seems to have been traditional. Wilbur Sanders, in John Donne's Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), adopts an extreme version of what might be called the "developmental" approach to Donne as a poet. This approach may have begun with Sir Edmund Gosse (The Life and Letters of John Donne, London: Heinemann, 1899), who treats the Elegies as a preparatory exercise, in which the young rake was sowing his wild oats poetically before settling down to serious writing. This tendency is perhaps seen at its best in Richard E. Hughes' The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne (New York: Morrow, 1968). Hughes is no doubt correct in thinking that in the Elegies we see glimpses of the views of love which are fully realized in the Songs and Sonnets. He says, for example:

Eventually he achieved a magnificent identity through his art, but in the beginning he borrowed identities...he pours his embryonic self into ready molds and bit by bit creates angles and edges that were not in the originals. (p. 19)

Sanders, however, assumes that Donne's poetic art is embarrassingly undeveloped in the Elegies. In a view which is at times rather close to Leishman's, he portrays Donne as a player of adolescent games of wit. He sees Donne indulging in a pointless iconoclasm, with its "cheap kind of
emancipation," unaware that his audience no longer worships the icons he is breaking. I hope to show, however, that it is impossible to look closely at the technique of these poems and assume that Donne is unaware of what he is doing. They show a degree of conscious rhetorical control inconsistent with the view that they were written by a poet unaware of the "adolescence" of their speakers.

IV. The Text

Helen Gardner is very conservative in her textual approach and will allow only fifteen of the elegies to be ascribed to Donne with certainty. I will, of course, use her edition of The Elegies and Songs and Sonnets of John Donne (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) as my text. But there are good reasons for thinking that one of the poems she prints in her "Dubia" section, "His Parting From Her," may be by Donne. I will not deal with "A Funeral Elegy" and I will not dwell very long on two or three of the elegies which have been dealt with in detail by critics. Most notable among the latter are "To His Mistress Going to Bed," which has been explicated in extraordinary detail by Clay Hunt (in Donne's Poetry: Essays in Literary Analysis, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954, pp. 18-31, 207-14). It should be noted that Sir Herbert Grierson ascribed twenty elegies to Donne in his great edition of The Poems of John Donne (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912). This edition is
invaluable and I will depend upon it heavily, though Gardner's edition clearly supercedes it textually.
FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION


5 Ronsard and the . . . Elegy, p. 37.


9 Smith, pp. 96-8.


12 The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets, p. xxiii.
13 See, for example, J. B. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit (London: Hutchinson, 1951), p. 56.
14 See Smith, p. 67 and Bush, pp. 69-73.
16 Langbaum, p. 77.
17 Langbaum, p. 85.
18 Langbaum, p. 94.
19 Langbaum, p. 104.
22 Epigrams and Elegies. By I. D. (John Davies) and C. M. (Middleburg, Holland, 1595).
23 "Blanda Elegeia": The Background to Donne's 'Elegies', "MLR, 61 (1966), 357-68.
26 p. 41.
28 Piper, p. 47.
29 Piper, p. 209.
30 Piper, pp. 60-61.
31 Wilkinson, p. 10.
32 Thomae Campiani Poemata (London: 1595).
Mr. Michael Fitzmaurice, a teaching associate in the Ohio State English Department. Two of the elegies have been previously translated by Walter R. Davis, in his *The Works of Thomas Campion* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1967), pp. 403-5, 407.


See Walter Davis's useful "Biographical Outline," pp. xxix, xxx.
CHAPTER ONE
THE "WITTY" ELEGIES

Any poem, indeed any literary work, is a verbally created world. To a considerable extent, the only reality which exists in any creative work is that which the narrator chooses to convey. But the reader normally maintains the implicit working assumption that there is a recognizable world "out there" surrounding the work. Browning, for instance, enables his reader to envision the monastic garden around his monk and the palace of his duke even though they are never explicitly described. It is against this presumed world of reality that we gauge the perversity of the overheard speaker. But even though Donne's young men constantly make topical allusions and references to off-stage activities, it is difficult to maintain a sense of the objective reality of their surrounding world. The speakers tend to be almost solipsistic. Though they do not identify themselves as poets, but as witty conversationalists and often as praeeptori amoris, they take up Sidney's concept of the poet as second creator and carry it to an extreme. They know "the world" and regard it as a source of topics for their invention. In the "witty"
poems, it is a source of conceits through which to display their wit. This attitude carries over into the poems which are manifestly dramatic in nature; there, even though the speaker is involved in a situation and is overheard conversing, he is always to some degree performing. His mistress is more a creation of his wit than she is a real sexual object, and she never assumes a real identity of her own. The situation is in many ways analogous to that in Browning's "My Last Duchess," where the Duke is never fully in control of his duchess until she has been transformed into art. Donne's witty young men try to exert control through a verbal, not pictorial, "art." Their love-play is an extension of their word-play: both are primarily vehicles of self-display. "The Anagram," therefore, and the other witty poems are not "dramatic" in the usual sense; perhaps they might better be called "ironic." I will use Leishman's label "witty," but I do not imply by it that these poems are without any dramatic element. In "Change," for instance, it is possible to visualize an almost fully dramatic setting, if the interpretation presented herein is accepted. "The Comparison" can be seen as a dramatic speech in which the speaker is summoning all his rhetorical powers to make his listener despise his mistress. All of them dramatize the self-conscious display of attitudes, which are then treated in full-blown dramatic monologues in such poems as "The Perfume" and "Jealosie." In "The
Anagram," "The Comparison," "Change," and "Love's Progress," Donne presents us with a monologue in which the speaker is flaunting his wit. His speech is pleasurable in itself, but the sensitive reader takes further interest in playing off his own intelligence against the often spurious wit of the speaker. In short, the rhetoric makes us aware of the presence of Donne, the true wit, listening derisively to the self-consciously clever wit of his speaker.

"The Anagram" offers an excellent starting point for a reading of the Elegies, for in its argument is the very essence of the assumptions underlying the rest of the poems. Though it is not truly dramatic itself, it is an entrée into the drama which the poems in toto comprise. And though it is only mildly entertaining in its use of puns and absurd dialectic, it offers a very interesting revelation of the relationship between language and reality operative throughout the Elegies.

The poem is a piece of witty exposition, an extended joke in which an ugly lady is praised for having all the proper features, which are simply distributed about her person in an unfortunate pattern. As Leishman and Donald Guss have shown, the poem is in the tradition of the mock encomium; such poems were especially popular in sixteenth-century Italy and no doubt became well-known to Donne during his travels in that country as a young man.² Rosamond Tuve notes that the poem is a mocking imitation
of the popular Renaissance poem describing a lady's beauty by means of the logical device of division (an itemizing of parts). "The Anagram" is Donne's *reductio ad absurdum* of the convention: it implies that beauty is a total effect and that it is absurd to attempt to define it by tabulating separate charms. Following the standard poetic logic, he implies, it should make no difference that a lady has the right features in the wrong places or the right qualities affixed to the wrong features, "Things simply [i.e. inherently] good, can never be unfit."

The greater interest of the poem, however, is in its power to evoke the "speculative" response described by Rosalie Colie as the proper reaction to a finely wrought paradox. It provokes such a response because Donne succeeds, to a considerable degree, in transforming a figure of speech into a figure of thought. The central figure of speech is that as the letters of an anagram can be shuffled around to form any number of words, so could Flavia's features, if properly arranged, form an attractive woman.

Though all her parts be not in th'usuall place,
She'hath yet an Anagram of a good face,
If we might put the letters but one way,
In the leane dearth of words, what could wee say? (11. 15-18)
But the device becomes a figure of thought as it becomes clear that this is not the usual poem of praise which takes a lady as its subject and then employs a figure of speech in a subordinate relationship to characterize her (as "My love is a red, red rose"). No, here the anagram is the mistress, to the extent that she exists at all; she has no existence to the speaker apart from what she can be equated to verbally. We form no image of her, even though the poem is ostensibly a description. We know nothing of her beyond her name (a conventional Roman one) and her apparently revolting appearance. She is the sum-total of a series of abstracted features. The woman as anagram has become a figure of thought; it has become possible to reduce a woman to a verbal formula. Once one has succeeded in doing this, he can regard her as less complex and ultimately less human. We are apparently presented with real pieces of human anatomy, but they are never more than pieces in a puzzle; they are never assembled so as to comprise a human being with real identity. It should be clear that in this case no pretense is ever made that the lady is anything other than a verbal formula; there is no truly dramatic situation, though there is a speaker and an auditor, and no actual relationship involved. But the assumptions implicit here are carried over into the more dramatic poems. We see young men throughout the Elegies trying to exert control over their relationships through verbal creations
of their own making. The brilliant young man of wit be­
comes a kind of creator; in "Tutelage" we shall see him explicitly regarding himself as having created his mist­
tress, at least as a sexual being, through teaching her the language of love.

"The Comparison" is the most static of the Elegies in its form. Except for the final couplet, it consists en­
tirely of a series of similes, all explicitly formulated with "like" or "as," contrasting two mistresses by com­
paring the one to attractive, the other to unsavory ob­jects. The poem begins with the first of its similes, lists others, and states its rather lame thesis in its final couplet:

Leave her, and I will leave comparing thus, She, and comparisons are odious.

In its static structure it differs from the other elegies (with the exception of "Julia" among the Dubia), all of which are characterized by sudden turns of thought. Even "The Anagram," which in many ways closely resembles "The Comparison," has a turn in its development, the second half (11. 27ff.) departing from the "anagram" and arguing the advantages of ugliness.

Though the argument per se of "The Comparison," is not particularly ingenious, the imagery which supports it is. Its forte is what is best called tactile imagery, and
Donne's use of this type of imagery bears certain resemblances to Frost's in his poem "Birches":

Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open. (ll. 45-47)

Donne's purpose is not precisely to recreate in the reader the sensation of the twig across the open eye; his images are not directly from experience. The speaker's strategy is to employ disgusting imagery to make his friend's mistress seem revolting and thereby induce him to leave her. Since the friend's relationship to the woman is presumably sexual, the most relevant appeal is to his senses. The comparisons throughout the poem are intended not to form a logical or consistent argument, but to overwhelm the listener with discomforting tactile imagery. His images of the woman's oily, scratchy, diseased tissues are designed to make his listener squirm at the very thought of making love to such a creature.

The movement of the poem is a negative version of the first journey over a woman's body described in "Love's Progress (ll. 39-72). After beginning with his own mistress's breast and neck, the speaker moves from the ugly mistress's brow to her head as a whole, her breast, trunk, arms and hands, and finally and most importantly, her genitalia. The revolting effects of the rest of the poem culminate in
its final section (focusing on her sexual organs), which comprises one-fourth of the poem. The revulsion which the listener is to feel is focused on the sex act itself: he is to feel a horror at the thought of performing the act within his mistress's diseased organs. Her disgusting sexuality infects her other features as well. Her brow, for instance, is covered with foul perspiration, which is "Like spermatique issue of ripe menstroous boiles." As Shawcross points out in his recent edition, Donne is using an image of venereal disease. In effect, she is the image of sexual corruption from top to bottom. Her sexual organs themselves are instruments of destruction (a gun, l. 39, a volcano, l. 41) because they are diseased, as indicated by their missing pubic hair: "... like to that Aetna Where round about the grasse is burnt away" (ll. 41-42). The simile "Or like hot liquid metallis newly runne into clay moulds ..." continues the weapon image ("the dread mouth of a fired gunne"), probably suggesting bullet molds, and introduces a discomforting tactile pattern. It suggests the sensation of immersion in scalding, congealing fluid within an abrasive receptacle. The image of disease and the tactile unpleasantness are carried over into the most offensive simile in the poem:

Are not your kisses then as filthy, 'and more, As a worme sucking an invenom'd sore? (ll. 43-44)
The phallic worm penetrating the vaginal sore recalls the immersion discomfort described above; by extending such discomfort to cunnilingus, Donne suggests the even greater revulsion of oral contact with disease. The next simile provides another image of sexual fear and extends it to the third of the three kinds of sexual contact, genital, oral, and manual:

Doth not thy fearfull hand in feeling quake,  
As one which gath'ring flowers, still fear'd a snake?  (11. 45-46)

The last of these similes suggests, upon reflection, some of the most discomforting tactile sensations:

Is not your last act harsh, and violent,  
As when a Plough a stony ground doth rent?  (11. 47-48)

Her genitalia are diseased and scabrous: entrance might have to be forced—as when a plow is forced into hard, stony ground—and penetration would be rough and painful. The contrasting manner of the speaker's love-making with his own mistress is presented in three succinct figures:

So kisse good Turtles, so devoutly nice  
Are Priests in handling reverent sacrifice,  
And such in searching wounds the Surgeon is  
As wee, when wee embrace, or touch, or kisse.  
(11. 49-52)

These three images of oral, manual, and genital contact are intended to provide positive contrasts with those
These positive images are not, however, as convincing as are the unpleasant ones. Though the latter have a repulsive effectiveness, the flattering images are relatively bland. This is probably inevitable to some degree: it is always difficult to bring as much vividness to an illustration of the "good" as an effective satirist can bring to the object of his scorn. But it should be noted that the flattering images here often do not carry even the positive force the speaker assumes they do. In the last set of similes quoted above, the conventional images of the affectionate doves certainly contrasts favorably with the loathsome worm, but the comparison of their caresses to a priest's handling of the elements of the Eucharist suggests a ritualistic action which is somehow the antithesis of an act of passion. The final image of a surgical instrument working in a wound does not provide a more satisfying impression of an erotic act than does the image of the "harsh, and violent" act of his friend. It is very difficult, in fact, to see any pleasant implication of the image; it produces the highly uncomfortable sensation of cold steel entering naked flesh. This is the case throughout the poem. The speaker's simile for his mistress's arms and hands could as easily be taken negatively as positively out of context:
And like that slender stalk, at whose end stands
The woodbine quivering, are her arms and hands. (ll. 27-28)

I know of no traditional meanings for such a figure, and
if it is original it is scarcely pleasing. It seems to me
that the image serves only as a means of introducing the
set of negative images which follow (ll. 29-34); they are the
real poetic interest here.

Moreover, the images of his mistress are often ambiguous
in their implications. The similes devoted to her
head are apparently meant to denote only roundness:

Round as the world’s her head, on every side,  
Like to that fatal Ball which fell on Idæ,  
Or that whereof God had such jealousy,  
As, for the ravishing thereof we die. (ll. 15-18)

But as Helen Gardner points out, it is not clear "why
Donne assumes that the golden apple of the contest on
Mount Ida and the apple of the Fall were perfectly spheri-
cal." The characteristic of roundness is not very convincingly imposed by the speaker; the normal associations of the images are negative. The apple dropped by Eris, goddess of discord, into the beauty contest certainly is associated with beauty, but beauty in the service of destruction, since it led to the ten-years suffering of the Trojan War. The apple from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil does not, except by a considerable stretch
of the imagination, even have the redeeming association with beauty. Neither is his image of her sexual charms free of negative implications:

Then like the Chymicks masculine equall fire,
Which in the Lymbecks warme wombe doth inspire
Into th' earths worthlesse durt a soule of gold,
Such cherishing heat her best lov'd part doth hold.
(ll. 35-38)

His point is that just as worthless metal is inspired to become gold within the alchemist's limbeck, so is his member inspired when held within her "cherishing" organ. But the comparison is with a process which, while certainly widely believed in at the time, was also the object of continual suspicion. The mining and transforming of the metals of the earth was regarded by many as a kind of sacrilege, as evidenced by Spenser's Cave of Mammon (Faerie Queene, II. vii). Donne himself disparages alchemists in "The Bracelet" (ll. 43-48) and in "Love's Alchymie" parallels the fraudulence of alchemy with the deceitful hopes fostered by love (ll. 6-12).

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this examination of the imagery of "The Comparison." The first is that the praise of his own mistress is, at best, of secondary interest to the speaker. Like the listener's mistress, she is a mere instrument for his wit to play upon. Earl Miner is seriously misleading when he uses this poem to exemplify the "double energy" of metaphysical
poetry. He says that the speaker satirizes his listener's ugly mistress while affirming his love for his own beautiful lady. The affirmation is only a rhetorical appearance, however; all of the energy of the poem is expended in satirical denial. We shall see that lyric affirmation is seldom to be found in the *Elegies*. Whether the speaker is flattering his lady, as in "The Autumnal," or denouncing her, as in "Recusancy," she is seldom more than an object for his wit.

Secondly, this poem clearly shows that Miss Tuve's observations on the function of Renaissance imagery must constantly be qualified in reference to individual poets. We have seen that the images in "The Comparison" are designed to suggest certain unpleasant tactile sensations. Of this Miss Tuve says "... the Elizabethan, unlike the modern, appears to be little interested in the capacity of an image to all but reproduce sensations. This is the simplest function an image can have: the accurate transliteration of a sense impression." We have seen that Donne, unlike Frost with his image of the twig across the open eye, does not try to transliterate a sense impression. But he does try to *create* a felt sensation in the reader by playing upon the reader's imagination; he suggests sense responses through analogues with imaginable physical actions (the worm sucking the sore, the plough breaking stony ground). Neither do such images always bear the clear illustrative
relation to a conceptual statement that Miss Tuve says they must. She argues that the function of Renaissance images is never to cause the reader to reflect upon the state of the speaker's mind, but to clarify his stated argument. The overriding criterion for such images is that they achieve "... a kind of luminous immediacy, a formal clarté." The Renaissance poet did not have the modern penchant for ambiguity, she says; therefore his images express quite unequivocally the meaning he states. They carry on a clear-cut rhetorical development:

Donne's images are for one thing a series of strenuous attempts to make us put our feet in exactly the path that will lead us through an inquiry. Unexplained qualities of the images stick out awkwardly on all sides if we try to cover them with the aim now oftenest assigned him, faithful description of his processes of mind.

In "The Comparison" the path is manifestly obvious and at the end of it lies repudiation of the listener's mistress and acknowledgement of the speaker's skill in a conventional play of wit. But the "unexplained qualities of the images" are too numerous to be ignored. They do not just "stick out awkwardly on all sides" of the path; at times they threaten to obliterate the path's boundaries. When the speaker describes his own mistress's head as the fatal Ball of the Fall story, or his copulation with her in terms of a surgeon searching a wound with his scalpel, we wonder
for a moment whether we have not strayed—or whether our
guide has not strayed—from the path we thought we were
following. We wonder whether we have reached the true end
of the path when we get to the pat concluding statement of
the speaker's monologue. The repulsiveness of the listen­
er's mistress has been extended, by the force of the speak­
er's imagery, to his own and even perhaps to women in gen­
eral. Donne has endowed him with a rhetoric which, without
his awareness of it, obliterates the attractiveness of his
own lady.

Such questions arise because the speaker's rhetoric
seems to undercut the basic raison d'être of his argument.
This argument demands a taste for feminine beauty, as op­
posed to mere sexual gratification. It assumes a high de­
gree of discrimination in the judgment of its speaker.
But, as we have seen, the imagery of the poem does not re­
fect a discriminating judgment. The images frequently
reflect negatively upon his own mistress and his love­
making with her. Of the opening set of images, for exam­
ple, Earl Miner is certainly correct in saying that Donne
is, in effect, defining the two mistresses in terms of
their sweat. He says that there is a "tacit identifica­
tion in synechoche of the mistresses' totalities with their
differing perspirations." But Miner accepts the argument
at face value, saying that the poem achieves its effect by
"discriminations of the judgment (i.e. reason) in differen­
tiating between things apparently like: two sweaty mistresses. It seems to me that this mistakes the most basic perceptual response a reader is likely to have to such a passage. For in spite of all the similes, the reader has probably not been diverted from the fact that he is being confronted with two sweaty women. It seems likely that this overriding physical fact reduces the nice distinctions to relative triviality. It is, moreover, dubious as to whether the most elevated figures of speech could ever make perspiration appear attractive. One of the "flattering" images is particularly ambiguous in its effect: "As that which from chaf'd muskats pores doth trill." The musk of the musk-cat, or musk-deer, was indeed a source of perfume, but the image of an animal's sweating pores cannot be entirely pleasant. Moreover, the Oxford English Dictionary gives several illustrations of the popular use of the term to refer to a prostitute.

We have said that the witty elegies are concerned with dramatizing attitudes. The third and final conclusion to be drawn from our examination of the imagery of "The Comparison" is that Donne is dramatizing in the poem a curiously ambiguous attitude toward sexuality. Ostensibly, the speaker expresses his dislike of a particular woman, as contrasted with his admiration of another. But what he really finds revolting about the disparaged mistress is her sexuality. We have seen how the poem moves toward and
focuses on her genitalia and how the speaker's vision of her corrupted genitalia pervades his description of all her parts. The "spermatique issue" of her diseased sexuality has infected her from brow to thigh. Sex is viewed as a disease in the images of the boils (l. 8) and of her "gouty hand" (l. 34). It is seen in terms of war and instruments of destruction in the image of the starved inhabitants of Sanserra (ll. 9-12), the "fatall Ball," the "dread mouth of a fired gun," and the volcano of Aetna. It is associated with death in the image of the mistress's body as a worm-eaten trunk and a grave (ll. 25-26), in the several images of worms, and in the image of the quartered bodies hanging on the city gate. Most importantly, it is associated with death as a consequence of sin in the comparison of his own lover's head to the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "for the ravishing thereof we die." This moral, or mortal, fear of sexuality is suggested further in the images likening the ugly mistress's head to a formless mass:

Like the first Chaos, or flat seeming face Of Cynthia, when th'earths shadowes her embrace. (ll. 21-22)

The moon in eclipse is envisioned as Cynthia, or chastity, being embraced by the shadow of earth. This violation of chastity is equated with primeval chaos, all of which is--it must be remembered--in reference to the female head,
out of which came the impulse which led to the taking of the "fatall Ball . . . for the ravishing thereof we die." The impulse was planted in the female head by, of course, the phallic serpent who appears in the genitalia section later in the poem. Following close upon the images just discussed is the image of scourged flesh which puts moral horror into terms familiar to Donne's audience:

Like rough bark'd elmboughes, or the russet skin
Of men late scurg'd for madnes, or for sinne,
Like Sun-parch'd quarters on the citie gate,
Such is thy tann'd skins lamentable state.

(11. 29-32)

It is significant that this is the only point in the poem at which a comparison is presented in a specifically human form, and that the image is of human bodies suffering horribly for sin. The genitalia section which concludes the poem is an intricate network of images of death, disease, and destruction, all preceded by the description of his own mistress's womb in terms of the forbidden mysteries of alchemy. It is important to see, then, that he berates the ugly mistress not simply because she is physically unappealing; this should be the only relevant consideration for the emancipated young libertine concerned only with bodily pleasure. He also shows her to be morally repulsive, and the moral repulsiveness carries over into the images of his own loved one. This is in spite of his conscious
attempt to color his own love in positive moral tones ("good," "devoutly," "reverend," ll. 49-50), which may in itself compromise his "libertine" pose. It seems to me that this apparent libertine bravado, undercut by unreconciled moral qualms, pervades the Elegies. We see the intellectual rogue superficially delighted with himself and his cynical, hedonistic approach to life, but suffering deep-seated disillusionment with sexual pleasure and half-consciously casting about for sources of meaning. By and large, Donne denies him access to these sources in the Elegies; here his interest is in depicting the dilemma.

"Change" offers a useful contrast with "The Anagram" and "The Comparison," for though it is, like them, a witty defense of an essentially indefensible proposition, it shows this kind of poem developed in a far more dramatic fashion. We see a man's thought in the process of responding to a specific situation; the process includes sudden changes of direction, unconscious ironies, even contradictions. To see clearly the distance between "Change" and the more static poems of wit, the reader should look first at "Variety," which has often been ascribed to Donne and deals with the same subject. Though Grierson prints "Variety" as Donne's, Helen Gardner is certainly correct in excluding it from his canon. As she points out, it is utterly unlike anything by Donne in its style and tone:
I cannot find any parallel in Donne's works to the easy, natural, good-tempered tone in this poem. It is altogether lighter in mood and more lilting in its cadences than even his lightest Elegies and lacks the satiric edge that he gives to even his gayest songs. The poem is a straightforward piece of exposition, neatly and schematically working out its opening thesis. It is, all in all, much too smooth and self-satisfied a performance to be Donne's.

N.J.C. Andreasen sees "Change" as the same kind of poem as "Variety." Her analysis of "Change" is the only one in print, and is generally reasonable and interesting, but I believe that the poem is both more dramatic and less didactic than it appears to be in her reading of it. She sees it as the presentation, in slightly more dramatic terms, of the same thesis as that of "Variety":

The heavens rejoice in motion, why should I Abjure my so much lov'd variety, And not with many youth and love divide? Pleasure is none, if not diversifi'd. (ll. 1-4)

She says that we see a lover whose mistress has pledged herself to him, but who fears she will be unfaithful and cannot decide whether to accept amatory change or condemn it:

The lover hesitantly wavers between these two poles and finally concludes by deciding to accept the fact of change and call it joyous.
He determines to move on from one potentially unfaithful mistress to another, thereby avoiding cuckoldry and maintaining his "purity."15

It is difficult to see the logic, or even the intentional ill-logic of this. The poem gives numerous indications that it is intended to be a dramatic piece; assuming for the moment that it is, it seems reasonable to assume that the speaker is expressing some solution to the dilemma in which he finds himself. Andreasen's formulation is somehow unsatisfying, for it just does not seem to actually represent a solution.

The problem here arises partly because, as is so often the case with Donne's poems, it is difficult to decide whether or not we are being presented with a real dramatic situation. Andreasen assumes that the speaker and his mistress have "given their love for one another the double seal of faith and good works, seals normally so efficacious that they are not easily broken"16 and that the speaker without immediate cause simply begins to speculate upon her possible infidelity. I should like to suggest that the dramatic situation may be more fully realized. Let us suppose that he has a definite reason for doubting her fidelity: she has just broken her vows to someone else.

Although thy hand and faith, and good workes too,
Have seal'd thy love which nothing should undoe,
Yea though thou fall backe, that apostasie
Confirme thy love; yet much, much I feare thee.

(ll. 1-4)
The speaker is, of course, using the "language of theology" (there is a joke on the faith-works distinction); but he may also literally mean that she is married and has broken her vows. She has given her "hand and faith," formally sealing that sacrament of love "which nothing should undo." Her "good workes" would, of course, be her sexual favors, but also her marital duties or the dowery with which her marriage was sealed. Whether or not this reading be correct, the monologue begins in medias res, presumably at the end of a seduction sequence. The listener is in the process of "falling back," her "apostasie" being sexual in nature. But in terms of the reading suggested above, her breaking of a sacramental tie with another confirms all the more her love for him (the speaker). This thought, however, makes the lover realize that if she can break so strong a tie with another, she will be even more inclined to break her less binding tie with him. Thus we have a quite believable dilemma for the speaker of the poem.

The speaker's attitude toward his situation is one of anxiety. He never "rejoyces" in "much lov'd variety" as does the speaker of "Variety." He makes no pretense, until perhaps the very end, that he has decided to "accept the fact of change and call it joyous." The argument which follows does not affirm promiscuity, but resists it. It does not express his commitment to be promiscuous himself, but on the contrary draws a consistent contrast
between men, who tend to adhere to one woman, and women, who by nature seek sexual variety. The idea is that man is capable of reason and must strive to control the sexual relationship, because the female is at the mercy of her animal instincts.

A close examination of the imagery of the first half of the poem will show clearly that it is not an exaltation of libertinism. For lines five through twenty are not just "the lover's analysis of the nature of women;" just as importantly they define the nature of men. Specifically, they contrast female promiscuity with male commitment. One of the first images portrays man as the fowler trying to lure elusive woman, but at the mercy of the next hunter who may know how to use the same means and lure her away. This depicts the successful seduction campaign he has waged, which he now fears will have been in vain if his mistress decides to fly to someone else. This leads him to generalize: "and as these things be, women are made for men, not him, nor mee." This is one of several problematical passages in the poem—Andreasen wisely bypasses it—but I think it is best read in the light of the adulterous situation suggested above. Assuming that we are dealing with a specific set of relationships, the specific referents for "him" and "me" are the husband the lady is leaving and the speaker himself. He is thus saying: as has been exemplified in my seduction of her, a woman is not destined
for a specific man, not for him, nor—I am afraid—for me; the only sure fact is that she was designed to be made love to by some man. This is particularly important in relation to the preceding generalization, which does not so much illustrate feminine lechery, like those that follow, as it attempts to define the nature of women and, by implication, of men:

Women are like the Arts, forc'd unto none,
Open to'all searchers, unpriz'd, if unknowne.
(11. 5-6)

An art can be known (with a sexual pun here), esteemed highly (prized), even mastered to a great degree, but it cannot be "forced," and it never fully becomes one's own; it remains virtually unchanged no matter how many may search into it. A single work of art may be possessed, but the temporary owner can never alter its identity. That work of art can, however, have an immense influence on its admirer; the possessor may become the possessed without having the slightest effect on the possession. This reflects the speaker's awareness that he has been the seducer, but now, in the act of making her his possession, realizes that his commitment is already far greater than hers is likely to be. All that he knows of women and his success in seducing this particular one lead him to assume that she will not regard him as more than a temporary partner. His own role is thus threatened by change, all the more so
since there is not likely to be any corresponding change in her which will allow a new equilibrium to be established. He thus feels acutely threatened by the possibility of her promiscuity, now that he has "liberated" her.

He contemplates this situation with horror in a series of images which show him as committed, indeed imprisoned, in this new role, her as free to follow her whim at his expense. Having compared women to such proverbially lecherous creatures as foxes and goats, he asks two rhetorical questions:

Shall women, more hot, wily, wild then these, Be bound to one man, and did Nature then Idle make them apter to 'endure than men? (11. 12-14)

Andreasen quotes the last five words as if they were part of a declarative statement, taking them to refer to women's supposedly greater—more "enduring"—sexual capacity. Helen Gardner seems to adopt the same view, quoting Montaigne to the effect that women are "much more capable and violent in loves-effects" than men. If one looks at the whole passage, however, it seems obvious that the second rhetorical question follows up the first and that, syntactically, both require a "no" answer. The speaker is no longer talking about woman's sexual appetite per se; he is concerned with the relationship to men that must follow as a consequence of those appetites. He says, in effect, is it likely that these hot, wily creatures should bind them-
selves to one man, and that, if they do so, they will be as likely as man to persevere in such a relationship? Clearly nature would have been very "idle" to have made them so. The point is that the image culminates in this contrast of women with men, who are more "enduring." But the speaker goes on to contemplate the negative implications of this for men.

The following images all have sexual implications and all suggest man's sexual enslavement to woman. Women are to men as clogs (heavy pieces of wood) attached to beasts to prevent their free movement. They are like galleys, which remain free to move about, while men are chained to them as slaves. The slave-in-galley image bears some resemblance to the "immersion" images we have seen already; like them, it suggests a repressed fear of sexuality.

Rivers (men) must spend themselves into a determined sea, but that sea may receive any number of rivers. A man is confined to his single plot of plow-land and must cast all his seed upon it, but must acknowledge that the field can bear far more seed than he has.

Who hath a plow-land, casts all his seed corne there,  
And yet allowes his ground more corne should beare. (ll. 17-18)

Andreasen's handling of this image typifies her treatment of this section of the poem: "women are available to all
men in the same way that any ploughed field will receive
seed corn . . . ."22 Donne's syntax, however, emphasizes
male confinement and possible male inadequacy to meet fe­
male sexual needs. It should be noted that we have already
seen the plow-land figure used as a negative image of
sexuality in "The Comparison" (ll. 47-48).

This brings us to the second of the manifestly dra­
matic moments in the poem:

By nature, which gave it, this liberty
Thou lov'st, but Oh! canst thou love
it and mee? (ll. 21-22)

Like the first, it is an abrupt exclamation, totally
lacking in cleverness or rhetorical effectiveness, which
breaks the continuity of what the speaker has been saying.
The first--"much, much I feare thee"--marked his awareness
of the possible implications of her "apostasie." He has
been contemplating for the last sixteen lines the horrors
which could result from unleashing her full sexual energies.
We might perhaps assume that, like the speaker of a seduc­
tion poem such as "The Flea," he has argued that the lady
should demonstrate her liberation by making love to him.
This is always a dubious argument, for the seducer does not
want to liberate his listener so much as to exercise con­
trol over her. Donne is exploring the consequences of the
argument of the sexual opportunist by having him take his
own arguments about sexual liberation literally. Doing so,
he suddenly sees himself as the potential victim. If he is merely to assume the place of the one he has cuckolded, his position will be intolerable, his self-image shattered.

In light of his fears of the consequences of sexual promiscuity (ll. 7-22), it is difficult to believe he would not embrace it as the solution to his problem. As noted earlier, it is first of all not clear how he could see it as a solution, since he would simply be accepting what he fears. Andreasen accepts this as a contradiction. She assumes that Donne has portrayed a speaker so dense as not to realize he is adopting the course he fears: "Having at last decided on intentional blindness, he can forget that only a few lines earlier he said of change, 'More than thy hate, I hate it.'" But there is not even a gap of a "few lines"; he would have to be contradicting his "I hate it" in the very next line, and within the same sentence by saying he chooses to "change as oft as shee." I find it impossible to believe Donne would reverse the dramatic flow of the monologue so unaccountably, or that he would create a character so totally unaware of what he is saying. We must assume that he means what he says when he considers that the "likenesse" which "glues" their love may demand that he "change" too, and when he rejects that possibility. His answer to the question "must I change too?" is clearly "no"--he says "more then they hate, I hate it." He would rather suffer her hate than undergo a process which would
make his identity dependent upon its likeness to hers.

The passage in which he states what his course of action will be is a genuine crux.

... must I change too?

More then thy hate, I hate it, rather let mee
Allow her change, then change as oft as shee,
And soe not teach, but force my'opinion
To love not any one, nor every one. (11. 24-28)

Having read the passage in many different possible ways, I can only conclude that Donne is guilty of faulty composition. The alternative readings do not constitute a valid ambiguity, but are mutually exclusive. Andreasen makes no specific reference to these crucial lines, but her argument would demand that they be read as follows: Must I change too? The idea is hateful to me: rather let me allow her to change, and then change as often as she does, thereby not teaching her my doctrine of selective libertinism abstractly, but demonstrating it and thereby forcing her to accept it. There are several problems here, the first of which is the enormous contradiction we have already discussed. The second is that in this reading the word "rather" makes no sense; for he would not be doing something "rather than" change--he would simply be changing. Thirdly, it is not clear how he would be "forcing his opinion"24 if he were changing "as oft as shee." He would merely be imitating her pattern, not teaching her anything. Shawcross suggests "By his reciprocal change she will
become jealous and return to him alone." This explanation is plausible; it remains focused on the speaker's central problem of keeping his new mistress. Andreasen sees him as simply abandoning this problem and wandering away to one mistress after another. But Shawcross's gloss still assumes the above paraphrase to be accurate. I should like to offer an alternative: Must I change too? I hate the idea. Rather than change when she does, I will allow her (if she must) to change, (remaining stable myself), and thereby not try to teach her what I want, but force her by example to accept my view that she is not restricted to one man (her husband), but neither is she to make love to everyone (or, . . . to accept my view that she should not love simply anyone or everyone). There are other possible variations, but I would insist that the "rather . . . than" structure is essential, for his policy only makes sense if it is an alternative to the hated thought of his own change. He must, in short, show her that the question of sexual fidelity is not an either-or issue. It is not the case that she must remain faithful to her husband or, making a break, become completely promiscuous. He wants her to make a new commitment to him.

The images which follow illustrate this view and are meant to define the role of the woman, not the speaker himself. Andreasen assumes they depict his decision to "like a river . . . meander slowly from mistress to
mistress." But his promiscuity, present or future, is not the issue in his mind. He is concerned with controlling his partner's sexual activity and is still determined that she reject the two extremes. She is neither to remain in the captivity of her present owner nor to roam everywhere as a sexual vagrant (Grierson is certainly correct in glossing "roguery" as "vagrancy," II, 66). She is not to stagnate where she is, like a motionless body of water, but neither is she to become putrified in the vast sea of sexual promiscuity, receiving all waters (this recalls the image of lines 19-20). The final image is complex and easily lends itself at first glance to the view that he is envisioning himself as a river moving from partner to partner. But since he has just described promiscuity as putrifying, it is difficult to believe that he would regard merely a lesser degree of it as purifying. Fortunately, we have another use of the same figure in the Elegies to aid us in understanding the very elliptical use of it here. In "Recusancy" (ll. 21-34), the speaker describes his mistress as a rushing river and her admirers as river banks; he is the streambed which channels the stream until "her often gnawing kisses winne/ The traiterous banks to gape" and she sets out on a new course, leaving the channel, "who thenceforth is drie." The figure of the stream within its banks defines the relationship between lovers. To Donne's elegiac lovers it depicts a basic sexual reality:
the need for control of female sexual energies within male bonds. The female sexual drive is the more powerful sexual force; it is a torrent which threatens to carry all before it. This is consistent with a traditional use of the river as a female symbol. Edmund Wilson, in his famous essay on *Finnegan's Wake*, shows how the river Liffey is used as the feminine symbol in the novel and is transformed into Anna Livia Plurabelle. There can be no doubt that the affected, young pseudo-intellectuals of the *Elegies* feel threatened by this more elemental force. But the speaker here presents an image of female sexuality contained within solid male banks. Like a free-flowing river, she has kissed one set of enclosing banks adieu and is now within his control. The image is admittedly still not totally satisfactory; for if she is a flowing stream she will logically go on to kiss other banks. But the speakers of the *Elegies* are constantly unaware of the full implications of their figures of speech. Moreover, the alternative readings are even more unsatisfactory. The reading followed in this essay does seem to explain satisfactorily the way these images serve the speaker's own rhetorical needs and the way they reflect the dramatic movement of his thoughts. The final stream image is the best he can do, at the moment, to describe to his mistress the alternative to both the stagnation of her present relationship and the potential corruption of carrying her sexual liberation too far. To
him it depicts cleanly effected sexual change and the establishment of a harmonious new relationship. Not dwelling on the negative implications of his image though, he attempts to drive home his message with the high-sounding but vapid generality: "Change is the nursery / Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity."

Hopefully, this close look at the development of the poem's monologue has shown it to be both more dramatic and less didactic than it appears in the only published critical assessment of it. It is important for our purposes to see that the expository, didactic approach is foreign to Donne's method in the Elegies (Andreasen does acknowledge that the poem is to some degree dramatic). It is not simply a paradox on the hackneyed theme of "Variety," into which have been inserted statements self-incriminating for the speaker. It does not work out as a depiction of the opposition between two types of love, cupiditas and caritas, the latter emerging the victor:

Two loves, caritas and cupiditas, are yoked by violence together. The speaker, devoted to cupiditas, attempts to persuade himself that its tyrannous transiency can be overcome, that he can achieve the security of caritas through persistent self-gratification.

The reader simply does not become aware of the presence of any concept resembling caritas, and as we have seen, the speaker does not really adopt the policy of selective
promiscuity. There are no discernible moral poles in the poem. The play of religious language at the opening and the reference to eternity at the end do not establish a "sacred" love as a standard against which to measure the "profane" love of the speaker. We see a man in a kind of limbo, enmeshed in competing value systems, all of which are relativistic. It is clear that conventional morality is no longer a viable alternative, but neither is the free exercise of impulse.

In "Love's Progress" we move to a poem which is far less dramatic than "Change"; indeed it is, like "The Anagram" and "The Comparison," merely a "witty" development of a fairly common trope. The speaker is not involved in any sort of struggle, as is the speaker of "Change"; he is an unabashed praeceptor amoris, confidently setting out his method of dealing with women. But it seems to me that it is clearer in this poem than in any of the others we have seen that Donne is presenting a kind of dual dialectic: a witty speech with an implied witty commentary upon that speech. The chief means by which this commentary is conveyed is through imagery, which often betrays the wit of its speaker. The poem is successful comedy on both levels: (1) the speaker's rhetoric is extremely clever in its own right, and (2) Donne's witty manipulation of that rhetoric enables the reader to see through the pseudo-sophistication
of the young rake. The more serious implications of this 
bawdy comedy are, again, not part of the argument of the 
poem, but of the interplay between reader and speaker and 
poet. We are led, as in "Change," to speculate upon the 
futility of "liberating" oneself in the way these young 
men attempt to do; the kind of "freedom" attained via the 
senses is of a superficial nature. This flaunting of con-
ventional sexual morality offers no lasting satisfaction, 
since a new code--a libertine one--is merely substituted 
for the old. No binding judgments are made by Donne in 
these matters; he does not go beyond the moral relativism 
we have seen in "Change."

"Love's Progress" is organized around a central geo-
graphical metaphor: the speaker is the experienced trav-
eler in the realms of love who lectures upon the proper way 
to make a "progress" over its terrain, which is a woman's 
body. The conceit of the journey over the female anatomy 
is not original with Donne, but he does use the convention 
in a significantly novel way. The mistress becomes a mi-
crocosm, her body the earth, its "centrique part" the cen-
ter of his universe, as the earth was in the Ptolemaic 
system (see lines 33-36 and Gardner's note). One of the 
important figures in the most affirmative poems in the 
Songs and Sonnets is that of the microcosm of lovers, that 
self-contained world of two (as in "The Good Morrow," "The 
Sun Rising," "The Dissolution"). That microcosm embraces
a harmony of opposites, a unifying of poles of experience into oneness: passion and tenderness, flesh and spirit, change and stasis. But the world of the *Elegies* is one of dichotomies, not of harmonies. In this poem, the lover is by no means at one with his "world"; he is a kind of stranger in a strange land. The whole point of the poem is indeed to insist on a separation of realms of experience. He tells his listener to keep the emotional or aesthetic aspects of women out of one's sexual relations with them. His Cupid has nothing whatever to do with spiritual matters:

... Search every sphere
And firmament, our Cupid is not there.
He's an infernall God, and under ground
With Pluto dwells, where gold and fyre abound. (ll. 27-30)

Those who worship him "their sacrificing coales/ Did not in Altars lay, but pits and holes." Altars are, of course, associated with spiritual values, which are forbidden.

His journey itself is a mad one. Richard Hughes has plotted the topsy-turvy geography of the traveler, who rushes from:

Jerusalem (the women's brow, l. 45), sails almost due west to the Canary Isles (her lips, ll. 51-53), through the Mediterranean, then doubles back and moves north up the Aegean to the Dardanelles (her breasts . . .), then south again to Jerusalem and an over-land trip eastward to India (her trunk, l. 65), and then, still another reverse, back through the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean (her navel, l. 66).
This sexual universe is not only chaotic, it is hostile, as we see in the speaker's description of its upper reaches. Its dangers are those attendant upon commitment. The speakers through the Elegies draw back from the complications and risks of emotional involvement; none portrays those risks so extensively as does this lover. The man who gets involved with anything beyond "The right true end of love" (sex) is "one which goes/ To sea for nothing but to make him sicke." We have already seen this image of sexual enslavement; it depicts the man who has allowed himself to become chained to the galley, rather than simply paying his fare and taking a ride on it (see "Change," ll. 15-16). The lady's features all threaten to trap or bind:

The hair a forrest is of ambushes,  
of springes, snares, fetters and manacles.  
(ll. 41-42)

The brow can capture in two ways:

The brow becalms us, when 'tis smooth and plaine,  
And when 'tis wrinkled, shipwracks us againe;  
Smooth 'tis a Paradise where we would have Immortall stay, and wrinkled 'tis our grave.  
(ll. 43-46)

When a woman is pleasant, she lulls us into loving her and desiring to remain in her company. But if we do commit ourselves, then her displeasure, which creates "graves" (furrows or trenches) on her brow, can destroy us (emotionally, or—in the hyperbole of love—bring the death—
wish which accompanies the "pangs of despised love"). Her
lips tempt him to permanent anchorage; her voice sings
siren songs which would lure him to destruction and, like
the Delphic oracle, would tell him that which would seal
his fate; her tongue is like a Remora eel, which would en-
able her to attach herself to him parasitically and hinder
his free movement.

It is a typical Donneian irony that, upon reflection,
the imagery of the mistress's lower reaches appears as
threatening as that of the upper. Though the speaker
strongly advocates "this empty and etheriall way," it is
difficult to see what recommends it. The analogues he uses
are to acts of abasement before authority.

Civilitie we see refin'd: the kiss
Which at the face began, transplanted is,
Since to the hand, since to the Imperial knee,
Now at the Papal foot delights to be;
If Kings think that the nearer way, and do
Rise from the foot, Lovers may do so too.

(11. 81-86)

From the position of equality assumed in the kissing of the
face, the lover descends past the social courtesy of kiss-
ing the hand, past the servitude of bowing to the knee of
a king, past even the abject subjection of bowing all the
way to the Papal foot. (Three levels of obeisance are in-
dicated: social, political, spiritual, each more demanding
than its predecessor.) It is indeed difficult to imagine
a prostration as total as he advocates. In light of this,
the speaker's assumption that he has "found out" womankind is ironic. Women, he implies, are not to be adored, or even admired, and the standard objects of their beauty are not to be given even token attention by the knowing lover. Women are to be recognized, and used, for what they are worth. It should be acknowledged that this argument is quite clever in its own right, and certainly the reader's primary interest is in the wit of the bizarre logic with which the speaker recommends using this "empty and etheriall way" to a lady's sexual charms. It is when the reader hesitates and imagines the literal use of the speaker's method for a moment that Donne's further comic implications emerge. We envision the young rake prostrate before a woman, a kind of sexual tyrant (which is ironic, considering his imperious tone), who makes him grovel before giving her consent for him to rise to her "centrique part." He is putting women in their place, but his own place has in the process become more inferior than that of the adoring lover whom he despises. In spurning the niceties of more courtly lovemaking, with its conventions of subservience to the idealized lady, he seems to suggest a kind of sexual self-abasement greater than that feared by the speaker of "Change."

Another aspect of the speaker's obsequious mode of "seduction" is reflected in his reference to the ultimate authoritarian figure. In proclaiming the foot as the
fittest point at which to begin, he argues that:

Least subject to disguise and change it is,
Men say, the devil never can change his. (ll. 77-78)

He means obviously that though women may deceive us with their painted faces and other such deceptions on their upper person, there is nothing they can do to their feet (or their genitalia). If we are to really know women, we must know them by those undisguisable organs which play no devious aesthetic tricks. This is a typical Donneian remark: the allusion to the devil is casual, almost an aside. As he often does, Donne is using a figure for a limited rhetorical purpose, but is also aware that it has strong traditional associations which cannot be confined within that specific application. The association, in the reader's mind, of a woman's foot, and thus her sexuality— to which her foot is merely an approach— with the forces of evil is probably inevitable and intended by Donne. We are presumably to assume that the speaker is not aware of this, just as he is not aware that this association is consistent with the earlier identification of his Cupid as "an infernall God" who "under ground/ With Pluto dwells . . . ." The speaker regards women as inclined to be "white devils"; like Webster's Vittoria they use their beauty to incite men to evil. He escapes their influence by treating them only as sexual objects, but pure sexuality, as we have seen in "Change," can be enslaving in its own right. It is
perhaps ironic then that the line which has puzzled Donne's editors is best understood in reference to this "devil" imagery:

Some symetrie the foote hath with that part
Which thou dost seeke, and is thy map for that.

(11. 74—75)

No one has been able to see any real symmetry between the foot and the sexual organs. But if the lines are read with the "infernal" imagery in mind, the cloven foot can easily be seen to bear a general resemblance to the vagina. But whether Donne intends us to relate the two images or not, the point is that he is cleverly having his speaker render fealty to an "infernall God" who is traditionally more dangerous than the feminine beauty he resists. It must be clear that we are not really talking about the man's religion; he is a worshipper not of the forces of evil, but of the senses. He is not an evil man, but a "passion's slave" whose manner of worship (to continue from Hamlet's same speech, III. ii. 66-67) is to "crook the pregnant hinges of the knee/ Where thrift may follow fawning."

Donne is again presenting the irony of the liberated young man blind to the limitations he has placed upon himself. He is speaking as a man who has control over the situation, but his practice is to give over control to the possessor of the charms he seeks. The rhetoric of flattery and seduction he rejects represents a traditional means of
exerting control, by a mutually acceptable set of verbal symbols, over one's sexual partner/adversary. To plead directly for her assent is to place himself at the beck and call of her sexual whims. It seems that his satisfaction is also strongly dependent upon the resources of his wallet.

His Cupid is a god of both "gold and fyre"—money as well as passion. There is an assumption throughout the Elegies, as in Ovid's love books, that the gentleman-lover's position in the "world" depends upon his ability to maintain the appearance of wealth. Money is a crucial sexual necessity in both the realm of serious courtship and the day-to-day world of more casual encounters. It should be remembered that the women who inhabit the erotic poems of the Latin elegists were mostly Greek courtesans. Donne's London did not have a strictly comparable class, but it does seem to have had an abundance of wives and daughters of the bourgeoisie whose heads were easily turned by a fashionable "gentleman," and it did have its prostitutes. Despite the air of sophistication which prevails in the Elegies, there is a crudely direct relation in them between money and sex. Of his god of "gold and fyre" he says: "Men to such Gods their sacrificing coales/ Did not in Altars lay, but pits and holes." The pits and holes are no doubt identical to the "purses" or "mouths" to which the lover pays tribute:
Rich Nature hath in woman wisely made
Two purses, and their mouthes aversely laid;
They then which to the lower tribute owe
That way which that exchequer lookes must goe.
Hee which doth not, his error is as great
As who by Clyster gave the stomach meate. (ll. 91-96)

The "brutal ugliness" of the conclusion has been noted by Andreasen; the coarseness is, I think, intentional on Donne's part and is in perfect keeping with the speaker's mercantile attitude toward sex. For the lover assumes that he is being outrageously clever in the same way he has been throughout the poem. He is not sensitive to the fact that he is violating all semblance of the decorum he has established; for though he has rejected Petrarchan flattery, he has maintained its imagery in modified form. The lady's cheek is a "rosy hemispheare," her teeth pearls. The final images of the poem make abundantly clear the coarseness underlying its veneer of sophistication throughout. For the journey which comprises its central metaphor is a merchant's voyage; its ports of call (India, the Canaries) are those reknowned for their commercial treasures. The "Rich Nature" which has provided women with their two purses is the "new Nature, use" which presided over the earlier comparison of women to gold, "the soule of trade" (see ll. 9-16). It could be stated somewhat high-mindedly that the use of gold to facilitate love-making is a perversion of a truly "natural" process. But it would perhaps be more in keeping with the tone of the poem to observe that the
apparently joyous libertine, who proclaims with such bravado his mastery of the arts of seduction, must to some degree depend upon his purse for his pleasures.

The speaker's assumed sexual sophistication is ironic in still another way. For the poem is only superficially a celebration of eroticism; its argument shuns prolonged sexual enjoyment and the pleasures to be found in feminine beauty. The speaker's impatience with all activity but copulation itself is the antithesis of true eroticism; clearly he is anything but a connoisseur of sexuality. Perhaps somewhat unfairly abstracted from its witty context, his attitude suggests an adolescent intolerance of postponed gratification. The "bear-whelp" image defines his attitude:

And love's a beare-whelpe borne; if we'er overlicke Our love, and force it new strange shapes to take We erre, and of a lumpe a monster make. Were not a Calf a monster that were growne Fac'd like a man, though better than his owne? (ll. 4-8)

It is better that love remain a shapeless lump; to give it shape requires, at the least, a refinement of one's sensibilities and, at most, a commitment to the complexities of human relationship. Better that it remain animalistic than that it be humanized and become "monstrous" with threats of emotional involvement. In this light, the poem's title does not serve just to denote the central
metaphor; neither is it limited to suggesting, by ironic inversion, the descent from a higher concept of human love to carnality. The latter movement is, I believe, assumed throughout the *Elegies*, but seldom treated by Donne in high moral terms. More to Donne's point is the reflection in the title of the speaker's attitude toward himself and the ironic view we are to have of him. He regards himself as having progressed beyond conventional attitudes toward women and sexual morality, but his attitudes actually suggest a regression from truly adult sexual sophistication. The reader might do well to keep him in mind as a prototype of the characters we will meet in the following chapter.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I

1*An Apologie for Poetry,* in G. Gregory Smith, *Eliza­


5*The Complete Poetry of John Donne* (New York: Double­
day Anchor, 1967), p. 11.


7*The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley* (Prince­

8Tuve, p. 3.

9Tuve, p. 31.

10Tuve, p. 175.

11Miner, p. 128.

12Miner, p. 146.

13p. xliv.


15Andreasen, p. 102.

16Andreasen, p. 102.
17 Andreasen, p. 79.
18 Andreasen, p. 102.
19 Andreasen, p. 103.
20 Andreasen, p. 103.
21 Gardner, p. 136.
22 Andreasen, p. 103.
23 Andreasen, p. 104.
24 Gardner: "in the sense that we 'force' a text of scripture . . .", p. 137.
26 Andreasen, p. 104.
28 Andreasen, p. 105.
30 Andreasen, p. 119.
31 Andreasen, pp. 118-119, makes this point very effectively.
CHAPTER II

THE CORRUPT ELEGIES

We move now to those poems which are at the heart of this study and upon which its thesis stands or falls: "Love's War," "The Bracelet," "Jealousy," "The Perfume," "Tutelage," and "Recusancy." It is to these poems that our two key terms, "corrupt" and "dramatic," best apply. First, focusing upon their dramatic technique, we shall see that we have in these poems what Miss Tuve says we never have in Elizabethan poetry, the spectacle of "a man having a thought," as opposed to a man whose thoughts have been pre-arranged "into a carefully logical and . . . witty exposition." Her general position is the product of enormous erudition, and it would be presumptuous of me at this point to dispute it. But in her admirable systematizing of the tenets of Renaissance poetic, she fails to acknowledge Donne's significant deviances from the general practice, deviances which are pervasive in the Elegies. For it is, I believe, demonstrable that in many of these poems Donne is experimenting with a kind of dramatic poetry in which we see a man struggling with a thought. What complicates the matter is that the man speaking is thoroughly familiar with
the Renaissance poetic techniques Miss Tuve so ably presents. Donne uses this technique in such a way that his speaker seems superficially to be in control of his thoughts, but contrives his argument so that it ultimately contradicts itself and reveals the chaotic inner life of its speaker.

In these dramatic poems, Donne's personae reveal what I shall call, for want of a better term, a corrupted view of human relationships. My working assumption is that there is no reason to assume this view to be Donne's own. Sanders, in his recent book on John Donne's Poetry, is probably correct in asserting that:

A good few of the Elegies suffer from this kind of self-advertising cleverness, . . . They tend to be very consciously emancipated . . . and they continually insult their reader by supposing him to be rather adolescently susceptible to shock.

Sanders, however, regards this as a failure of Donne's own adolescent wit. It should become clear in the following reading, however, that Donne succeeds both in being witty, though we may or may not find this kind of consciously shocking humor to our taste, and in causing us to reflect upon a significant and disturbing set of attitudes. In the poems in this chapter, we see lovers who feel themselves betrayed by the illusion of love they have committed themselves to. "Jealousy" and "The Perfume" represent what would seem to be the inevitable development of that disillusionment to the extreme of total cynicism toward other human beings.
These poems take place in the Ovidian world of illicit love in an urban setting; the speaker has been liberated from the bondage of orthodox morality. He delights in the ingenuity with which he can play the fascinating game of romantic intrigue; whatever feeling he may have for his lover seems quite incidental.

In these poems, with the probable exception of "Love's War," we see the best examples of the peculiar love-hate paradox which Donne explores in the Elegies. The standard love-hate paradox is seen explicitly in "The Prohibition." It involves the conflicting passions at work in the love-relationship: the joy of finding a true sense of personal identity in conflict with the fear of the loss of selfhood, the satisfactions of commitment in conflict with the fears of enslavement. But in a poem such as "Jealousy" Donne is not dealing just with the love-hate relationship between the two principals in a love match, though this is involved to some degree. He is presenting the converse of the idealizing love of the Petrarchan tradition, which expands outward from its object and gives new meaning to all the relationships within one's personal universe. Here the love-relationship is exclusivist, and not in the positive way of "The Sun Rising," where the lovers are confident of their superiority to the rest of society. Here the lovers are in conflict with the social order and cower under its surveillance.
"Love's War" offers a good entrée into the "corrupt" elegies, for in these poems we are very much aware of the sexual relationship as a conflict. The conflict is seldom explicitly acknowledged; the speaker of "Love's War" does not acknowledge any conflict in his relation with his lover, stressing as he does the difference between it and war. He plays on the paradox of a destructive process (love's "war") being creative. But we are also aware that this process is potentially destructive, and we are aware partly because of the military terms used to describe love-making. Donne thereby evokes the "speculative response" Rosalie Colie sees as necessary to a good paradox. We are led to reflect upon the genuine element of conquest in the seduction process (accomplished before this particular poem opens), here the conquest of female by male. There is also the possibility that the male will be vanquished, or "imprisoned," in the process, that the feminine will may prove to be the more powerful force. War has since Homer been one of the traditional testing grounds for manhood. Donne's young men want nothing to do with anything so dangerous. They are tested in the wars of Venus, not Mars, and in their tests they are usually found wanting.

"Love's War" is an extremely clever variation on the stock comparison of the wars of Mars and Venus, or the glorification of the Miles amoris. As others have pointed out, Donne's treatment is different from most in that he stresses
the differences between love and war, and shows love to be superior. It seems to me that Donne is closest to Tibullus, whose elegy IX—"Who first introduced the terrible sword?"—is an outright denunciation of war and a praise of peace and love. Affinities with Donne can also be seen in the fact that the love of Tibullus's peasant couple is not idyllic; it can become violent:

Then the war of love grows warm, a woman's hair is torn,
Her door is broken in, and she grows plaintive;
Bruised on her tender cheeks she sheds tears; while the victor sobs too
That his crazy hands should have been so violent;
And Cupid, the mischief-maker, feels the quarrel with insults,
And sits inflexibly between the angry couple.
(I.x. 53-58)

Likewise in "Love's War," the celebration of love is compromised somewhat by the awareness of love's dangers.

Leishman has pointed out that though a situation is suggested and though the speaker addresses his lover directly as "thee," the poem does not become truly dramatic. We have only Donne's voice developing his conceit, and the pronoun "her" could just as easily be used as "thee." I think, however, that as in the other elegies we need to extend somewhat the boundaries of the "dramatic." For we do have the dramatization of the situation of a figure speaking to a presumed listener, in a particular setting (their bedroom), with an identifiable world outside.
The most important dramatic feature is the presumed geography which exists in the speaker's mind: the sharp demarcation between "here" and "there." Rosalie Colie has observed that Donne "unmetaphors" the love-war figure of speech: in the poem there is literally a war going on. This allows him to exploit military terminology, playing off the literal fact of war against his consciously metaphorical language of warfare, a technique which enables him to compare and contrast the alternative experiences of love and war in an extremely clever way. These realms of experience are represented in the geography of the poem by the bedroom ("here") and the public world outside ("there"), which is conducting a war. As in "The Bracelet," the series of topical allusions (ll. 5-18) is not a digression: it serves to recreate the outer world according to the speaker's vision of it. Also as in "The Bracelet," and as in a comparable passage in "On His Mistress" (ll. 33-43), that world is seen as corrupt and threatening, virtually gone mad. We see it as the speaker sees it, in its "lunatique giddiness," "with a strange warre possest," "now rageinge, now at rest." The speaker has therefore retreated from it, and the nature of his retreat is interestingly reflected in the internal geography of the poem. In lines five through eighteen we survey the mad world of foreign affairs; then, in line twenty-nine, we are set squarely in the lover's bedroom with the emphatic "Here." The "Here"-"There" dichotomy
controls the rest of the poem, the adverbs themselves controlling the syntax of the next twelve lines.

The transition from "there" to "here" is effected by a sea voyage. In the speaker's mind, the voyage threatens to take him away from "here," but it becomes clear that the threat has been at least partly responsible for bringing, or keeping, him where he is. The sea-voyage is a curiosity, in part because it belies the facile observation that the poem is simply a clever toying with the love-war analogy. For it does not develop that analogy in any way. The foreign policy digression (ll. 15-18) at least deals with war and thus can be said to develop one side of the analogy. But these lines seem to serve no other purpose than to depict the speaker's fear of the journey, not the war itself. He is depicting the horrors of this imagined journey in a manner which has close affinities with the way Donne describes, in much greater detail, the horrors of a real expedition in "The Storme" and "The Calme." In short, the passage has a certain mimetic quality, recreating as it does an impression of experience for its own sake. This observation must be qualified by the admission that the passage is highly figurative in its language, but such language is in character for the elegiac speaker, who habitually parades his wit in his every utterance. The point is that the passage does stand apart from the rest of the poem in its deviation from the central metaphor and its depiction of what is essentially an
emotional state, that of fear. The images of the "hot parching clime" turning him to "dust and ashes," the ship--"a swaggering hell"--"mewing" him up, the "longe consumptions" of the voyage taking him to execution all have a ring of conviction. The sea-voyage serves as an emotional nucleus for the poem, in large part because it stands apart from the generally superficial bravado of the rest, which is dominated by the love-war conceit.

The depiction of the sea-voyage is far more convincing than is the exaltation of the "making of men" (used as the poem's title in one manuscript) later in the poem. Those remarks upon the procreative powers of love have the air of being mere plays of wit. They represent a neat rhetorical antidote to the effects of war, which is to destroy men, but they carry no emotional weight. No one seriously believes that the lover's motivation in making love is to renew the population on the home front, which the war is depleting. Moreover, these references to what is apparently to be wedded family life, since children are to be raised, are at odds with the opening of the poem. There the speaker is addressing a woman as a "faire, free city" who "mayst thy selfe allow/ To any one." The poem opens, in other words, in the standard libertine situation of the Elegies, the lover always on guard against his rivals. The triteness and inappropriateness of the apparently domestic situation projected at the end of the monologue offer further evidence
that the core of the poem is not in the affirmation of
erotic love but in the speaker's retreat from a hostile
world.

This brings us back then to an evaluation of the "here"
of the poem, from which the imaginary voyage threatens to
take the lover. As in many of the Songs and Sonnets, here
the lovers form a little world in opposition to the world
at large. But in the Songs and Sonnets the assumption is
always that they are superior to it. Their isolation serves
to idealize their relationship; they become a self-sufficient
microcosm. But that is not the case in "Love's War." Though
the eroticism of their world is clearly preferable to the
violence of the larger world, there seems to be an element
of escapism in it. The speaker's emphasis upon his fear of
death taints his apparent commitment to his mistress. The
series of witty love-war comparisons which comprise the
latter third of the poem all emphasize the safeness of
making love rather than war.

There wee are alwayes under, here above,
There engines far off breede a just true
feare,
Ye lyes are wrongkes, stabs, yea bullets
lye. (ll. 36-39)
There lyes are wrongs, here sage uprightly
lye. (ll. 36-39)

The unstated assumption of all these jokes is, of course,
the cowardice of the speaker, who is arguing that his course
of action is not to be looked down upon, but is indeed
preferable to military service. We saw earlier that the speaker visualizes the public world as a place of madness. His implicit point is that it is futile to attempt to function in such a world; to keep his sanity one must withdraw from it and find meaning in some creative act, such as lovemaking. But he strikes a witty compromise with society: he will do his part by making men who will serve as soldiers in his place.

Thou nothing; I not halfe so much shall do
In these warres as they may which from us two
Shall spring. Thousands we see which travaile not
To warres, but stay, swords, armes and shot
To make at home: And shall not I do then
More glorious service, staying to make men? (11. 41-46)

This idea, taken literally, appears grotesque: we can visualize a series of fledgling soldiers emerging from the assembly line of their parents' boudoir to be devoured by war as proxies for their amorous father. The speaker does not mean all this to be taken seriously, of course; it is simply a joking rationalization for choosing love over the madness of society's demands. But the rationale for the choice is really self-evident: few people would seriously maintain that making war is really superior to making love. What he is half-consciously rationalizing is his sense of alienation from the social order and the means he uses to regain a sense of value. Donne is playing on several levels with the traditional love-war theme, in which the lover is
usually raised to the status of warrior. Instead he makes
the soldier and warrior antithetical figures; his lover,
however, tries to make his peace with the warrior while,
paradoxically, using a metaphorical language of war to de-
scribe his love-making. The traditional metaphorical frame-
work allows the speaker to indulge in a kind of sophistry;
he polarizes his will and that of the outer world by identi-
ifying them respectively with the forces of love and war.
Put as such, the attitudes of the intellectual-libertine
can only appear as creative; society's most extreme demand
of the individual is obviously destructive. When we thus
take away the appearance of compromise with society, we see
how truly alienated is the lot of the elegiac lover. He
affects the superiority of the alienated artist. Though
the truly creative lover might be thought of as an artist,
Donne's lover never shows that his activity is creative
(except that he is going to make babies). We are far more
aware of his likeness to the restive, clandestine lovers of
the other elegies. This impression is produced in large
part by the military terminology, beginning with the opening
image of the lover as beseiger of the "faire, free city."
Any attempt at compromise with society on his part is likely
to be unsuccessful, since his "artistry" has no social value.
It violates public standards of morality and, moreover, is
pure process, contributing to nothing but its own pleasure
and perhaps the lover's ego-gratification. If he accepts
his alienation, he is left with only the love-relationship in which to find meaning. And as he says, with an intended opposite meaning, "Is't not all one to fly/ Into another world as 'tis to dye?" The attempt to fly into the microcosm of love is doomed, within the context of the Elegies, because this erotic world is as vulnerable to divisiveness and corruption as is the outer social world.

The milieu of the Elegies is identical to that of the Satires. Both groups of poems are filled with details of the street and London public life. In the case of the Elegies, this is in part due to the fact that they derive from the Ovidian and Catullian elegies, in which the speaker is always seen acting in a particularized urban setting. We are also reminded constantly of the Elizabethan stage, especially its comedy, which abounds with references to the London society surrounding it.

This use of setting is particularly important in "The Bracelet," for it helps establish the particular dramatic quality of the poem. Though Donne does not set his speaker in a specific time and place, his contemporary readers would easily have recognized the setting as the London they knew. The listener does not assume a real presence and it is not perfectly clear as to whether she participates in any give-and-take with the speaker. The speaker does reply to things she has said at two points (ll. 69, 79), but she may or may
not have said them during the progress of the monologue. In any case, her role remains static throughout. The poem is an argument addressed to the speaker's mistress, requesting that she relieve him of the expense of replacing her "seavenfold chain," which he has lost, but there is no indication that he ever really hopes to win the argument. Some of his points have little or no persuasive content, such as the nineteen lines (ll. 23-42) alluding to French and Spanish coinage. He indeed acknowledges that her mind is made up three-quarters through the poem: "But thou art resolute; Thy will be done." After this he does not even address himself to her; the second person pronoun referring to her disappears as he addresses instead the "Good Angels" and "Thou wretched Finder." The shifting addressee is common in the Elegies and often seems to indicate that we are overhearing a private monologue, not an actual interview.

There is, however, a kind of drama at work in the poem which is different from that which we see in many dramatic poems: a dramatic relationship between the speaker and his surroundings. Donne establishes an antipathy between the speaker and his milieu which constitutes the central tension of the poem. The situation is not that of "Love's War," where the speaker has attempted a kind of withdrawal from a hostile society; here he is immersed in it, but is no more at home. Though Donne does not set out the scene in explicit terms, he does succeed in creating the atmosphere of
the London street. Its people populate the poem: the al-
chemist, the crier, the unfortunate finder of the bracelet,
and the conjurer with his "whores, theeves and murtherers."
Its controversies crowd into the speaker's mind: Spanish
subversion, French and Scottish politics, the wars in the
low countries. Donne's lover has descended from his balcony
or study to pursue his love through the town. The atmo-
sphere of the marketplace pervades the poem and takes on a
figurative value. Like Jonson's Bartholemew Fair, it be-
comes a metaphor for a world in which all basic relation-
ships are reducible to economic terms.

The language of the speaker is not that of the street,
however, but of the study. He develops an ingenious series
of puns and scholastic arguments playing on the analogy be-
tween angels as coins and angels as spiritual agents. His
subtle mockery of theological concepts shows Donne at his
irreverent best, putting his intense study of theology to
good comic use. The speaker has the same intellectual equip-
ment as the studious young man of "Satire I." Like him, he
urbanely watches the street life stream past him, confident
of his intellectual superiority to it. But he is also the
corrupt alter ego of that satire, for he is no longer de-
tached from the seething urban world outside. He has in-
dulged fully in the intrigues of the social world which the
scholar of "Satire I" regarded as so threatening. The lover,
moreover, has found that the scholar was correct in his
fears: the social world is indeed enslaving. He has played a game in which money and style are the price of status and love and must pay in increasingly higher price simply to maintain his present standing in the game. The divided self of "Satire I" is still present, but within the psyche of a single figure. The same dichotomy is at work. The intellectual--cynical in his knowledge of the vagaries of love--still attempts to keep his distance from the life of the street, but has already been drawn too far into it to do so. Donne is again depicting the internal struggle of the intellectual-libertine, but without the schematic arrangement (i.e. dual figures) he used in "Satire I."

The poem's argument turns on the double meaning of "angel." The speaker argues fancifully that his "twelve righteous angels" (coins), which he must have melted down to replace her golden chain, be considered in their theological sense and thus spared. Once this imaginative leap is taken, her demand that these "twelve innocents" be "damned, and in the furnace throwne" must of course be looked upon with horror. He plays on at least the three following aspects of the theological meaning of angels: (1) its ability to provide man with the necessities of life and thereby protect him from want and adversity ("my guard, my ease, my good, my all?"); (2) its value for society when kept in its pure, unadulterated state of coinage (therefore undeserving of tampering); (3) its restorative powers and
use in alchemy and conjury. An example of these correspondences can easily be seen in the following lines, where the corresponding theological and economic meanings (those identified as number one) are made explicit:

Angels, which heaven commanded to provide
All things to me, and be my faithful guide,
To gain new friends, t'appease great enemies,
To comfort my soul, when I lie or rise.

(ll. 13-16)

The ingenious uses of these correspondences could be analyzed at great length. However, many—though by no means all—of them have been explained by Grierson and Gardner in their notes. More important for our purposes is the overall pattern at work throughout the poem, which has as its basis the correspondence between the purchasing power of gold and divine redemptive power. An implied equation is operative: gold for services-products = angelic or messianic intercession for human salvation. The concept of payment thus becomes a metaphor, first of all, for the atonement. It also furnishes the terminology for speaking about a broad range of activities and relationships. One indeed begins to suspect that for the speaker it ceases to be a metaphor, that it accurately represents his vision of life. (Again we have the "un-metaphoring" process noted by Colie.) In this vision, all relationships are predicated upon the concept of payment.
The payment concept is pervasive in the poem. In the speaker's case, he is giving gold for love, since his relationship with his mistress seems to depend upon his replacing her bracelet. Keeping in mind the formula set out above, we see that Christ's act of atonement is presented in the poem as a payment in exchange for God's mercy towards mankind. On a lower level, gold is shown being given in exchange for political influence in the form of "Spanish Stamps, still travelling"; they "Visit all countries . . . ." ruining some countries, enriching others. Gold can turn Justice to the giver's ends (l. 36) and can be more effective militarily than cannon-shot (l. 32). The passages on alchemy assume the exchange of gold for knowledge and control of physical laws (ll. 34-35, 43-46). Money paid to the Conjurer gives one knowledge of the future and can apparently even secure one's place in the hereafter (ll. 59-68). The payment of money to a Cryer is the most effective means the speaker knows to touch the minds of other men (ll. 55-58).

The long digression upon external affairs (ll. 23-42) indeed presents a vision of a world in the grip of the corruptive influences of gold. As we have seen in "Love's War" (ll. 5-18), Donne uses the digression to characterize his speaker's view of external reality. The speaker himself is, of course, just prattling, showing his cleverness. He has affinities with the young fop who styles himself a social
critic in "Satire IV." Like him, he "Speakes of all States, and deeds, that have been . . ." and

\[\ldots\] like a priviledg'd spie, whom nothing can Discredit, Libells now 'gainst each great man. He names a price for every office paid; He saith, our warres thrive ill, because delai'd . . . . ("Satire IV," ll. 133, 119-122)

The digression has a thematic relevance which the speaker is only vaguely aware of, for though he can show the devious influence of gold at work in the world abroad, he resists acknowledging that it has corrupted his own most intimate relationships. He shows a world in the control of avarice, but assumes that he stands apart from that world; it becomes clear to the reader, however, that he is very much a part of it. In that world Spanish subversion, which was commonly regarded by the British as the modus operandi of the forces of the Anti-Christ (Popery), works through gold. This malign force is likened to the power of magic (through conjury), "which would enforce/ Nature . . . from her course . . ." (ll. 35-36). Creation is depicted here in organic terms, each of its levels with its own quickening power. Just as the "soule quickens head, feet, and heart," so does water "like veines, run through th'earths every part" (ll. 36-37), and so does gold run its course ("Visit all countries") through human society. Gold, however, is different in that it is as likely to bring death (as with "France ruin'd, ragged, and decay'd" and "mangled seventeen headed Belgia,"
ll. 40, 42) as life ("Scotland . . . proud in one day,"
1. 41). Its life-giving powers are, moreover, capricious
and short-lived. Though, like the soul which quickens the
body, they are "Good soules" which "give life to every
thing," they can also bring with them " . . . all the hurt
which ever Gold hath wrought" (ll. 83, 105).

The long digression on gold's corrupting power abroad
(ll. 23-42) has a counterpart in the curse upon the imagined
finder of the bracelet (ll. 91-110). In both passages we are
presented with an external scene, as opposed to the witty
plea which comprises the rest of the poem. In the first we
see a broad panorama of European civilization under control
of gold. In the latter our eye is trained on a single,
imaginary individual being destroyed for possessing it. Sig-
nificantly, the curse itself begins "Here," in contrast with
the earlier depiction of the effects of gold elsewhere. It
is not clear precisely what the speaker means by "Here"; pre-
sumably he makes some gesture, indicating he would like to
have the finder "right here" in order to have his vengeance
upon him. It is quite clear that in any case the real "Here"
is within the speaker's mind, and this presents us with the
interesting creation by Donne of a portrait within a por-
trait. We have been watching an individual agonizing over
the loss of the bracelet; now we see him fantasizing the
imagined agonies of its finder. He has become, in effect,
a conjurer, like the one he described earlier, though the
magic he employs is of a psychological nature. For it is not difficult to see that it is the nature of his own dilemma which he has projected upon his imagined victim. As the lover's fate has been bound up with that of his mistress's chain, so is the finder to be bound with chains:

Here fetter'd, manacle'd, and hang'd in chaines
First mayst thou be, then chain'd to hellish paines.
(ll. 95-96)

(This play on hell-chains and the chain-bracelet has been used earlier, in line 22.) The finder is to undergo a series of misfortunes in which he is essentially passive. He is to be charged with treason, but only after having been bribed to it by foreign gold (and he fails both to fulfill his mission and to receive his pay). Otherwise he is the victim of disease or unsuspecting errors. He picks up poison, or some libellous pamphlet or interdicted book which, "negligently kept," brings down the law upon him. He is even to suffer what is for the lover the greater fate of impotence:

Lust-bred diseases rot thee'and dwell with thee
Itchy desire and no abilitie. (ll. 103-104)

This reflects the lover's own sexual deprivation, a consequence of his failure to satisfy the whims of his mistress:
Much hope, which they [the Angels] should
nourish, will be dead,
Much of my able youth, and lustyhead
Will vanish . . . . (ll. 51-53)

In general, he is as impotent to control his fate as the
speaker feels himself to be.

It is clearly not accidental, in a poem which makes
such extensive use of theological parallels, that the find-
er's ultimate misfortune is to suffer the Christian fate of
eternal damnation:

    . . . at thy lifes latest moment
       May thy swolne sins themselves to thee
       present. (ll. 109-110)

We may speculate upon the irony that it is the possession
of gold which afflicts the Finder, whereas the lover assumes
his problems stem from the loss of it; he does not assume
that his own association with it has brought his way any
of the corruption it is presumed to cause. He has indeed
regarded gold as his redeemer, and it is no doubt true that
gold has benefited him socially (or sexually) in the past.
In the immediate context, his mistress is God, he fallen
mankind, the coins his intercessors; the latter are gener-
ally treated as angels (spiritual), but in at least one
passage seem to be identified as the Messiah and/or Chris-
tian martyrs (ll. 77-90). Whichever they are, they are in-
effectual before a capricious and vengeful deity:
Shall these twelve innocents, by thy severe
Sentence [dread Judge] my sins great burden beare?

They save not me, they doe not ease my paines
When in that hell they are burnt and tyed in
chaines. (11. 17-22)

(Hell is, of course, the forge in which they are melted; the
chains are the bracelet.) The Messiah is laid to rest (in
an image reminiscent of the Pieta), apparently not to be
resurrected, and his martyrs are unsuccessful:

But thou art resolute; Thy will be done.
Yet with such anguish as her only sonne
The mother in the hungry grave doth lay,
Unto the fire these Martyrs I betray. (11. 79-82)

Obviously the redeemer is a failure, because the last image
presented is of a man facing damnation. There is a curious
kind of Manicheanism about all this: we see man suspended
between damnation and salvation, with his "redeemer" having
the powers of both. Gold has the powers of both white and
black magic, but there is apparently no logical cause-and-
effect governing its operation. Our speaker here, like his
counterparts in other Elegies, is presenting his vision of
a world in which all values are relative. Success and fail­
ure are determined by accident, as indicated by the conse­
quences for him of the accidental loss of the chain, and the
imagined effects upon the finder of his accidental discovery
of it.
Central to this vision are the theological-economic parallels employed throughout the poem. We need to recall our earlier discussion of the parallels between the concepts of economic exchange and the atonement. In particular we noted the implications of the parallel between human love (secured by gold in this case) and divine. In several of the most famous of the *Songs and Sonnets*, Donne uses the language of religious worship as a way of exalting an ideal human relationship. In "The Canonization," for example, human love is equated with the love of the divine manifested by saints and is equally deserving of canonization. The religious parallels thus project human love upward. But in "The Bracelet," as in the other elegies which employ theological parallels, debased human relationships force their theological analogues down to their level. The assumptions here are antithetical to those of Petrarchan love poetry, in which human love is idealized to the point that it becomes a manifestation of divine love and universal harmony. To the cynical eye of Donne's speaker, who is approaching such knowledge from an experiential point of view, human love has shown itself to be corrupt and mercenary. Since it has traditionally been regarded as the visible manifestation of all higher levels of meaning, all values have begun to appear debased. Theology in particular appears ludicrous, useful only as a playground for the exercise of his superior wit.
"Jealousy" and "The Perfume" carry to an extreme the debasement of human values through the lover's embroilment in the game of love-making. The black humor of their speakers, who laugh unashamedly at the sick husband's grotesque jealousy and wish a set of meddling parents cold in their graves, is undeniably amusing. But we chuckle somewhat uncomfortably, for there is a shrillness in the speaker's voice as he attempts to make light of his situation.

"Jealousy" is in the great comic tradition of tales dealing with the joys of cuckolding an old husband. But here the joke is a grim one; for the husband is sick and deformed, almost literally a basket case, yet retains enough energy to be afflicted with jealousy. The lovers have taken great delight in flouting openly "In scoffing riddles, his deformitie," while enjoying the hospitality of his table. They have gone so far as to "usurpe his owne bed" while "he swolne, and pamper'd with great fare,/ Sits downe, and snorts, cag'd in his basket chaire" (i.e. while he falls asleep after dinner). The peculiarity of Donne's use of the cuckolding motif can be seen by contrasting the tone of this poem with that of Chaucer's "Miller's Tale," or even better his "Merchant's Tale." In the latter story, January is also afflicted, in that he is blind. But his physical blindness reflects his willful mental blindness, which leads him to take a young wife against all reason. This is reflected further in his attempt to enforce by physical
restraint the fidelity which has no basis in affection. The reader sees the natural passion of May and her lover as a healthy contrast to January's doddering possessiveness. But in "Jealousy" there is little to admire in the stealthy love-making of the speaker and his mistress; there is indeed something spiteful in it. We cannot share the speaker's scorn of the husband; the old man may indeed elicit the reader's pity, for he is seriously ill and being taken advantage of. If we are to sympathize with anyone in this poem, it might as well be the husband, who despite his condition shows some pluck in asserting his rights.

The monologue begins in medias res, at a point when a new element has been introduced into the lover's relationship. Her husband, suspecting some intrigue, has become jealous and has apparently thrown his wife into a fright. The speaker's address to her is an attempt to allay her fears, yet it is not at first clear how his opening remarks are intended to do so. For twelve lines he creates for her a vision of her husband writhing in pain on his deathbed, his relatives crying, she dancing for joy like a slave about to be liberated. His point, he says, is that since she would welcome his death, she should welcome his jealousy, for it will hasten his death:

Yet weep' st thou, when thou seest him hungerly
Swallow his owne death, hearts-bane jealousy.

(11. 13-14)
Apparently the extra anxiety may be too much for his already-failing health. It is assumed that in the past they have anticipated the freedom they would have if rid of him. The speaker will also, no doubt, be delighted when they are in possession of the "grest legacies" for which the husband's kindred are "howling" and "Begging with few feign'd teares." It must also be noted that the lover wants his mistress to share his relief that, since her husband is jealous, he has at least not kept his suspicions secret:

O give him many thanks, he's courteous,
That in suspecting kindly warneth us. (ll. 15-16)

But these rhetorical purposes do not explain the revolting imagery with which the speaker embellishes the deathbed vision he summons up before his mistress.

If swolne with poyson, he lay in'his last bed,
His body with a sere-barke covered,
Drawing his breath, as thick and short, as can
The nimblest crocheting Musitian,
Ready with loathsome vomiting to spue
His Soule out of one hell, into a new. (ll. 3-8)

Donne is again employing the rhetoric of disgust we have seen him use in "The Comparison." The lover in this poem does not simply want to remind his mistress of the possibility of her husband's death; he wants her to imagine it in all its revolting fullness. Why does he take such obvious glee in summoning up the horrors of scabs and vomit in what is ostensibly a reassuring lover's speech? The
reason is perhaps that the vision serves his own internal needs as much as it serves to convince the listener. He makes light of the matter ("Fond woman," etc.), passing off the husband's suspicions as merely an inconvenience which can be dealt with by a simple expedient ("Wee play'in another house, what should we feare?") He tacitly acknowledges, however, that this crisis has created an emotional trauma for her, as he lightly upbraids her for weeping (1. 13) and complaining (1. 2). It also seems for that reason to be something of a trauma for him, since her reaction indicates that her husband's feelings are still a strong force in her life. The jealousy operative in the poem is reciprocal; the illicit lover envies the superiority of the husband's claims upon his wife, especially since he must now acknowledge those claims more than ever and take measures to circumvent them. The violent imagery seems to reflect his repressed hatred of his rival and the indignities he is forced to endure because of him.

The speaker's jealousy of his mistress's husband has another dimension, for despite all of his own chicanery, the old man is basically secure in his place. The speaker must acknowledge that the husband's house and its possessions (including his wife) are his domain; in acknowledging this, he uses terms which indicate that the husband's rights are public, private, and even religious in nature (marriage being a sacrament).
Now I see many dangers; for that [his house] is 
His realme, his castle, and his diocesse. (11. 25-26)

The speaker knows that, in his relation with his mistress,
he is alien from the moral and social order which defines
the husband's rights. As in other political references in
the Elegies, the speaker aligns himself with those outside
the establishment:

But if, as envious men, which would revile
Their Prince, or coyne his gold, themselves
exile
Into another countrie, 'and doe it there,
Wee play' in another house, what should we feare?

As the inhabitants of Thames right side
Do Londons Mayor; or Germans, the Popes pride.
(11. 26-30, 33-34)

One of the characteristics of these elegies is that
the speakers tend to see themselves as alienated from the
respectable social order. Here the lover is not only understandably hostile toward the public morality which obstructs his pleasures but, by some peculiar emotional chemistry, seems to channel that energy which would normally enrich his relationship with his lover into a hatred of society's most visible representative (her husband). For a curious feature of the speaker's references to their past relationship is the pleasure they have taken not in just making love, but in flaunting that love-making before her sick husband. And the overriding concern of the speaker in regard to their present
crisis is not for its possible danger to their relationship. Even though it means considerable inconvenience for them, he welcomes the husband's newly-aroused jealousy; he delights in seeing him "hungerly/ Swallow his owne death, hearts-bane jealousie." This heightens the drama of the game. The measure of the speaker's pleasure is the degree of another person's suffering; to this the pleasures of his mistress's company seem to make little addition.

Thus we have the ultimate paradox that the individual who regards himself as master of the pursuit of love, the most passionately human of activities, emerges as strangely lacking in the most basic areas of human sensitivity. We must keep in mind, of course, that he is joking in much that he says, and that Donne, his creator, is consciously playing with the normal decorum of love poetry. But the speaker's joking has a hollow ring, suggesting that its coarseness is not just a pose, that it is symptomatic of a deep-seated coarseness of sensibility. We are probably not, however, to look for an explanation for this in the peculiar psychology of the individual speaker. I would suggest that instead we see it as reflecting an inherently corrupt concept of the love-relationship; in this concept, which was current in Renaissance poetry and had been popular in the Medieval poetry of courtly love, secrecy, fear, and a sense of social alienation are assumed to offer fertile ground for the growth of love. We are seeing in these poems Donne's
explorations into the uglier side of that secret game of love which had so fascinated poets since the time of Ovid.

"The Perfume" is a companion-piece to "Jealousy": both are poems of clandestine love at a moment of crisis. Whereas in "Jealousy" the lovers were merely suspected, here they have been caught. Much to the speaker's mortification, it was his own loud perfume, smelled by his young mistress's father, which led to their detection. We see the speaker engaged in a delusive attempt to evade responsibility for him dilemma. In the process, he blames her, her parents, even his perfume, but never himself. We have again Donne's ironic creation of a poem of love which presents a strangely corrupt vision of the most basic human relationships; for the speaker wishes the death of his mistress's parents and seems to acknowledge that he is interested in her primarily for her money. The tone of the poem is, however, redeemed from the grimness of "Jealousy" by light comic elements, most notably the account of the mother's physical examination of her daughter for pregnancy, which, as Leishman notes, is reminiscent of Jonsonian comedy.

As in "Jealousy," the speaker's feeling for his lover appears to be much less intense than his hatred for a third party. He also has found the game absorbing in its own right, having taken great pleasure in duping her suspicious parents. This pleasure is not here an end in itself, however. For their hostility threatens his chief end in making
love to their daughter:

Though hee hath oft sworne, that hee would
remove
Thy beautie, and food of our love,
Hope of his goods, if I with thee were seene,
Yet close and secret, as our soules, we have
been. (ll. 9-12)

Earl Miner suggests that the lover probably does not mean that he loves the girl primarily for her father's money, since he is speaking directly to her. He must mean, says Miner, that they might not be so persistent in their secret love if they did not have so powerful an economic incentive. It seems to me that Miner is attaching a level of subtlety to the lines which a straightforward reading simply will not bear. Gardner, in her note (p. 123), is more likely to be correct in suggesting that the speaker may be just quoting her father's accusations ("Though hee hath oft sworne, that he would remove" what he believes to be the "food of our love,/ Hope of his goods . . . ."). This reading is not totally convincing, though, because the phrases "Thy beauties beautie, and food of our love" do not have the ring of a quotation; that is, they sound more like something the lover himself would say. More importantly, Miner's reading is consistent with what I regard as a general misreading of the poem, particularly its tone. He believes that the lovers, though they are no Romeo and Juliet, are as valuable and real in their own way. He says that the
hostile outer world will not leave them alone, and that its oppressiveness has made way for their "true human attachment." There is, however, no indication of human attachment in the poem; the speaker says nothing to his mistress which is even complimentary, except perhaps that she has some beauty (1. 10). In regard to the passage in question, it seems quite likely that he is being cynically frank with her, making no secret of the fact that her most prominent charm is her money.

Moreover, he clearly implies that he has little confidence in her fidelity. In the opening lines of the poem, we find him complaining not that her father's suspicions endanger the future of their relationship, but that all her sexual escapades are blamed on him.

Once, and but once found in thy company,  
All thy suppos'd escapes are laid on mee;  
And as a thiefe at barre, is question'd there  
By all the men, that have beene rob'd that yeare,  
So am I, (by this traiterous meanes surpriz'd)  
By thy Hydroptique father catechiz'd. (11. 1-6)

This might be taken superficially simply to indicate that her father questioned him so long and hard that it seemed as if he were being subjected to a trial. But it is more specific than that, and almost certainly implies that her father has been a constant victim, that there have been many "robbers" of her charms. These early passages (11. 1-6, 9-12) establish the essential cynicism of the speaker
toward their love-affair. He is not only brutally pragmatic in his desire to see her parents dead—this is the negative energy directed toward others which we have come to expect; he is open in acknowledging his material motives in making love to her and his indifference toward her other affairs (except as they inconvenience him).

It has also been thought by some readers that he betrays a shocking hostility toward her in his long address to his perfume. A minor controversy has arisen as to whether this long and curious speech, which comprises roughly the last quarter of the poem, is not addressed to her as well as to the perfume. The difficulty arises because she is the addressee up to that point (l. 53) and in the concluding couplet which follows (ll. 71-72). Moreover, a number of remarks in the speech, such as its opening apostrophe, seem to apply better to a woman than to perfume: "Thou bitter sweet, who I had laid/ Next mee . . . ." The following lines also apply equally well to a woman whom he seems to have suspected of promiscuity:

By thee the seely Amorous sucks his death
By drawing in a leprous harlots breath. (ll. 59-60)

Arthur Minton defends this identification of the woman with the perfume, arguing that the speaker believes she has betrayed their relationship to her family. Henry Ten Eyck Perry, in a rebuttal of Minton, points out that lines such
as the following can hardly be applied to women: 13

By thee, the greatest staine to mans estate
Falls on us, to be call'd effeminate; (ll. 61-62)

Gods, when yee fum'd on altars, were pleas'd well,
Because you'were burnt, not that they lik'd your smell. (ll. 65-66)

Perry objects to the notion that the address is to be ap­plied to the woman on the grounds that the poem is a satire on men--specifically fops like the speaker--not women. His point is that the speaker's perfume (together with his address to it) does indeed reveal him, and not just in the sense that it signals his presence to her father. Perry is certainly correct in showing that the satire is upon the speaker, but it is not clear why this unconscious self-satire cannot be effected just as well, or better, in a speech in which the speaker is railing against his perfume and his mistress simultaneously. Earl Miner argues that the speaker is more concerned with himself than with the girl. 14

He says that the speech is an oblique self-criticism by the speaker, in which he is contrasting the girl and the perfume. She is the only trustworthy thing he knows, since he has been betrayed even by himself through his foolishness (i.e. his perfume).

There is no reason to regard all of these readings as mutually exclusive. Certainly it is a mistake to take the perfume speech as a thoroughgoing attack on the girl (not
the perfume at all), and to imagine a specific narrative sequence, as Minton does, to account for the speaker's accusation that his mistress has betrayed him. Some of the lines clearly do not work in such a context. It is almost equally clear that Miner's view, in which the speech affirms the speaker's love for his mistress, mistakes the tone of the speech, and the poem in general. There is no indication that the speaker regards his mistress as beyond reproach, and there is no touch of tenderness in his address to her. But it also seems pointless to deny that the reader inevitably confuses the perfume with the girl as he first reads the speech; the fact that this whole critical question has arisen is evidence of that. Donne gives no indication that he is beginning to speak to someone or something other than her, and he is too skilled a user of language to be unaware of this. It is reasonable to assume that he wrote the passage as he did for a specific purpose, to produce a kind of ambiguity possible only in a highly dramatic context.

The speaker's invective is certainly intended, in the most direct sense, for the perfume. But in the dramatic setting, the perfume itself has no physical locus, unless we assume he is holding a perfume ball, and even this would serve very awkwardly as the addressee. His mistress is physically present, however, and it is not difficult to visualize his pointed glances in her direction as he says "Thou bitter sweet, whom I had laid/ Next mee . . . ."
There is no need to assume that he believes she has literally betrayed him. We have seen enough sexual insecurity among Donne's speakers not to be surprised to find that her complicity in their disastrous affair is cause enough for his repressed fear of her. Such an individual is easily capable of regarding his lover as the source of the frustration which has resulted from their clandestine lovemaking. When we look at the monologue as a fully dramatic presentation, we can also see that Miner's point that the speaker is obliquely blaming himself has some truth in it. We must assume that implicit in his complaints is at least a vague awareness of what is manifestly obvious to us: it is he who is primarily responsible for his predicament.

His perfume betrayed his presence, and something in his character aroused her parents' animosity to begin with. It is therefore to some degree his own foolishness which he is disgusted with as he rails against the outward sign of it, his perfume. It is this ability to hold several, often contradictory, attitudes in suspension which is characteristic of the finest dramatic poetry. We are reminded of Browning's Renaissance figures, for example, with their simultaneous sensitivity to art and indifference to the human beings who created or inspired it.

Perhaps more important than the specific rhetorical purpose of the speech is its overall effect: by the end of it the perfume has come to assume a metaphorical value.
The speaker encourages this by personifying the perfume and giving it various human attributes, such as the capacity to betray. Its basic figurative function is to serve as an objective correlative for its user and his milieu. Like him it is frivolous and unstable. It epitomizes his artificial world, which is full of sweet smells, golden trinkets, witty speech, and casual love-making. We sense that the lover's judgment upon the halls of princes would apply as well to his own milieu: "There, things that seeme, exceed substantial" (l. 64). Through the final section of the monologue, the perfume is being regarded in terms of its foulest and most basic components. It is the "Base excrement of earth"; of its elements he says:

You're loathsome all, being taken simply alone; Shall we love ill things join'd and hate each one? If you were good, your good doth soon decay. (ll. 67-69)

The idea of decay touches off associations with death, whereupon the speaker abruptly wishes the death of her father and concludes with the thought of an old man's decaying corpse.

All my perfumes, I give most willingly, To'embalme thy fathers corse; What? Will hee die? (ll. 71-72)

The though delights him because his problems would dissolve at that point. The perfume, fragrant when properly compounded, has been reduced to "base excrement" and is to be
used as embalming fluid (in the fancy of the speaker). These final, delusive comments suggest very strongly that his unstable relationship with his mistress, like the vaporous substance which epitomizes it, is on the brink of dissolution. And his every utterance provides further evidence as to why it should dissolve. For even more perhaps than in his foppishness, in the refined coarseness of his sentiments, he demonstrates why any girl's father would be disdainful of him. To the degree that he has the capacity for self-awareness, he must face the discomforting fact that his mode of existence, with its manners, style, and sexual rites, has proved to be fruitless and degrading. Like the perfume, it has lost its savor and has begun to take on an odor of corruption.

Donne's editors have traditionally placed "Tutelage" and "Recusancy" together for good reasons. They employ traditional motifs: "Recusancy" the love as religion theme, "Tutelage" the praeceptor amoris pose (combined with love as religion). But they use them in novel ways. The speakers are aware of the conventions as figurative ways of speaking, and employ them wittily, but they have also by some strange process come to take the conventions seriously, almost literally. The speaker of "Tutelage," in the course of his relationship with his estranged mistress, has obviously come to regard himself seriously as a teacher of love and resents his pupil's ingratitude. For the speaker of "Recusancy,"
the loss of faith in love has taken on the appearance of a real religious trauma. The poems thus share a tone of earnestness and disillusionment.

I should like to suggest further that the two poems may derive from a pair of Ovidian companion-pieces. In the Amores II.xia and II.xib, the lover has been betrayed by his mistress, as have Donne's speakers, and is likewise disillusioned and vindictive towards her. The basic narrative backgrounds of the two pairs of poems are also similar. In Amores III.xia, Ovid has introduced his mistress to society and made her the object of a great deal of admiration. Now he is made a fool of by other men, who make love to her while she keeps him locked outside her door. Amores II.v and III.vii also incorporate the basic "tutelage" idea. In III.xib, Ovid experiences the love-hate feeling, a result of commitment and betrayal, which resembles that of "Recusancy" in many ways, including the use of religious language. He loves her, but hates what she does to him and would prefer simply to hate her. But Ovid's poem ends on a relatively tame plea for commitment; Donne goes one up on it by having his speaker take the hate wish much more seriously, not merely using it to reinforce the love-plea.

The speaker of "Tutelage" has played the game of love with, he thought, consummate skill, but things have not gone according to his expectations. He has been his young mistress's tutor and priest, taking upon himself the duties
of initiating her into love's inner circle. She had been "Natures lay Ideot," one of the laity who possessed only the gifts of nature; as such she had no access to love's mysteries, which are gained only through "art." He observed her in her early social intercourse and noted her ineptitude. She would naively answer each admirer's questions with the noncommittal "I, if my friends agree," relying totally upon the advice of her immediate social circle in conversation. Her unsophisticated curiosity was absorbed with household charms believed to reveal the name of her husband-to-be.

Since, household charmes, thy husbands name
to teach,
Were all the love trickes, that thy wit
could reach. (11. 15-16)

She was so socially inept that "an houres discourse could have made/One answer in thee . . . ." Lines three through twelve catalogue the refinements he taught her after coming to her rescue. He assumed, perhaps reasonably enough, that his tutorial service placed her in his debt, but went on to delude himself into assuming that it gave him a proprietary interest in her. He is incredulous, therefore, to find that she has proved "too subtle" for him and has married someone else. His emphasis upon metaphors relating her to property suggests that he, like his counterpart in "The Perfume," may be disturbed by the loss of her fortune as much as by
his sexual loss. She is a piece of property which her hus­
band, not the speaker, has succeeded in fencing off for his
own cultivation. She is a piece of plate which he has
framed and enameled, a head of livestock which he has tamed
and broken, only to be put into use by someone else. (ll.
28-30).

He sees himself as her creator, which he may have been
in a social sense, and plays with the notion of himself as
God and she as his creation. He says that he has, with his
"amorous delicacies/ Refined thee'into a blis-full paradise."
This garden of Eden is in contrast to the mundane "worlds
Common," which she was formerly a part of, and the fenced-
in meadow which she became after her marriage. The inhab­
itants of this garden are not, of course, living things:
"Thy graces and good words my creatures bee." In an obvious
phallic joke, he claims that he even planted within his gar­
den the forbidden tree, which combines the fruits of the
trees of knowledge and life: "I planted knowledge and lifes
tree in thee." He is playing on the sexual sense of "know­
ing" and the ability of the phallus to beget life, as well
as indicating that he brought about her "fall" from innocence.
The religious parallels are negative in their import, as they
tend to be throughout the Elegies. His "blis-full Paradise"
has become a place of torment, and the emphasis is not upon
the positive aspects of creation (in the social sense, so­
phistication; in the sexual sense, fulfillment), but upon
the fall from innocence through sexual knowledge. His creation was, in fact, designed to bring about the fall. Ironically he, like Satan, experiences a more painful fall than does his victim. His only expressed regret is that someone else is getting to taste the fruit of his garden. He is certainly not aware of the irony of his stance of tutor, or implanter of knowledge. For he has been a creator ignorant of the nature of his creation. So absorbed had he become in the conventions of the world of sighs, artful glances, and alphabets of flowers that he mistook them for realities. He came to assume that the "delicacies" had substance and gave him a substantial interest in their recipient. Even more importantly, he mistakenly assumed that his supposed creation would retain the image in which he created it. She ceased to be submissive and predictable when she had been taught to be as "subtile" in the "sophistrie" of love as he.

Perhaps the speaker's most basic illusion is his complete faith in the efficacy of language to order reality. In our discussion of "The Anagram," we saw how the elegiac speaker attempts to create his own stylized reality through the use of the verbal formulae of poetic love and literary wit. In "Tutelage," the requirements of the religion the speaker has taught his mistress are largely verbal in nature. Her deficiencies before were those of language:
And since, an hours discourse could scarce have made
One answer in thee, and that ill arraid
In broken proverbs, and torne sentences. (11. 17-19)

She did not understand "The mystique language of the eye
nor hand" (my italics). Nor could she "... judge the
difference of the aire/ Of sighes, and say, this lies, this
sounds despaire." We have already seen his pride in having,
taught her "the Alphabet of flowers" and "graces and good
words" (my italics). Like virtually all the elegiac speak­
ers, he loves to hear himself talk; he assumes, moreover,
that to pass on his gift of speech to another human being
is to form an indissoluble bond with her. He has a poet's
obsession with language, but none of the true poet's in­
sight. Donne was himself obviously intoxicated with lan­
guage, but saw clearly the folly of much of the love poetry
of his time, which had become a composite of verbal con­
ventions. I believe that Donne is presenting here a kind
of parody of an individual so bound to these conventions
that he remains blind to the realities of the most complex
of human relationships.

We see, therefore, in "Tutelage" a speaker who has
assumed that he is in control of his world through the use
of its "arts," but who in fact has been humiliated by it.
The title "Ideot" belongs to him, not to his pupil. For
the final irony of the poem is in the speaker's presumption
of knowledge and his real ignorance of the implications of
that knowledge, together with his ignorance of his actual relation to his pupil.

In "Recusancy" Donne again presents an individual humiliated by the game of love and attempting to restore his badly-damaged ego. At the outset he states his awareness of the degrading aspects of the stance of the sonnet-lover. He cannot be the abject worshipper, for to be someone's "Idolatrous flatterer" is to have no meaningful relationship with her whatever. He has committed himself to her in the belief that her heart was "waxe"—warm, soft, and malleable to his ends—and her constancy "steele." But this impression proved deceptive and he now laments her faithlessness. He refuses to grovel before her to regain her favor because to do so would be even more intolerable than losing her. His ego has therefore been threatened and we see him trying to muster a defense for it.

The monologue develops in three distinct movements, each of which employs a different type of metaphor. The first uses political analogues (ll. 1-10), the basic pattern being that of subject to ruler. The second (ll. 15-34), excepting ll. 19-20) employs nature imagery, principally that of the stream. The third (primarily ll. 41-46, but also ll. 11-13, 19-20) uses the religious metaphor referred to in the poem's title (supplied by Gardner).
In the first section, the speaker insists that he does not want his relationship to his loved one to be that of the obsequious subordinate to his prince. He presents several figures: hangers-on at court or a great man's house, who wait in vain for preferment and inflate themselves with expectation at the slightest hint (ll. 1-3); fawning courtiers who would fill their prince's style (official extended title) with the names of realms where he has no actual authority (ll. 4-7); military leaders who fill their rolls with dead men's names in order to collect their pay (ll. 8-9); and royal servants who have purely ceremonial functions (ll. 9-10). (The third would not seem parallel with the others, since the commander of a regiment would himself seem to be a person of power; the point, however, lies in his relation to his prince, to whom he offers service in the form of the men under his command. If the prince is rewarding him with a number of "dead pays"—as was quite common—he is bestowing a form of false favor, which is what the lover does not want from his lady.) This section is a kind of introduction to the main argument of the poem. The speaker abandons the political analogues, presumably because they are inadequate to define his relationship to his mistress; certainly the subsequent figures of speech are much stronger. Implicit in the dissatisfaction he expresses through the political figures is the idea that courtiership is trivial in relation to the fundamental issue of love. The queen-
subject metaphor was, of course, a popular way for the lover to describe his abject submission to his mistress in the courtly love and Elizabethan sonnet traditions. When Donne uses this metaphor positively, he transforms it, making himself and his lover a monarchy of two, each sharing equally in their powers: "She'is all States, and all Princes, I" ("The Sun Rising"). But in "Recusancy" Donne creates these political figures only to dismiss them early in the poem.

There is something vaguely unsatisfactory in the relation of this section to the poem as a whole, for the political references do not seem consistent with the emotional thrust of the remainder. The speaker ends this section with his basic appeal:

Oh then let mee Favorite in Ordinary, or no favorite bee. (ll. 9-10)

(An official "in Ordinary" has an actual function; the title "extraordinary" denotes a merely honorary position. See Gardner, p. 126.) He seems to be appealing to her, then, to make a genuine commitment to him; he wants no more casual dalliance, which gives merely the appearance of relationship. If we assume that the poem is a dramatic address with a specific rhetorical purpose, we would naturally assume that this appeal embodies that purpose. But, as in other elegies which seem to be argumentatively structured, the rest of the poem does not support that announced argument. At its
conclusion, the speaker is no longer appealing to the addressee for favor at all, but is doing just the opposite—stating his determination to terminate their relationship. We are again led to consider Miss Tuve's statements on "the strict logical coherence of Donne's images." If indeed "Each [image] is chosen and presented as a 'significant' part of an ordered pattern, and every care is taken to make that order rationally apprehensible," then it is extremely curious that in this poem the second and third sections bear so oblique a relation to the first. For after the opening section, in which he appeals for her commitment to him, he goes on to conjure up images of the destructive nature of her attractiveness (ll. 15-34), then to renounce her completely (ll. 35-45). We shall see later that this schematic summary of the poem is somewhat misleading, but it is clear that the speaker's thought visibly changes direction as he dwells on his mistress's insidiousness in the middle section of the poem. What we seem to have, in short, is "a man having a thought."

If we bypass for the moment the stream image which comprises the central portion of the poem and examine first the final section, we can see how the emotional direction of the speaker's monologue has changed. The poem culminates in a flourish in which he expresses an utter disregard for the consequences of becoming independent of her. He uses a religious conceit: he, like one who refuses to attend the
established church, will be a recusant from worship of her. Being so determined in his defiance, he can suffer no further damage if she, in retaliation, completes the break and makes him an excommunicant. As Gardner explains, his emphasis is upon his assertion of his own free will in controlling his feeling for her: "One who stays away by his own free will cannot be harmed by being forbidden to come." His tone is bitter; he displays none of the playfulness of the speakers of the other elegies. He betrays an almost desperate need to maintain his own integrity. Leishman's assessment of the poem does not take into account this earnestness of tone and is therefore seriously inaccurate. He regards its subject as purely a pretext, which "seems to exist chiefly for the sake of the ingenious comparisons." Actually, however, this final section, in which the speaker explains the rationale for his "recusancy," contains no "ingenious comparisons" except for the basic religious comparison, which is not really all that ingenious. What does need to be emphasized is that the speaker is in dead earnest and that the passage is quite subtle in its reflection of his psychological state.

Yet let not thy deepe bitternesse beget Carelesse despaire in mee, for that will whet My minde to scorne; and Oh, love dull'd with paine Was ne'r so wise, nor well arm'd as disdaine.

...thus taught, I shall
As nations do from Rome, from thy love fall.
My hate shall outgrow thine, and utterly
I will renounce thy dalliance, and when I
Am the Recusant, in that resolute state,
What hurts it mee to be excommunicate? (ll. 35-46)

Gardner suggests that the attitude of "disdaine" he is adopting is much more limited than the "scorn" he resists, which is a more general state of despair, or *contemptus mundi*. Donne is showing how the mind's attempts to respond to love—or failure in love—can become complex and contradictory, even perverse. As a defense against her rejection, he adopts the posture of the aggressor, directing her rejection back against her. He becomes a player of roles, as do so many of Donne's elegiac speakers, to avoid the intolerable vision of personal inadequacy. He says that through the "new eyes" of this adopted character, he hopes to "survay thee, 'and spie/ Death in thy cheekes, and darkness in thine eye" (ll. 39-40). He reverses the stance of the adoring lover, who attempts to measure the depth of his adoration; his mistress's rejection of him demands that he "outgrow" her in hatred. Hatred thus assumes a positive value for him. He seeks to effect a degree of alienation proportional to the former degree of commitment. What we see is an individual who claimed earlier (ll. 1-10) that he would accept only absolute honesty and genuine feeling in a human relationship, but who is now engaging in a self-delusive attempt to deny his own inadequacy in that relationship.
He had attempted to define the nature of that relationship in the extended metaphor of the river, which comprises the heart of the poem. We shall conclude our examination of "Recusancy," and this group of elegies, with a consideration of the implications of this provocative figure. For I believe that it provides us with a real insight into the problems Donne is concerned with in the Elegies. Miss Tuve has pointed out that the river image is a standard trope, and she and Donne’s editors, Grierson and Gardner, cite other uses of it, including one by Shakespeare (Two Gentlemen of Verona, II.vii.25-32), which is utterly different from Donne’s, and one by Carew ("To My Mistress sitting by a River's Side, an Eddy") which is obviously derivative of Donne. But another poet of the 1590’s, Samuel Daniel, made striking use of the figure, and it is worth noting how his use of it compares with Donne’s.

In his Musophilus, or Defence of all Learning (1599), Daniel has at one point been expounding upon the abundance and multiplicity of his age, which has reached a point where it is cloyed with plenty. He then describes (ll. 270-288) the world as at the flood, like a river, which runs into empty creeks that "lay contemn'd before," flooding them and then running off some other way. He thus depicts the world’s nature as "humorous," changing unpredictably from—in religion for instance—hot adoration to spiritual frigidity. Whether Donne influenced Daniel or not, both poets saw the
value of the figure as a way of presenting the potentially destructive power of love. Like Donne, Daniel uses it to depict a willful and capricious force of abruptly changing moods.

Donne compares his speaker's mistress to a stream which has abandoned its established course (her faithful lover) after insidiously gnawing away at an adjacent "traiterous bank." This image is difficult to explicate in detail. Grierson is probably correct in taking "traiterous banke" to mean "the weak or treacherous spot in its bank." This may be intended to refer to some weakness in the speaker which she exploited, though it is probably best not to read the analogy in too much literal detail. It is clear that the initial image defines the harmonious relation between the speaker and his mistress. In that image, new suitors are described as tree boughs along the river, which "Do stoope downe, to kisse her upmost brow" (l. 26). In any case she eventually "rusheth violently" into a new course, leaving the old channel dry. Some of the implications of this metaphor have been noted in our discussion of "Change." Here its chief importance is that it effectively defines the speaker's situation. He insists at the end of the poem that he is maintaining his independence and will bend neither to her will nor to despair at losing her. He has been the "wedded channel" that gives direction to and controls the stream; it indeed might be said to give the stream its very
form. But the reality is that the stream has defied him and has acted completely without regard to his control. If we might be permitted to pursue briefly the implications of the metaphor in a somewhat anti-Tuvian manner, we realize that even though the channel gives the stream its form, it is the stream which gives the channel its very existence. When "She flouts the channell, who thenceforth is drie" (1. 33), the stream bed retains no life, no animation; it even loses its very definition as a channel. The image thus reflects his predicament in a way which undercuts the independent gestures he makes at the beginning and end of the poem.

We have briefly compared Donne's use of the river metaphor with Daniel's; in concluding, it should prove enlightening to compare the uses of that figure in this poem and in Donne's own "Satire III." In the satire the river represents political power:

As streams are, Power is; those blest flowers that dwell
At the rough streames calme head, thrive and do well,
But having left their roots, and themselves given
To the streames tyrannous rage, alas are driven
Through mills, and rockes, and woods, and at last, almost
Consum'd in going, in the sea are lost;
So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust
Power from God claym'd, then God himselfe to trust. (11. 103-110)

The implications of the figure in "Recusancy" are in some
ways more searching; in "Satire III" it is used basically as a graphic illustration of an abstract point. The sexual stream can be as destructive in its own way as the political. As the beginning of "Recusancy" seems to imply, political relationships are not to be compared with the more fundamental human relationship of love. In the political stream, one can be carried along by external power and destroyed by an enveloping sea. But in love the stream and the channel are a unity, the one absolutely essential to the other. Since, as we have seen, without the stream the channel ceases to exist as a channel, the loss of the integrated selfhood achieved through love can result in a loss of identity. The loss of the spiritual soul, as suggested in the last lines of "Recusancy" (with their play on the condemning act of excommunication), thus becomes almost anti-climatic; there can be no salvation, or damnation, where there is no true moral self. It should be noted that Donne does compare the destructive power of the deceiver in love to that of Satan. She is like the whirlpool which sucks in careless flowers or the taper which draws flies to their destruction: "and such the devill is,/ Scarce visiting them, who are entirely his" (11. 15-20). In "Satire III," it is shown that to allow temporal power, which has no jurisdiction over the soul, to determine one's religious choice is to invite damnation. In "Recusancy," Donne is not concerned with making outright choices between powers and institutions. He sees
evil now as working in more complex and experiential ways; all is in terms of human relationships.

Throughout the Elegies the conflicting values and claims of social relationships are seen as threatening. In particular, the complex and artificialized processes of love, supposedly the most meaningful of relationships, so bewilder the individual that he may lose contact with any meaningful system of values. The conventional theme of failure in love is thus made the subject of serious literary exploration. Donne takes a hyperbole of Petrarchan love poetry, the ultimate despair which attends loss in love, and deals with it in almost literal, or at least non-hyperbolic, terms. At this point in his intellectual life, Donne seems to believe that the loss of selfhood and the moral chaos which result from the corruption of human relationships are as serious a threat to the individual soul as the choice of misguided religious principles. This is obviously not the Dean speaking, but neither is it a mere libertine "Jack."
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II


15. Edgar F. Daniels and Wanda J. Dean in The Explicator, XXIV (Dec. 1965), No. 34, explain this metaphor.

16. Tuve, p. 34.
17 Tuve, p. 43.
18 Gardner, p. 126.
19 Leishman, p. 83.
20 Gardner, p. 126.
21 Tuve, pp. 296-297.
22 Grierson, II, 72.
CHAPTER III

THE "AFFIRMATIVE" ELEGIES

The four "couples" (we see only the male speaker, of course) featured in this chapter all confront the reality of loss, either through parting or through the inevitable effects of time. The degree to which they can respond realistically to their situation is the measure of the depth of their commitment. No longer are we being presented with a corrupted vision of human relationships such as we saw in the last chapter; these poems are uniformly positive in their treatment of love. But we shall see throughout an assumption of the limitations of human love. Though these poems are not erotic, their underlying assumptions are not fundamentally different from those of the erotic elegies: love has its basis in sensual experience. Though at its best it can have profound meaning, it cannot transcend the physical limitations of human existence. It is not a transcendent experience, as it will be at the high points of the Songs and Sonnets. As we shall see with regard to "His Picture," even in its most meaningful form it is spoken of in terms of appetite. In "The Autumnal," it is likened to a vintage wine which "comes seasonabliest, when our tast/ And appetite to
other things, is past." In "His Picture," with which we shall conclude this portion of our study, love is no longer a delicacy to be savored by the mature epicurean; it is rich fare still, but only to be appreciated by those who, through suffering, have "growne strong enough/To feed on that which to'disus'd tastes seemes tough."

Our subject then is the precariousness of love, even that which has its basis in deep-seated emotional commitment. We see Donne presenting lovers who have hazarded the dangers of commitment and who now see forces of circumstance about to upset the delicate emotional balance they have established. "The Autumnal" offers a useful entrée into Donne's treatment of this problem. This poem is admittedly different in nature from the rest of the elegies and its inclusion in our discussion at this point requires justification. Gardner hesitates to place it among the elegies at all, citing as precedent some of the finest manuscript sources, where it is often among the Songs and Sonnets. The poem is written in the same heroic couplets as the other elegies, but its couplets are mostly closed, whereas Donne's normal conversational style in these poems tends to enjambment. In technique, its closest relations among the elegies are to "The Comparison" and "The Anagram": like them, it is a relatively static treatment of a central conceit and involves the itemizing of a woman's features. But its tone is utterly different: its
purpose is flattery and lines such as the opening couplet seem to express real sentiment.

No Spring, nor Summer beauty hath such grace,
As I have seen in one Autumnal face.

It has indeed been traditionally regarded as an occasional poem, addressed to Donne's close friend, Magdalen Herbert; some of the titles in the manuscripts, such as "On the Lady Herbert afterward Danvers," support this association. Gardner cites good reasons for believing the poem to be addressed to Mrs. Herbert, and I see no reason to dispute her qualified acceptance of the traditional attribution. For our purposes, this is not the important consideration; what is important is that despite its occasional nature, the poem shares with the other affirmative elegies an ambivalence in its attitudes toward love. To clarify the nature of this ambivalence, we must reconcile the two opposing responses which the poem has elicited.

The association with Mrs. Herbert seems to have led most readers since Walton to regard it as an unambiguous poetic complement. Leishman, on the other hand, arguing from what is often a consciously untraditional point of view, argues that the poem is much too contrived and intellectual to be a sincere emotional statement. He takes the somewhat extreme position that:
Leishman is certainly correct in pointing out that the poem is not primarily an emotional statement, but he oversimplifies. It is probably not so true to say that Donne's wit here is "dissociated" from "feeling" or that it "gradually predominates over it" as to say that the two coexist in a kind of unresolved tension. Leishman seems to have some vague notion of this, for he quotes Basil Willey's remarks on Thomas Browne and relates them to "The Autumnal":

something of this peculiar quality of the 'metaphysical' mind is due to this fact of its not being finally committed to any one world. Instead, it could hold them all in a loose synthesis together, yielding itself, as only a mind in a free poise can, to the passion of detecting analogies and correspondences between them.

Leishman uses Willey's observation, however, as a part of his refutation of Eliot's praise of Donne's "unified sensibility" and apparently sees this "peculiar quality" as a manifestation of Donne's "escapism," his tendency, like that of Shakespeare in Richard II, to "degenerate into quaintness, into mere wit."
Rosalie Colie's explanation of the nature of paradox is most enlightening on this point. She uses the archtypal Cretan paradox, "All Cretans are liars"—spoken by a Cretan, to show that the true paradox equivocates: its negative and positive meanings balance one another and are mirrored in one another. In this way, the paradox forces speculation, as the reader's mind is forced to play with the problem. In particular, the paradox likes to raise the problem: "Can a thing unpraisable in fact be praised? If it can then it is not unpraisable..."9 Donne, in "The Autumnal," has written a poem of flattery in the form of a paradox praising that which is normally considered unpraisable, at least in love poetry: middle-age, with its loss of beauty and passion. This was recognized by the compiler of the Stephens Manuscript (now in the Houghton Library), who entitled it "A Paradox of an ould woman" (though, as the poem emphasizes, Mrs. Herbert was not old). Donne shows that in terms of intellectual stimulation, emotional maturity, and even sexual attraction, his subject is more worthy than ever of an admirer's praise. Yet the reader retains his awareness—and there is every reason to think that Donne expects that he will—that the bulk of the evidence, in the real world, is to the contrary. The reader's negative predilections toward the subject of age, his ingrained knowledge of the facts of deterioration and death, temper his delight in the ingenuity of the poem's praise of autumnal beauty; moreover the poem
itself encourages this negative awareness. This can be seen in the flatter ing conceits which somehow do not seem to be flattering at all, and which thus have puzzled many readers, Leishman, I think, among them. For example, the praise of barrenness (l. 32) and the quibble on her wrinkles as "graves" (ll. 13-18) allude to realities which remain ominous despite the playfulness with which they are treated. As Leishman points out, the two syllogisms showing that it is better to love an old woman than a young one might easily appear in a poem such as "The Anagram."

If we love things long sought, Age is a thing Which we are fifty yeares in compassing. If transitory things, which soone decay, Age must be lovelyest at the latest day. (ll. 33-36)

The method of such a poem, as we have seen, is to present a specious argument, attacking a woman by praising her. But it is impossible to find any consistent irony intended in "The Autumnal"; the speaker clearly admires his subject.

The best example of Donne's use of negative meaning to balance positive flattery is his image of the "Deaths-head" faces of "Antique" women (ll. 37-44). He jokes in this passage about the physical hideousness of the aged:

But name not Winter-faces, whose skin's slacke; Lanke, as an unthrifts purse; but a soules sacke; Whose Eyes seeke light within, for all here's shade; Whose mouthes are holes, rather borne out, then made; Whose every tooth to a'severall place is gone, To vexe their soules at Resurrection; Name not these living Deaths-heads unto mee, For these, not Ancient, but Antiques be. (ll. 37-44)
Leishman's comment is that the passage is "An apology which, although it might perhaps have reconciled Mrs. Herbert to the fact of being what Donne calls 'ancient,' could scarcely have helped her to regard with equanimity the prospect of becoming what he calls 'antique.'" One is inclined to agree, but it is necessary to recognize that it is not the function of the passage to serve merely as an apology. Its function is analogous to that of similar "digressions" in the other elegies (it is a digression in that it does not serve to flatter in any way, and thus does not forward the ostensible argument of the poem). It serves the same purpose as the topical digressions in "On His Mistress" (ll. 33-43), "Love's War" (ll. 5-18), and "The Bracelet" (ll. 23-42), and roughly the same purpose as the images of the ship's journey ("Love's War," ll. 19-28), the perfume ("The Perfume," ll. 53-70), and the stream ("Recusancy," ll. 21-34). In the topical allusions, the speaker presents an image of a mad or corrupt outer world; the nature of its madness or corruption reflects that of his own dilemma. In the sea voyage, stream, and perfume passages, the speaker stops and dwells upon an image which represents the forces which he hates or fears. In "The Autumnal" the speaker likewise stops to gaze for a moment into the abyss; here it is that of his addressee, not himself, though it has obvious relevance for everyone. In his argument, he says "name not Winter-faces," but goes on to name them; he says, in effect, "this is what you are not,"
but the reader inevitably supplies the adverb "yet." The passage, then, when set off against the flattery of the rest of the poem, allows the poet to define the almost perfect ambiguity of mature or aging beauty. It is a beauty to which he responds with heightened sensitivity because he is aware of its transitory nature. But he is also likely to express his feelings with a certain bitterness, even cynicism, knowing as he does that this autumnal beauty is tainted by the as yet faint, but distinct, odor of mortality.

We are very much aware in this instance of Donne the man, the personal friend of Mrs. Herbert, looking over the shoulder of Donne the poet. The poet is performing in a conventional mode, the verse encomium, though his performance is not strictly conventional. If we may dwell for a moment upon a metaphor, we can think of the poem as a public performance for a private audience. Donne and Mrs. Herbert, with whatever select friends who might be invited, may be envisioned as watching Donne the poet perform. The performance is brilliant, but to the degree that reality intrudes into it the audience is ill at ease. They are all too aware of the forces which threaten the precarious beauty of the poet's subject. The poet is a kind of verbal tightrope-walker, maintaining a balance--though strangely enough, not a particularly delicate one--between the positive and negative possibilities of his subject. The lady would no doubt applaud his performance politely, but she and her
audience have been made uncomfortably aware that, though her fragile charm is held in suspension by the poet's balancing act, it does not in real life have the benefit of the protecting net of art.

The poem ends with an image of the future relationship between the poet and his lady as a downward journey.

Since such loves naturall lation is, may still
My love descend, and journey downe the hill,
Not panting after growing beauties, so,
I shall ebbe on with them, who home-ward goe.

(ll. 47-50)

The pursuit of sensuous beauty, which occupies the speakers of the earlier elegies, is too exhausting for the individual who is himself feeling the effects of time. With no further expectations of ecstasy, he is resigned to the loss of beauty and sexual energy, but has acquired subtler tastes which can find some satisfaction in mature adult relationships. He retains much of his youthful cynicism, but has outgrown his rebelliousness. It is significant that he sees the downward journey as "loves natural lation [motion] " (my italics); the inevitability of ultimate loss is in the natural order of things.

"On His Mistress" would appear to be the antithesis of the erotic elegies. A sincere parting message, it was long thought to express Donne's pain at leaving his wife, Ann More, and even bears the title "His wife would have gone as his
The speaker attempts to dissuade his lover from accompanying him on a dangerous journey, expressing in the process his confidence in her fidelity during his absence. As Doniphan Louthen has pointed out, the poem is unique among the Elegies in its "curious mixture [of] the tenderness of 'Sweetest Love . . .' with the unexpurgated realism of the Satyres." Also unlike anything else in the Elegies is the speaker's reference to the Christian afterlife (ll. 43-46), which he hopes his lady will enter. Finally, the poem includes the equally uncharacteristic suggestion, though an unconvincing one, of the mystical union of parted lovers (ll. 25-26).

These observations are, however, misleading, for the poem offers anything but a tranquil parting of lovers secure in their relationship. "Parting is such sweet sorrow" is a note Donne never strikes, though the few critical comments which have been made upon this poem seem to assume that it does express such sentiments. Even Louthen, who acknowledges what he calls its "unexpurgated realism," believes that it establishes "a nice balance of eulogy and tenderness, with realism and common sense," that, in effect, the realism is in the service of the expression of tender emotion. It is more accurate to say, however, that the lovers feel a severe tension between their emotions and the realities of the surrounding world. Their relationship has achieved a certain equilibrium with that threatening world, but this
equilibrium is now disrupted by the necessity that the speaker leave. New dangers haunt his parting monologue.

Their past relations have been desperate and secretive. Their first meeting was "strange and fatall"; "strange" has no doubt the primary meaning here of "exceptional to a degree that excites wonder or astonishment" (OED), but it also retains the familiar sense of "peculiar" or "unusual." Wondrous though their first encounter may have been, it has upset their relation to the rest of the world ever since. It was "fatall" in the sense that it joined their fates, but it also fated them to a course of intrigue and danger, making him, for instance, the object "Of hurts which spies and rivalls threatned . . . ." As Gardner points out, it is difficult to read these opening lines without thinking of the opening lines of *Romeo and Juliet* ("A pair of star-crossed lovers . . ."). That the speaker has the more sinister sense of "fatal" somewhere in his mind is apparent in his later fears of both her death and his own. The history of their affair up until now has been one of repressed desire, despair, guilt, threats of rivals, and angered parents. Their history is related in a series of subordinate clauses, all of which modify the main clauses "I calmly beg" and "I conjure thee." This is not the way the secure lover of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," for instance, expresses himself; it sounds more like the tone of the lover in "A Valediction: of my Name in the Window," who is fearful of
his mistress's fidelity. Though the tone of "On His Mistress" is vastly different, its speaker resembles in many ways the speaker of "Tutelage," who bemoans the loss of a woman because he has so much invested in her. He implores her, on the basis of all they have shared, to give up her absurd scheme for accompanying him and remain faithful to him at home. He is "unswearing" their vows of constancy in order to "over-sweare" them, that is, to make them even stronger.

Here I unsweare, and over-sweare them thus:
Thou shalt not love by meanes so dangerous. (ll. 11-12)

Line twelve may refer ahead to her plan to be his page, but its phrasing ("by meanes so dangerous") suggests that it refers to what he has been describing, the intrigue they have practiced up to the present (i.e. "by meanes so dangerous" as those we have been using). He seems to be saying that his departure will remove her from the dangers she has been suffering; in turn, he requires of her a higher order of constancy, one which will endure even in his absence.

Donne is presenting a relationship at its moment of truth. In its earlier stages it has been conducted in the unstable world of Ovidian love intrigue; its circumstances have no doubt been much like those we see in "The Perfume" or "Tutelage." But at the moment of parting, their affair assumes a new dimension for the speaker. As the sexual
basis for their relationship is to be at least temporarily removed, he sees their opportunity— their necessity in fact—to establish a firmer basis for their future relationship, and thereby dismiss the fears and insecurities they have endured. He appeals to her, therefore, to "Temper, oh faire Love, loves impetuous rage." He rejects the idea of her traveling with him as his page because it would perpetuate the deception they have had to practice all along. It would indeed continue it in an absurd and grotesque form which is abhorrent to him. As he implores her to "Dissemble nothing, not a boy, nor change/ Thy bodies habit, nor mindes . . . ," he is hoping that the present experience will liberate them from compromise and secrecy.

But the outer world threatens, more so because the young lover must remove himself from his one secure relation. Like the man in "Love's War," he would like to remain in the world of his mistress's boudoir, but circumstances will not permit that. The world, which up to now has been intrusive and uncongenial to their love, begins to appear violent and chaotic now that he is to be— quite literally— set adrift in it. As he tries to impose order on his own little world, images of disorder and violence begin to appear in his speech. He wants her to keep as aloof as possible from the outer world, for though her beauty has exerted its control over him and even moved him to idealism, it can no more control the primitive sexual energies at large than it can
"move/ Rage from the seas . . . ." Beauty is, in fact, a catalyst for destructive sexual forces, which he compares with the powers of the natural elements:

Thy (else Almighty) Beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love,
Nor tame wilde Boreas harshness; Thou has read
How roughly hee in pieces shivered
Faire Oritheea, whom he swore hee lov'd. (ll. 19-23)

The way Donne has transformed this myth indicates his purpose, for in Ovid's story (Metamorphoses, vi, 682-713) Boreas carries off Oritheea and forces her to make love to him, but he does not destroy her. Gardner is puzzled and assumes that Donne simply confused this story with one of two others in which a girl is killed by the wind. But whether his memory failed him or whether he was consciously remaking the tale, Donne chose the resultant story because it offered him what he needed for his poem: an image of sexual destruction, of mutilated sexual innocence. It embodies the speaker's fearful guilt regarding the past course of their affair and his feeling of vulnerability as he and his lover are thrown upon their separate resources.

He then conjures for her a vision of a world mad with sexuality:

Men of France, changeable Camelions,
Spittles of diseases, shops of fashions,
Loves fuellers, and the rightest companie
Of Players which uppon the worlds stage bee,
Will quickly knowe thee, 'and knowe thee, and alas
Th'indifferent Italian, as wee passe
His warme land, well content to thinke thee page,  
Will haunt thee, with such lust and hideous rage  
As Lots faire guests were vext. But none of these,  
Nor spungie hydroptique Dutch shall thee displease  
If thou stay here. (11. 33-43)

This is a rough counterpart of the politically mad world in  "Love's War" (11. 5-18) and the gold-corrupted world in  "The Bracelet" (11. 23-42). In each case, the world is  seen as in the grasp of those forces which have threatened  the viewer or his relation to his loved one. Here the world  is a hunting ground of predatory sexual animals. It is in  the control of the sexual "rage" which he has, in a slightly  different frame of reference, implored her to resist  ("Temper . . . loves impetuous rage"). It is in a sense a  kind of nightmare vision of the world he is leaving, the  world of Ovidian eroticism portrayed at the beginning of the  poem and in many of the other elegies. He has himself been  an eager participant in that world, pitting himself against  his "spies and rivalls." He is now trying to disentangle  himself from this jungle, but instinctively realizes that  the outer world will not change in accordance with his in-  ternal change. He sees himself condemned to enter the  Stygian world he has helped create with his "masculine  perswasive force." The inhabitants of this world of heat  and rapacity are creatures of no stable identity: "Th'in-  different Italian," "Men of France, changeable Camelions,"  all of them "Players uppon the worlds stage." They may be
gaudy without ("Shops of fashions"), but they are diseased within ("Spittles of diseases"). In an image which implies the dread of sexuality we have seen underlying other elegies, he presents this world as a Sodom and Gomorrah bent upon its own destruction and that of all who enter it; its inhabitants "Will Haunt thee, with such lust and hideous rage/ As Lots faire guests were vext . . . ." England, he argues, offers a haven for her from such a world. (He assumes that she will ultimately be delivered from it through passage into the Christian after-life.) He is "only worthy to nurse in my minde/ Thirst to come back." She can "Feede on this flatterye, That absent lovers one in th'other bee." But as Louthan points out, "flattery" clearly means here "sophistry which is gratefully to be received, if not swallowed." It would be a mistake to read too many negative connotations into the speaker's professions of hope; we are to a large extent obligated to accept his sentiments at face value. But his statement on "absent lovers" is flat and unconvincing when compared to the passages on the "stiff twin compasses" and "gold to ayery thinnesse beate" in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"; the latter expresses a vastly greater sense of conviction. The speaker of "On His Mistress" idealistically professes that if his lover dies, his soul will soar towards her from other lands (ll. 17-18), but one suspects that she is likely to find scant consolation in that.
In his final vision, he creates nightmares for her of his death and imagines her terror:

nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnights starting, crying out, oh, oh,
Nurse, oh my love is slaine; I saw him goe
Ore the white Alpes, alone; I saw him, I,
Assayld, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleede, fall,
and dye. (ll. 50-54)

Not only does this final section express his fear of his own destruction, it also marks a return to the secretive world alluded to early in the poem. His anxiety over her possible disclosure of their secret recalls the world of "The Perfume," with its spying servants in the employ of suspicious parents. This undercuts the idealistic sentiment of the lines preceding and implies that the new order of relationship envisioned earlier is not likely to come into being.

To see clearly the implications of the strikingly visual final image, one has only to contrast it with the references of some of the parting lovers in the Songs and Sonnets to their own deaths. They use death as a figure of speech, a hyperbole for parting—the "death of the heart." It is one lover's habit "To use my selfe in jest/ Thus by fain'd deaths to dye" ("Song"—"Sweetest Love I do not go"—ll. 7-8). Another tells his mistress to "Impute this idle talke, to that I goe,/ For dying men talke often so" ("Valediction: of my Name in the Window," ll. 65-66). A most explicit example is the conclusion of "The Expiration":
The speaker in "On His Mistress," however, is talking about his own literal death. In this we can see, of course, that there is none of the serenity of the more secure lovers Donne portrays, who can use their own death as a figure of speech. There is a note of self-indulgence in this young man's creation of an image which can only alarm his listener. The speaker of "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," like "virtuous men" who "passe mildly'away," expresses himself with subdued confidence; the speaker of "On His Mistress" is shrill. His final words are brave but lame flattery; he is beaten rather than hopeful, or even resigned. Obviously, though he has felt an aspiration for something higher, he is still one of Donne's "Dull sublunary lovers" who have not transcended the limits of the senses and therefore

... cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.
("Valediction . . . Mourning,
11. 13-15)

"His Parting From Her" is manifestly a sincere parting message, and its often quoted passage (11. 75-82) is a beautiful expression of a lover's feeling for his absent
lady. But the poem maintains to a lesser degree the same
kind of tension between the outer world and the world of
lovers as does "To His Mistress." Its speaker feels a
similar conflict between the lyricism he would like to ex­
press and the sordid realism of the circumstances of their
affair. The complexities of "His Parting," however, are of
a different order from those of the other poems and in some
ways render it a less satisfactory work of art. Lowry
Nelson, in the only published critique of the poem, shows
that "the speaker of the poem moves through a change in at­
titude which begins in despair and ends in constancy and
affirmation." But his statement is misleading, for it
assumes a consistent and meaningful movement within the
logic of the poem. The problem is that the two moods
(despair and affirmation) are not reconciled in any con­
vincing way: they simply stand side by side.

Any careful reader must face up to the possibility that
such deficiencies may be due to the poem's having been writ­
ten by another poet, one whose talents were inferior to
Donne's. Gardner prints the poem in her Dubia section and
argues against Donne's authorship. I have been increasing­
ly drawn to Gardner's speculation that it may be of composite
authorship, for this would explain its unevenness. It has
occurred to me that the shortened version of the poem, which
was the first printed version (in the second edition of the
poems, 1635), might represent the portion written by Donne.
No one has been able to account for the shortening, especially since the manuscript from which the 1635 printer was composing contains the full text. It seems to me possible that the compositer knew, from some other source, that these lines were the only ones by Donne; he may have simply made note of them, later setting his type from the manuscript from which he was working, but excluding the spurious lines. The shortened, forty-two-line, version includes the fine opening (11. 1-4), a typically Donneian version of love-intrigue (11-45-56), the section containing the poem's most striking passage (11. 67-82), and the ending (11. 95-104). When all of this is looked at as the "kernel" poem, the rest does begin to take on the appearance of padding. On the other hand, it is difficult to get away from Gardner's observation that the long version looks to be the original. For the transitions in the shortened version are so extremely clumsy that they must have been composed after the fact. I shall not, therefore, contend for the authorship theory presented above, but will assume the poem to be a single unit and to have a reasonable claim to a place in the Donne canon. It was, after all, printed in all the early editions but the first (which did not include a number of indubitably canonical poems) and has been accepted by Grierson and by Donne's most recent editor, John Shawcross. I have dwelt upon this problem, however, in order to make clear to the reader that some of the problems we shall
encounter may originate in the authorship question and that the solution to these problems may require the skills of the textual editor as well as the critic.

The poem's valedictory sentiments are less interesting than its vision of the anxieties of clandestine love-making. It presents, with considerable intensity, the "fire and darkness" of the world of intrigue we have seen in such poems as "Jealosie," "The Perfume," and "To His Mistress."

The opening movement presents a vision of cosmic darkness, a theme treated most profoundly by Donne in "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucies Day." The speaker's loved one is leaving and with her departure comes a darkness so disturbing that the horrors of "greate Hell . . . are shadows to it."

The first section is an apostrophe to Night (ll. 1-12); the apostrophe form is also used in the three subsequent sections, which are addressed to Love (ll. 13-64), fortune (ll. 65-83), and his "Friend" herself (ll. 83-104). Nelson's interest is in this multiple audience, which he sees as a characteristic of the rhetorical complexity of Baroque style. The shifting audience, as we have noted, is common in the Elegies.

To the degree that is has a dramatic function in this poem, it suggests the dilemma of the speaker. He is in a state of emotional perplexity and is casting about for answers, turning first to one possibility, then another, each of which he apostrophizes. As Nelson points out, the poem loses its effect partly because these apparent dramatic audiences are
not really dramatized; the speaker retains a "third person attitude toward them," though addressing them in the second person. Moreover, there are no real transitions between the different addressees.

The speaker discontinues his mournful address to night because he is not just oppressed by darkness of spirit, but tormented by the "fire" which burns within him. This fire is not simply the love-light which all lovers swear to keep burning, but specifically the discomfort of sexual desire. In the long address to Love, he does not use the exalted language of the valedictory speaker who has resigned himself to physical loss and has begun to think of his love in more idealistic terms. He describes their agony throughout in terms of physical pain, as epitomized by this image:

Or tak' st thou [love] pride to break us on the wheel,
And view old Chaos in the Pains we feel? (ll. 17-18)

As in "On His Mistress," the speaker recreates the history of their affair. The arousal of their desire for one another is described with much greater intensity than in the earlier poem:

Was't not enough that thou didst dart thy fires Into our blouds, inflaming our desires, And made'st us sigh and glow, and pant, and burn, And then thy self into our flame did'st turn? (ll. 35-38)
The last line, which has puzzled editors, is awkward, but its meaning is comprehensible: their desire was transformed into love itself. With increasing commitment, they contrived dangerous rendezvous, always dreading her "towred husbands eyes" and those of his spies. In a passage clearly derived from Ovid, he describes how they flirted with coded language, glances, and even their feet, under her husband's very eyes. They have practiced all the secrets of love's art, but have in the end been denied satisfaction. This depiction of sexual frustration is very well done and perhaps represents the poem's best claim to the Donne canon.

The exact cause of the rupture of their relationship is left vague. His "torment" is not due simply to the fact of his lover's departure; he is also beset by guilt. He equivocates in his treatment of his dilemma, sometimes blaming it on the inherent capriciousness of love, sometimes on some "amiss" or "fait" of his own. We are reminded of "The Expostulation" where the speaker blames first his mistress, then womankind in general, and finally a third party who betrayed them both. The following passage expresses the essence of his dilemma:

Or have we left undone some mutual Right,  
Through holy fear, that merits thy despight?  
No, no. The fait was mine, impute it me,  
Or rather to conspiring destinie,  
Which, since I lov'd for forme before, decreed,  
That I should suffer when I lov'd indeed. (ll. 19-24)
We assume from this that their relationship has come to disaster because he was not prepared for real commitment. He "lov'd for forme before," having adopted the pose of the young man about town of the elegies, to whom love-making is one of the "formes" of his social role. Finding himself emotionally involved, he was unable to meet the demands of the new situation. In his terms, destiny decreed that he should get his come-uppance. Does his reference to "some mutual Right [i.e. 'rite?]" which they "left undone . . ./ Through holy fear" mean that they failed to consummate their love before circumstances separated them? This seems in keeping with his image of the "golden fruit" which was swept away from him before he could capture it (ll. 25-29). But another of the poem's inconsistencies, this one of imagery, can be seen in the later passage in which he compares the course of their love to the seasons:

The Summer how it ripen'd in the eare;  
And Autumn, what our golden harvests were. (ll. 79-80)

Here the "golden fruit" was definitely harvested. Obviously their basic "falt" was commitment itself—they "went . . . still on with Constancie." We know from "The Indifferent" that in the Ovidian world Love punishes those "Poor Heretiques . . ./ Which thinke to stablish dangerous constancie" (ll. 24-25). But this being the case, one senses a certain inconsistency in the latter part of the poem, where the speaker swears his constancy almost ad tedium.
He reconciles himself to the "blinded Justice" of Love's wrath as so many of the elegiac speakers do, by a piece of verbal magic. Here it takes the form of a bizarre image of their determination to remain together (even though their separation is an accomplished fact).

First let our eyes be riveted quite through Our turning brains, and both our lips grow to; Let our armes clasp like Ivy, and our fear Freese us together, that we may stick here, Till Fortune, that would rive us, with the deed Strain her eyes open, and it make them bleed, (ll. 57-62)

This is a singularly violent and unpleasant image of supposedly true commitment. It is a nightmare version of the sexual embrace: their bodies are connected like those of Siamese twins, their eyes riveted into one another's brains, their arms wound like vines around one another, the whole deformity frozen rigidly into oneness. Over it stands the medieval personification, Fortuna, straining so hard to part them that her eyes bleed. The passage is a grotesque parody of conventional "joining" images of Petrarchan love poetry, as used seriously by Donne, for example, in "The Ecstasy":

Our hands were firmly cimented With a fast balme, which thence did spring, Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred Our eyes, upon one double string. (ll. 5-8)

Like the image of the scalpel in the wound ("The Comparison"), this is one of the numerous figures in the Elegies which has
implications probably not recognizable by their speakers. This image reflects the desperate state of their relationship. It is an image of painful union, the pain deriving in some part from each of a number of causes: the fear of detection, guilt, the bewilderment of emotional involvement, and the despair of parting.

If the poem were to end at this point, it would be an interesting if not totally satisfactory variation on a typical Donne theme. But what follows are forty lines of often repetitious verse expressing the speaker's serene confidence in his future relationship with his mistress. The transition is abrupt: despair simply ceases at about line sixty-four, and affirmation begins. If the whole poem is Donne's, its latter half contains some of the tamest, least clever lines he ever wrote. It is curious that the references that are made to the poem are almost invariably to this part of it; even Nelson's short analysis is concerned largely with its affirmative section. It might be pointed out that even though it is static and expresses commonplace sentiments, it does contain a very fine lyrical passage. But note that this striking piece of verse is mellifluous and straightforward in a manner quite unlike Donne's:

The ayre shall note her soft, the fire most pure;
Water suggest her clear, and the earth sure.
Time shall not lose our passages; the Spring
Shall tell how fresh our love was in beginning;
The Summer how it ripen'd in the eare;
And Autumn, what our golden harvests were.
The Winter I'll not think on to spite thee,
But count it a lost season, so shall shee. (ll. 75-82)

Moreover, the final couplet mars the effect of the passage, for it is simply incompetent. The idea that he will spite Fortune by not thinking about winter is inane, and the flat comment, "so shall shee," is irrelevant, since he is explaining his thought process. This latter clause obviously exists only to complete the rhyme. Other passages make little sense when examined closely, for example:

Though cold and darkness longer hang somewhere,
Yet Phoebus equally lights all the Sphere.
And what he cannot in like portions pay,
The world enjoyes in mass, and so we may. (ll. 85-88)

And so we may do what? He is apparently saying that even though all parts of the earth do not share equally in the sun's warmth, as a whole ("in mass") it gets its full measure. But how does this really apply to them? In the preceding couplet, he indicates that he has recovered from his earlier gloom ("come Night,/ Environ me with Darkness," etc.), by bidding her to "drown Night/ With hope of Day . . . ." But if they are both now seeing the light, what can he mean by suggesting that they will enjoy it "in mass"? The figure points to no psychological reality.

The second half of the poem is not totally, however, without relevance to the first. In spite of the speaker's new-found optimism, he thinks of their future relationship
in terms of its past history. Though he says that in separation "our souls are ty'd," he has no conception of the mystical union of absent lovers such as we see in "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning." His notion of the bond which is to continue to exist between them is a very literal one. Their relations are still to be maintained by secretive letters and gifts, and by other "shifts." His thoughts of her will not be a part of any transcendent meeting of minds, but will be the product of the normal processes of memory triggered by sense association.

I will not look upon the quickning Sun
But straight her beauty to my sense shall run;
The ayre shall note her soft. (ll. 73-75)

In the already-quoted passage which follows, his memory operates through the four physical elements and the seasons. His metaphor of the growing season suggests the biological nature of their relationship and implies that their involvement has also run its cycle. It is well for him, perhaps, that he chooses not to "think on" Winter.

More importantly, we see in the sincere professions of this poem a condition operative throughout the Elegies and indicative of their world-view. The elegiac speaker is utterly at a loss when he must take the affirmative. Eloquence of language or sentiment does not come naturally to him. Love flattery must by its nature focus on its object, the speaker's lady, and is therefore outer-directed. Its
practice is difficult for the egoist, who habitually uses language and wit for the purpose of self-display. This basically egotistical approach intrudes when he employs the conventional idea of the reflection of one lover in the other:

That I may grow enamour'd on your mind,
When mine own thoughts I there reflected find.

(11. 93-94)

He will find most joy in her when her mind is the reflection of his own. He acknowledges that he is ill at ease with the language of affirmation, indicating that he has always been suspicious of it and feels that he is open to the suspicions of others when he uses it:

Much more I could, but many words have made
That, oft, suspected which men would perswade.

(11. 101-102)

An ungenerous listener might well be tempted to speculate that the lover protests too much, but the poem does not provide any real evidence that Donne intends the speaker's profession to be taken with an irony. It can be argued that Donne is intentionally creating dull, inconsistent verse because he has created a speaker who is incompetent at expressing true emotion. But Donne always regards a poem as a performance; even when he is undercutting his speaker, he does so in a manner which will engage the wit of his audience. It is probably realistic to say that Donne is
both involved with a piece of verse which did not command his full interest and engaged in a purpose which was a departure from his usual aims in the *Elegies*. He is attempting to present a sincere individual in the process of emerging from the bewildering world of Ovidian love. We have seen that Donne has created brilliantly cynical Ovidian poems; he writes (or will write—the chronology is uncertain) equally splendid affirmative poems of love in the *Songs and Sonnets*. But in "His Parting From Her," if the poem is indeed Donne's, he has not fully resolved the difficulties of dealing with this middle state.

We began our discussion of Donne's dramatic elegies with a poem, "Love's War," which juxtaposed love and war; in "His Picture" we come full circle from that poem. Whereas in "Love's War" the speaker withdrew from the dangers of war into the love relationship, the lover here leaves his beloved for war. But the speaker here, about to encounter great personal danger, shows less insecurity in his attitudes than does the lover who spoke from the sanctuary of his mistress's boudoir. The departing lover has a stable sense of his relation to the outside world and is reconciled to life's demands. The poem seems to imply that the equanimity with which he faces this unpleasant situation has its basis in his mature relationship with the woman he addresses. "His Picture" is an anomaly among Donne's poems in its comparative lack of ingenuity; relative to Donne's usual work,
it is the essence of simplicity. The speaker says farewell to his lady in a straightforward manner, expressing his confidence that their love will survive his absence, and gives her a picture, by which she may remember him as he now appears, not as he may look after enduring the ravages of sea travel and war.

The poem's quiet tone of resignation resembles that of "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," but the two poems are unlike in that, first, the speaker here does not idealize the fact of separation. The lovers will not mystically remain together in an eternal love-stasis. Absence will be an unalterable reality, and change will definitely occur. Whereas "Valediction . . . Mourning" begins with a simile of a dying man, this elegy assumes the literal possibility that the speaker himself may die. The poem is more literally a "valediction" than any of Donne's poems which go by that name; significantly, it is the only one in which the speaker is going to war. The second major difference between "His Picture" and the "Valediction" poem is that the object used as the central symbol (perhaps "conversation piece" is a more accurate term here) of this poem, the picture, is a literal object, not a figure of speech like the compasses. Like the tears in "Valediction . . . Weeping," the name in the window, or the book in "Valediction . . . Book," it is a literal object which takes on figurative meaning, but it has an entirely different function. The picture is not an
emblem of the mystical presence of the physically absent lover; like any picture, it has captured an image which will be lost in the course of time. In this case, it is not only time, but war and the elements which will certainly alter the countenance of the departing soldier. The picture is thus both a physical reminder of him in absence, the physical fact of absence being an absolute reality, and a measure of the change which will without doubt take place in him. There is, then, a direct relationship between the central symbol and a set of human emotions, and this directness typifies the straightforward and realistic nature of the monologue as a whole.

The first couplet, for example, though it alludes to the poetic convention of the exchange of hearts, expresses a simple reality of their situation.

Here take my Picture, though I bid farewell; Thine, in my heart, where my soule dwells, shall dwell.

His heart remains his own; only physical images are exchanged, on the one side through a miniature portrait, on the other through memory. He is, of course, flattering her by saying that he cannot possibly forget her and thus has no need of a physical picture. But he is also delivering a somewhat grim reminder that he has no real need of her picture, since there is no reason to expect that she will be undergoing any radical change of appearance. His appearance
may, however, be considerably altered when she next sees him.

There is also unexpected candor in his little joke on the dual meaning of "shadow."

'Tis [the picture] like me now, but I dead,
'twill be more
When wee are shadowes both, then 'twas before. (ll. 3-4)

Commenting on the realistic likeness captured by the portrait, he somewhat tactlessly observes that it will represent his present image even better than he will himself after he has become, like it, a "shadow" ("portrait" and "ghost"). Such a comment could hardly be expected to allay the fears of his already-distressed lover, but it is not his purpose in the remark to do so. Neither is he appealing for her sympathy, as are the speakers of the other two elegies of departure. He is simply preparing her, somewhat playfully, for the worst. He assumes their relationship to be so mature that no emotional chicanery is necessary.

In addition to being the simplest and most candid in its mode of expression of any of the elegies, "His Picture" is also one of the most fully dramatic poems in the group. The following lines convey a subtle joke which can only be effective in a dramatic situation:
If rivall fooles taxe thee to'have lov'd a man,  
So foule, and course, as, Oh, I may seeme than,  
This shall say what I was; and thou shalt say,  
Doe his hurts reach mee? doth my worth decay?  
Or doe they reach his judging minde, that hee  
Should like'and love lesse, what hee did love  
to see? (ll. 11-16)

Clearly this is not one of those token dramatic situations  
which are merely transparent devices through which the poet  
can perform. This passage is meaningful only if seen as a  
playful verbal gesture by the speaker to his listener with­
in the poem. These lines cause the reader some confusion  
at first, for the speaker is putting into the mouth of his  
lady ("and thou shalt say") words which seem to make sense  
only if they come directly from him. When he returns "foule,  
and course" in appearance, she is to turn to his jeering  
rivals and say, in effect: has anything happened which  
should make my lover love me less? Why should any changes  
in him affect his estimation of me? The lines are peculiar  
in that his future regard for her is not the issue: the  
rivals would wonder how she could love such an ugly man as  
he may be by then, but would not consider that he should  
love her any less. What he is apparently letting her know,  
in a playful way, is that he is not concerned with the ques­
tion of their mutual fidelity. The replies he devises for  
her are a series of rhetorical questions asking whether all  
he has been through has affected his view of her. The im­
plied answer is that, of course, his feelings for her have
not changed, and why then would so comparatively trivial a thing as a change in his appearance cause her to love him less? He is playfully expressing to her his belief that her feeling for him is so far beyond question that she will not even recognize the nature of a remark which calls it into doubt, and will thus show only her naive concern that the change in him may have affected his feeling for her. There is also probably a subtle reminder here that he is not the only one who will change: time will do the work on her that war does on him. The question of fidelity, normally the obsession of parting lovers, is here the subject of a private joke. In contrast to the lovers in most of the other elegies, who are intensely concerned about the unstable relationships they are attempting to maintain, these mature lovers are so confident of their relationship that they can look at themselves with some detachment, smiling at the normal preoccupations of parting lovers.

In order to clarify the attitude toward love expressed in "His Picture," I should like to discuss its relation to a poem to which it would seem to be completely unrelated, the splendid erotic elegy "To His Mistris Going to Bed." I shall not discuss "Going to Bed" in detail in this study because it is the only one of the elegies to have been given definitive explication. Clay Hunt's chapter on it in his book Donne's Poetry would be difficult to surpass in thoroughness or ingenuity. Though some of his interpreta-
tions are open to the charge of being over-ingenious, Hunt does examine the implications of the poem's complex figures of speech with extraordinary care. In a number of ways, "Going to Bed" is Donne's most contrived and enthusiastic celebration of union, "His Picture" the simplest. For such reasons, the poems can be thought of as occupying opposite ends of a spectrum representing Donne's treatments of love in the Elegies, and thus offer an extremely useful means by which to define the limits of his thinking on the subject in this body of poetry.

The two poems seem antithetical in their views of the role of the physical in the love relationship, but in the final analysis they share certain basic assumptions. "Going to Bed" exalts physical beauty, whereas "His Picture" denies its importance, insisting that love can continue quite satisfactorily after one's physical beauty has been lost. "Going to Bed" glorifies the erotic, regarding it as the be-all and the end-all of love. "His Picture," though it does not deal specifically with the erotic, relegates purely physical infatuation to an early stage of romantic involvement. But more important than these differences, significant though they are, is the basic limitation of the love relationship which is assumed in both poems. Both assume that love can only be defined in experiential terms, that it can make no claims to ideal or absolute status. Both deny love the transcendence claimed for it in the Platonism of much
Renaissance love poetry; this transcendence is espoused by
Donne himself in later poems such as "The Ecstasy" and the
microcosmic poems in the Songs and Sonnets. We have already
noted how "His Picture" is conspicuously lacking in such
motifs as the presence-in-absence paradox so prominent in
the valediction poems. The poem minimizes the importance
of the body, which must deteriorate, but does not go on to
posit that love can survive its ultimate deterioration.
Love's staying power is asserted in relatively modest terms:
it can simply survive the loss of youth and beauty. In
short, with the attainment of mature emotional commitment,
one has reached the zenith of human love.

"Going to Bed," exulting as it does in erotic love,
would seem to be entirely different in its attitudes. But
a careful reading of the poem reveals that even though the
physical relationship is presented as monumentally satisfy­
ing, no claim is made for its ability to raise the lover
beyond the limitations of his world. The poem abounds in
religious analogues, but as in other elegies, such as "The
Bracelet," the theological parallels are directed downward.
They serve the erotic interests of the speaker, but they do
not elevate the erotic to a spiritual level. The religious
doctrines alluded to, such as divine revelation (ll. 33ff.),
are the subjects of an elaborate joke, the underlying as­
sumption of which is that such remote spiritual concepts
pale when contrasted with the tangible reality of sexual
pleasure. Clay Hunt explores the implications of the religious parallels in detail and his conclusions are most enlightening. In his long analysis of lines 33-46, the most important and sustained religious passage, he shows that:

The poetic proposition of this section of the Elegy asserts, in effect, that loving a woman's naked body is philosophically equivalent to loving her soul, and that consummation in sexual intercourse and consummation in the Mystic Experience add up to pretty much the same thing.27

His speculation upon the philosophical position implied by the whole of this irreverent comedy is extremely provocative:

The shock of these lines is the intellectual shock of what he sees. In effect, they present the wholehearted acceptance of sensual satisfaction as an act which entails taking up a philosophic option, which forces one to embrace a philosophic materialism and to reject completely the doctrines of philosophic idealism—to reject, in fact, the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.28

Gone from "His Picture" is the bravado of "Going to Bed." The glories of physical love have been dimmed by the effects of time, danger, and the awareness of death. The problem is, as Robert Frost has put it, "what to make of a diminished thing" ("The Oven Bird"). In "Going to Bed," the "thing"—and the word is precise since the point is that love is confined to the material world—has not been diminished. A proper reading of the Elegies would begin
with this poem and end with "His Picture." For love is a diminished thing after "Going to Bed," and reaches its nadir in poems such as "The Perfume and "Jealosie." Its value is reasserted, in subdued tones, in "His Picture." Though the approach in this poem is by no means melancholy, but good-humored, there is a certain poignance in the underlying awareness that the mature relationship of these two lovers is of a delicate and transitory nature. It is still at the mercy of a hostile outer world, still the object of the scorn and envy of the "rival fools" who people the world of the Elegies.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER III

1 See pp. xxxi, 146-148.


4 The Monarch of Wit, p. 99.

5 Leishman, p. 100.


7 Leishman, p. 108.

8 Paradoxia Epidemica, pp. 5-6.

9 Colie, p. 5.


11 See Grierson, II, 86-87; Gardner, pp. 139-140.


13 p. 54.

14 See Gardner, p. 140-141. Her references are to a story in Plato's Phaedrus and one told in Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (part 3, sect. 3, memb. 1, subs. 1).


For her reasons for doubting Donne's authorship, see pp. xl-xlili.

Gardner, p. xl.

The Complete Poetry of John Donne (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1967). Shawcross does not comment on the authorship question, so his reasons for printing the poem can only be speculated upon. The fundamental issue in these editorial judgements has been the differing concepts of what comprises conservative editing. Grierson, Shawcross (presumably), and others believe that the editor should print a poem which has been traditionally associated with the Donne canon and has not been proved to have been written by anyone else. Gardner takes the opposite approach, placing the burden of proof on the poem which would take its place in the canon: "We need positive reasons for ascribing a poem to Donne, not the merely negative reason that we cannot propose another author" (p. xlv).

This is a unique situation among Donne's valedictory poems; in all others, it is the male speaker who is leaving.

See pp. 122ff, where he examines a number of poems from this point of view.

Nelson, p. 132.

See Gardner, p. xlili.

Amores, I. iv. 15-32.


Donne's Poetry, p. 22.

p. 30.
CHAPTER IV
DONNE, JONSON, AND "THE EXPOSTULATION"

The four elegies published as numbers xxxviii-xli of the Underwood section of the 1640-1 folio of Ben Jonson's Works have been the subject of an authorship dispute. Some critics have claimed them all for Jonson, others all for Donne, while several have ascribed one to Donne (xxxix, "The Expostulation")\(^1\), the others to Jonson. The problem arose primarily because "The Expostulation" had been printed in the 1633 and 1635 editions of Donne's poems and is attributed to Donne in some dozen manuscript collections of the period. The question regarding the others developed out of their association with and resemblance to this disputed poem. The problem is not of monumental importance in itself, and it might well be argued that a study of this nature should not concern itself with textual matters. The issue does offer a focal point, however, for a comparative study of the methods of these two major poets in their practice of the elegiac mode.

Though several competent scholars have dealt with this problem, none of their views can be regarded as definitive. This is in part owing to the nature of the problem, for it
unlikely that any concrete factual evidence will turn up to settle it beyond question. But the problem is not insoluble; the difficulty has been that none of the critics have supported their views with a thorough critical analysis of the poems themselves. It has not been shown that any position can meet the test of close explication. Some attention has been given to the internal evidence for the authorship of "The Expostulation," but there has been no close study of the poem. Moreover, no one has related this internal evidence to the findings of a careful critical study of the other work of Jonson and Donne in the elegiac form. We have looked at Donne's elegies; a look at Jonson's should reveal the ways in which this genre was interpreted by a poet who was not only Donne's close literary associate for a considerable period of time, but also the greatest practitioner of this particular genre after Donne.

The conclusion which the following pages will defend is that the four disputed elegies, including "The Expostulation," were written by Jonson. I will argue, somewhat tentatively, that "The Expostulation" bears so much resemblance to Donne's work because Jonson wrote it under the influence of Donne. That this is the only of his elegies which is closely imitative of Donne accounts for its having found its way into the Donne canon, through manuscript transmission, in an age when mistaken attributions of authorship were common. We shall see that "The Expostulation" is thematically
and stylistically different from Donne's elegies and that the differences parallel those which make Jonson's elegiac poetry as a whole distinguishable from Donne's. Where the two poets are closest in method and content, Jonson's handling of the elegiac form is, with one striking exception (No. xlii, "An Elegie"—"Let me be what I am"), less effective than Donne's. Though this judgment no doubt partly reflects personal taste, it can be demonstrated that Jonson did not master the dramatic technique which is at the heart of Donne's concept of the love elegy. Jonson's poems are never really monologues; they tend rather to be expository, setting out a well-defined theme in an ordered series of metaphorical statements. They are dominated by ethical assumptions in a way Donne's never are and thus never become the searching, amoral explorations of love that Donne's are.

What has probably been regarded as the standard judgment on the authorship question is the view argued first by Evelyn Simpson in a 1939 article and eventually incorporated into the Herford-Simpson edition of Jonson. She argues convincingly that "The Expostulation" is Donne's and that the other three disputed elegies are Jonson's. Her view is based on both internal and external evidence and contrasts with that of her colleague, Herford, who had ascribed all four to Donne on stylistic and thematic grounds. Her ascription of "The Expostulation" to Donne is in line with the editorial practice of Grierson and is accepted by the
Jonson critic George Johnston. Helen Gardner, however, who probably knows the elegies of Donne better than anyone else to date, denies even "The Expostulation" to Donne, arguing that the textual situation is ambiguous and that internal evidence is against Donne's authorship. An eccentricity in her view is that she does not believe the poem is Jonson's either, regarding "the attribution to Jonson in the carelessly produced Under-wood as worthless." Malcolm Wilder was, to the best of my knowledge, the first critic to claim all four poems for Jonson. His article in itself makes a very poor case: he applies a dubious statistical test to "The Expostulation" to prove that it resembles Jonson stylistically, and he argues that the four poems must be regarded as a unit. Nell Johnson accepts his claims and adds to them her contention that the poems must be Jonson's because they are superior poetically to the elegies which are indubitably Donne's and reflect the greater mastery of the poet who wrote in the elegiac form in his maturity (Donne having written his elegies in his youth). I believe that Wilder and Johnson are correct in their ascription, but that they have reached this conclusion for some very wrong reasons and that Johnson, in particular, bases some highly questionable critical views upon it. I reject the idea of the organic unity of the four disputed elegies and the argument of Nell Johnson that they are superior to Donne's elegies. In my position, I am in agreement with W. D. Briggs
and with George Williamson, who argue convincingly that Jonson wrote the elegies in imitation of Donne's method.

The external evidence is absolutely against Donne's authorship of three of the elegies (Nos. xxxviii, xl, xli), but reasonably strong in support of his claim to "The Expostulation." If, as Herford and the French Jonson critic Castelain believe, the four elegies are of a piece and are all by Donne, it is extraordinary that they never appear together in any collection of Donne. Indeed, no one of the three (xxxviii, xl, xlii) appears in any Donne manuscript or edition. We shall focus our attention for the moment, therefore, on "The Expostulation." Several facts strongly suggest Donne's authorship. The poem was printed in 1633 edition, which contains only two poems which are definitely uncanonical. Moreover, it was reprinted in the edition of 1635, at which time Jonson was still living and may even have been preparing his poems for the folio edition; as Simpson argues, Jonson would probably have seen to it that the poem was removed from Donne's canon if it had been his own. That the poem appears in some dozen manuscript collections, never attributed to anyone but Donne, is also impressive evidence in Donne's favor. Perhaps most importantly, the poem was copied by Donne's friend Drummond in his personal manuscript collection, and is there followed by the initials "J. D." As Gardner admits, this is strong evidence, since Drummond's other ascriptions are all correct.
The external evidence against Donne's authorship does not at first glance appear to be as impressive as that supporting it, but to readers closely acquainted with Donne's work there is one major point which weighs heavily against his claim to it. The allusion to "the Kinges dogges" (l. 52) definitely dates the poem after 1603. Gardner argues very convincingly that the elegies should be dated in the 1590's. R. C. Bald, Donne's biographer, agrees that the elegies belong to Donne's Lincoln's Inn days (1591-1594 or 1595). It is extremely difficult for anyone who has looked closely at the development of Donne's work to imagine his writing a poem of this nature after 1601, when his marriage, wrecked career, semi-retirement and poverty at Pyrford and Mitcham led him to seek expression in modes other than the Ovidian erotic poem. Basing her observations on her own very intelligent ordering of the Songs and Sonnets, Gardner shows that those love poems written 1602-1605, show the influence of Neoplatonic thought in their view of the love-relationship and are characterized by a tone of contemptus mundi in their treatment of the social world. Though the evidence is not conclusive, it can be reasonably assumed that Donne was no longer involved, personally or poetically, in the world of "maskes and playes," of frivolous dalliance and intrigue.

In reference to the external evidence supporting the Donne ascription discussed above, one must wonder why Jonson, if the poem is his, did not obtain the removal of "The
Expostulation* from the 1635 edition of Donne. Nell Johnson, however, poses the equally valid question: why would Jonson allow Donne's poem to remain with the other three in his collection, since he clearly had a hand in arranging his poems, which were published within four years after his death? While it is true that the text of the Underwood is not beyond reproach, Jonson's preface to the collection indicates that he established at least the basic canon himself. It is curious that Gardner regards the attribution to Jonson in the Underwood as worthless, assuming that the poem may be Sir Thomas Roe's on the basis of a marginal note in one manuscript: "Quere if Donnes or S'r. Tho. Rows." It would seem, however, that the obvious intention of the note--judged by its wording--is not to serve as an ascription, but as a reminder for the copyist to check on the poem's authorship. Clearly, the solidest position is that if the poem is not Donne's, it must be allowed to be Jonson's, since it is nowhere attributed to anyone else. In reference to the appearance of the poem in some dozen manuscript collections, where it is never attributed to anyone but Donne, Gardner has, on the basis of her exhaustive study and categorizing of the manuscripts, pointed out that the manuscript evidence is open to question. The poem is absent from the most authoritative manuscript groups and appears in collections containing many uncanonical poems (including in several cases a number by Jonson--though she does not point
this out in her discussion of the matter).

It seems clear, then, that if the problem is to be resolved satisfactorily, it must be on the basis of internal evidence. It appears that the basic difficulty critics and editors have had in interpreting the internal evidence is due to their having fallen prey to a species of either-or thinking, reasoning in one of two ways: (1) emphasizing the similarity between the four disputed poems, they assume they must be by the same author, or (2) finding that there are certain differences between "The Expostulation" and the others, they go along with the external evidence pointing to Donne's authorship of the former, Jonson's of the latter.

It must first be acknowledged by anyone who would argue, as I do, for the Jonsonian authorship of all four that there are significant differences between "The Expostulation" and the other Jonson elegies. To see these differences is not to have settled the matter; it is merely to recognize why much of the confusion has come about. Jonson's claim to all four poems would not have been so seriously challenged if they were so homogeneous a group as some critics have imagined them to be. But it should be acknowledged that structurally the poems differ sharply: whereas the others develop a clearly set out theme in a consistent, orderly manner, "The Expostulation" changes direction sharply three times and lacks close coherence among its four parts. Thematically, the other three are departure poems; "The
Expostulation" is definitely not a parting message, for the point of its conclusion is that the lovers, far from parting, will begin their wooing afresh and re-establish their relationship. Evelyn Simpson points out that the situation assumed in "The Expostulation" is incompatible with that of the elegies which directly precede and follow it (xxxviii and xl), for in them it is the speaker's own discretion which is the issue. In xxxviii, he indeed admits his guilt in betraying her confidence and pleads for her forgiveness. In "The Expostulation," he is, at least in the beginning, attacking her for her faithlessness. I believe that Simpson goes much too far in stressing the differences in tone between the poems, but her remarks offer a needed antidote to the deceptive scheme of Malcolm Wilder, who presents them as a unified progression. In his view, the four poems form the following "logical sequence," which I will synopsize as an example of the way in which oversimplification has hindered solution of this problem: (1) The lover asks forgiveness for his betrayal of his mistress's confidence. (2) In "The Expostulation," he "rebukes her for a similar offense" and curses that "treacherous beast" to whom she has betrayed him. (3) He "takes up the subject of keeping close love's confidence." (4) "The third elegy having apparently succeeded in keeping the lovers together only temporarily, in the fourth and last he bids her a respectful farewell." It is only the critic's rhetoric here which provides the superficial
appearance of a sequence. The phrases "similar offense" and "in turn" in the second, for example, cleverly skirt the fact that in the second the situation is opposite and contradictory to that of the first. The statement on the fourth elegy is merely a euphemistic way of admitting that the poem has nothing to do with the other three. Anything whatever might be included in the first clause; that is, if the other three had been statements of passionate devotion, one might as easily say "The three elegies having succeeded in maintaining the lovers' devotion only temporarily, in the fourth . . . ." It should be clear that they are not united as a semi-narrative or a mini-drama; what apparent unity they do have is more likely to be the work of Jonson's editor, Kenelm Digby, than of the poet himself. Any meaningful treatment of the poems must take these differences into account. I am of the opinion that these differences are due to Jonson's having composed "The Expostulation" very much under the influence of Donne's work in the elegiac mode; the other three elegies are in their style and attitudes very much in line with Jonson's other love poetry.

Acknowledging, then, that there is significant external evidence suggesting Donne's authorship of "The Expostulation," and acknowledging further that there are significant differences between this poem and the undoubtedly Jonsonian elegies, I believe that the combination of the post-1603 date and the internal evidence presented below is decisive
for Jonson's authorship. Moreover, the internal evidence takes us to the heart of the essential difference between these two poets, not only in their conception of this poetic genre, but in their composition of love poetry in general. The most impressive internal characteristics (most impressive because undeniable and least dependent upon interpretation) of "The Expostulation" is the large number of classical borrowings which have been incorporated into it. Jonson has, of course, always been labelled as a classicist; his verses constantly reflect his close imitation of classical sources.21 Donne, on the other hand, seldom borrows directly from the classics; he is a very eclectic poet, synthesizing ideas from a great many sources, but seldom does he imitate or paraphrase specific passages from the ancients, as Jonson often does. This is particularly true of Donne in his elegies; a glance at the notes of Donne's scrupulously thorough editor, Helen Gardner, reveals that few poems have more than one source note, and some have none at all. But when the borrowings or direct allusions uncovered by Gardner and her predecessors are totalled up, they account for about half of the lines in "The Expostulation" (about 34 out of 70).22

Looking at the poem's argument, the veteran Donne reader is struck most by the submissive stance of its speaker, a quality decidedly uncharacteristic of Donne. As Gardner points out, "Donne is never abject before his
mistress." Simpson strangely enough cites the self-humiliation of the speaker of the other three elegies, but sees "The Expostulation" as fundamentally different in this respect. She states that the speaker here is reviling his mistress (whereas in xxxviii he pleads with her), but this is true only of the first section of the poem. Even there he tempers his raillery with flattery, referring to her beauty (l. 4-5), her sweet voice (l. 13), and the "Devine Impression of stolne kisses" they have shared (l. 17). The second section (l. 23-32) is outright flattery, in which he declaims her eternal constancy (l. 23-26). The final section becomes pure obsequiousness as he offers to "begin againe to court and praise" her, deferring to her every whim and opinion. In keeping with this submissive attitude, his tone is plaintive through the first half of the poem; even when he is apparently attacking her for her deceitfulness, his tone is that of one who has not been treated according to his deserts and who hopes she will relent in her cruelty. This tone is difficult to find anywhere in Donne's love poetry. It is certainly true that Jonson is not comfortable with it either, but it can be found in numbers xxii, xxxviii, and xl of the Underwood, all entitled "An Elegie," in "The Houre-Glasse" (Und. viii), "My Picture Left in Scotland (Und. ix), and in the Charis poems, especially the third (entitled "What hee suffered").
Equally foreign to the thought patterns of Donne's elegies is the generalizing tendency of the speaker of "The Expostulation." Disillusioned, the speaker asks broad questions about the nature of women:

To make the Doubt cleare that no Woman's true,
   Was it my fate to prove it full in you?  (ll. 1-2)

Are vowes so cheape with women? or the matter
   Whereof they are made, that they are writ in water.  
   (ll. 9-10)

He answers his own questions just as broadly:

0, I prophane! though most of women be,
   The Common Monster, Love shall except thee ...  
   (ll. 23-24)

Implicit in his disillusionment is an earlier assumption that women are basically good or trustworthy; none of Donne's elegiac lovers make such an assumption. The speaker now categorically asserts that women are morally inferior beings; Donne simply does not think in terms of such moral absolutes in his elegies, and indeed seldom does so in any of his love poetry. The only elegies in which he does generalize are those in which he is exploring wittily a specific doctrine, the libertine attitude that women exist only for sexual use. The "doctrine of use" serves as a basic premise for "Change" and "Love's Progress," but these poems make clear that reader and author are to share an awareness of the eccentric nature of the attitude being dramatized. In "The Expostulation,"
we have what is essentially the familiar Petrarchan lament with Ovidian trappings; it is the negative version of the Petrarchan lover's tendency to idealize womankind when love is progressing satisfactorily. It should be clear from the previous three chapters that Donne's elegies are thoroughly existential in character; the relativity of moral values is one of their basic assumptions. G.A.E. Parfitt has shown that Jonson's poetry is grounded throughout in a solid set of ethical assumptions. The movement of thought in Jonson is from ethics to experience, whereas the reverse is true in Donne. This Jonsonian characteristic is particularly evident here: the poem moves schematically from the general to the particular, from a diatribe based upon an ethical norm (which is in this case distasteful to the speaker) to the particulars of a love affair.

In the following reading of "The Expostulation," we shall see that it resembles Donne's elegies in its essentially dramatic portrayal of its speaker's thought processes. As in "Tutelage" and "Recusancy," we see the disillusioned, betrayed lover who feels that he has been enlightened by his experience. His lover, whom he had regarded as the epitome of beauty and devotion, has proved to be false, which proves, he says, that women are irredeemably corrupt and faithless. But he retreats from this position and adapts at least two alternative views in the course of the poem. The first (ll. 1-22) of the four distinct sections of the
poem consists of a series of rhetorical questions upbraiding the speaker's mistress. As noted above, he reduces human behavior to clichés: his idealizing of her having proved groundless, he resorts to sweeping negative generalizations. Without warning, however, he reverses himself again, not as a result of any evidence or logical process, but because his negative view represents a non sequitur for the lover. If taken seriously, that view would preclude further involvement with her. So in the second section of the poem (ll. 23-32), he retains his blanket condemnation of women, but is willing to regard her as an exception. Her integrity apparently again intact, he must shift the blame for the breach in their relationship: a third party has betrayed her trust to someone else. The third movement of the poem (ll. 33-52) is devoted to the speaker's curse upon the betrayer. In the fourth, having disposed of the obstacles to their relationship, he reaffirms his love of his mistress.

The relationship between the lovers, in accordance with the elegiac norm, is clandestine, though there is no specific indication that it is adulterous. The revelation of such an affair always threatens disaster, but here it does not seem to be the mere act of disclosure which has brought about the present crisis. The mechanics of the betrayal which has taken place are left somewhat vague. She has revealed their secret, and he has been abusing her for this in the first part of the poem. But by the third part of his
speech he has decided that he can escape his dilemma—of making the breach between them permanent—by blaming a third, and then a fourth party.

But O that treacherous breast to whom weake you Did trust our Counsells, and wee both may rue, Having his falshood found too late, 'twas hee That made me cast you guilty, and you mee, Whilst he, black wretch, betray'd each simple word We spake, unto the cunning of a third. (ll. 33-38)

It appears that the person to whom she told their secret insinuated himself into their confidence and stirred up their suspicions and anxieties— "made me cast you guilty, and you me." Moreover, the fourth party, to whom the betrayer revealed their affair, seems to have taken some drastic action "that [their] love hath slaine." Or perhaps it is this person who made them at first blame each other. The details are not perfectly clear, but the point is that the speaker has found an object for his scorn other than his mistress and can thus set about regaining her favors. But first he must purge himself of the resentment he had just begun to loose upon her.

The betrayer is then subjected to a series of curses so extravagant as to seem utterly inappropriate to what is purportedly a statement of love. He equates the betrayer's act with Cain's murder of Abel (ll. 39-40) and Peter's denial of Christ (ll. 45-46). The effect of these hyperbolic comparisons is not to lend force to the lover's denunciation,
but to make it appear ludicrous and, ultimately, trivialize his expression of positive feeling. His curse begins to appear adolescent in its extravagance as he wishes that

. . . after all selfe torment, when hee dyes,
    May Wolves teare out his heart, Vultures his eyes,
    Swine eate his bowels, and his falser tongue
    That utter'd all, be to some Raven flung,
    And let his carrion coarse be a longer feast
    To the Kings dogges, then any other beast.

(11. 47-52)

We are to assume, I believe, that the speaker is oblivious to the incongruity between these grisly images and an expression of love; this is suggested by his abrupt transition to the fourth section of the poem, in which he dwells upon the "soft pastimes" of love. For vulgarity of feeling, it would be difficult to surpass his transitional statement:

    Now have I curst, let us our love revive;
    In mee the flame was never more alive. (11. 53-54)

He seems to assume a curious sort of cause and effect here: now that he has cursed the betrayer, they can resume their love-making. He has dissolved the obstacle to their relationship with a verbal gesture which resembles those we have seen in the other sections of the poem. In lines 1-22, he somehow absolves her of guilt, to his satisfaction, by cursing womankind, and in lines 23-32 he re-establishes his confidence in her by reciting parallels between natural cycles and her constancy. In each case, there is no causal
relation between dilemma and resolution; problems are dissolved rhetorically.

One of the closest thematic relations between this elegy and those of Donne is this motif of the corrupt use of language. The situation resembles, for instance, that in "Tutelage," where the lover assumes that because he has transformed his lady's "discourse" and repaired her "broken proverbs, and torne sentences" he has recreated her in his own image. In the final section of "The Expostulation," the lover expects to re-establish the previous state of intimacy between himself and his mistress by repeating the verbal process by which he wooed her. Having begun by calling her, in effect, a faithless liar, a typical woman devoid of redeeming qualities, and having gone on to describe their love as "slain," he now assumes that harmony will be completely restored by his renewed flattery and his witty comments on the plays they will see together. He assumes, as did the speaker of "Tutelage," that his mistress is a malleable object which will take on whatever verbal imprint he presses upon her. If this is true of her, she is a mirror-image of him, for he is quite willing to adopt whatever attitudes might be pleasing to her:

I could renew those times, when first I saw
Love in your eyes, that gave my tongue the law
To like what you lik'd; and at maskes and playes
Commend the selfe same Actors, the same wayes;
Aske how you did, and often with intent
Of being officious, be impertinent. (ll. 59-64)
Though he began as her accuser, he is now willing to place himself in a position of total subservience to her whims. This willingness to submerge his own identity has been implicit in the movement of the poem, in which he has been indignant accuser, zealous defender of her constancy, again outraged accuser (of someone else), and finally groveling wooer. In this movement, the poem resembles the true dramatic monologues of Donne, and I believe that we are seeing Donne's influence at work. The poem is not fully dramatic; too much is left unaccounted for, and there is no close psychological coherence among the four parts. But in this unstable figure we can see elements of the typical Donne elegiac speaker, a player of roles searching for a pose which will allow him the appearance of control over a sexual situation.

Love itself has become a process which can be repeated at will. The "maskes and playes" they watch serve as fitting symbols of their relationship, which is a constant performance. The speaker's assumption is that love originates in chance, not in strong feeling; the lover's role is to ply his art so as to keep the play in motion:

Love was as subtilly catch'd, as a disease;  
But being got it is a treasure sweet,  
Which to defend is harder then to get;  
And ought not be prophan'd on either part,  
For though 'tis got by chance, 'tis kept by art.

(11. 66-70)
If we were to judge the speaker in grave moral terms, we would have to regard his attitude as itself a "profanity" upon genuine human relationship. But it is clear that here love is, as he says, an "art," a genteel sport as it is in Ovid. These last lines resemble Donne more closely than anything else in the poem. This is one of the few passages in Jonson's elegies in which it seems abundantly clear that the speaker's rhetoric is intended to elicit mixed reactions from the reader and to undercut the speaker himself. The images of love as "disease" and "treasure sweet" are incompatible (presumably this is intentional on the poet's part). The reference to love as a "subtilly catch'd disease" inevitably suggests venereal disease, which is scarcely to be treasured. Strictly speaking, the simile exists only to convey his observation that we fall in love unintentionally, but this is one of those figurative passages, common in the elegies of Donne, in which the normal associations of a term cannot be dispelled from the reader's awareness. The effect, of course, is to undercut the sentiments of the speaker, which he presents here as an affirmation of his love. The final lines assume the usual distinction between nature and art; but since we are now dealing with "chance," not nature, we cannot take "art" in its positive sense (creative artifice), but as "cunning." This cynical view of the genesis and conduct of love bears unmistakable resemblances to the characteristic assumption of Donne's elegies that in the
battles of the sexes all values are relative.

Despite this similarity to the attitudes dominant in Donné's elegies, the basic issue about which the "plot" of "The Expostulation" revolves is typically Jonsonian. The term "plot" suggests a narrative element, and it seems to me that one of the means Donné uses to effect a strong sense of immediacy in his monologues is a clearly implied narrative sequence which is assumed by the speaker in his address to his listener. In this, Donné's dramatic method closely resembles that of Browning. This sense of an implied narrative is weak in Jonson, as we shall see in his other elegies; the narrative events alluded to or assumed in the poem remain vague. The central motive which gives rise to the "plot" which does emerge is the need to maintain—specifically, the failure to maintain—secrecy in the love intrigue. Donné, as we have seen, employs the secrecy motif frequently; "Jealosie" and "The Perfume" have it as their central issue. But Donné does not dwell upon secrecy as a subject of importance in itself; he uses it as a catalyst for his characters' responses. "The Perfume," for example, is dominated by the lovers' need for secrecy, but the interest of the poem is in the well-fleshed out narrative of the lovers' ingenuity in conducting their clandestine love-making, the parents' comic attempts to deter and expose them, and especially the speaker's delusive responses to his humiliating indiscretion. In "The Expostulation," the loss of secrecy
is itself dwelt upon at length, but the circumstances attendant upon the lovers' exposure remain vague. We are not even sure as to what to make of the disclosure thematically; that is, are we to assume real treachery on the part of the speaker's mistress, in which case we have a genuine crisis of feeling, or was some meddling outsider wholly responsible? If it is the latter, the lovers are merely weathering one of the external dangers that constantly threaten clandestine lovers. This is not to imply that Jonson should be interested in a clearly suggested narrative sequence; as we shall see when we examine his other elegies, his interests are in other matters. But this use of the secrecy motif without an imaginative narrative context is a distinguishing feature of Jonson's use of the Ovidian elegy. It represents the central theme in the elegies directly preceding (xxxviii, "Tis true, I'm broke!") and following (xl, "That Love's a bitter sweet") "The Expostulation" in the Underwood collection.

If the above analysis is correct, the speaker of "The Expostulation" is being treated with a certain degree of dramatic irony by the poet, and in this respect the poem resembles the elegies of Donne. The differences described earlier are, however, decisive against Donne's authorship. The likely explanation of the similarity of this poem to Donne's in technique and attitude is that Jonson in the writing of it became absorbed in a Donneian situation. He
is perhaps offering a kind of literary challenge to Donne in his group of elegies (Underwood xxxviii-xli), and in this particular work is involved most closely with Donne's own characteristic theme and technique: specifically, the corrupt or superficial love-relationship, explored through the medium of the dramatic monologue. But the essential thought and structure of the poem are consistent with Jonson's other work in this mode, as should be clear when we have looked at his other elegies.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1 The numbering and text used here are those of the edition of C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, Ben Jonson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), VIII.

2 A dissertation by Nell E. Johnson, "Jonson's Ovidian Elegies with Particular Attention to the Underwood xxxix—'The Expostulation'--Controversy" (Colorado, 1966) is intended to be a close study of Jonson's elegies. But most of it is devoted to setting out Jonson's critical views and other matters which serve as background for the elegies. The discussions of the poems themselves are very brief and, regrettaingly, very superficial. Some observations are offered upon each poem, but no real explication of method is offered. Only a few general statements are made upon Donne's elegies.

3 "Jonson and Donne: A Problem in Authorship," RES, 15 (1939), 274-282; her argument is reiterated in Ben Jonson XI, 66-70.

4 He says that in this group of poems "we have a glimpse of the mystic passion, shot with splendour and with gloom, which womanhood provoked in the genius of Donne" (Ben Jonson, II, 383). He is here in close agreement with Swinburne, who says in his A Study of Ben Jonson, in The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, ed. Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise (London: Wm. Heinemann Ltd., 1926), XII, 73: "The four very powerful and remarkable elegies on a lovers' quarrel and separation I should be inclined to attribute to Donne rather than Jonson; their earnest passion, their quaint frankness, their verbal violence, their eccentric ardour of expression, at once unabashed and vehement spontaneous and ingenious, are all of them typical characteristics of the future dean in the secular and irregular days of his hot poetic youth."


8 "Did Jonson Write 'The Expostulation,' Attributed to Donne?" MLR, 21 (1926), 431-435.


11 William Basse's "Epitaph on Shakespeare" and the paraphrase of Psalm 137, probably by Francis Davison (Gardner, pp. xxxvn.).

12 "Jonson and Donne," p. 275.


15 "Jonson's Ovidian Elegies," p. 121.

16 "Some of these poems in the Under-wood were no doubt collected by Jonson; but many must have been added by editor Digby, who was doubtless also responsible for the arrangement—or confusion—of the whole, as well as for the revision of the printed text." (Herford and Simpson, Ben Jonson, II, 337.)

17 To The Reader

With the same leave the Ancients call'd that kind of body Sylva . . . in which there were works of divers nature, and matter congested; as the multitude call Timber-trees, promiscuously growing, a Wood, or Forrest: so am I bold to entitle these lesser Poems, of later growth, by this of Under-Wood, out of the Analogie they hold to the Forrest, in my former booke, and no otherwise.

Ben Jonson
(Herford and Simpson, VIII, 126.)

18 In the O'Flaherty Manuscript, Houghton Library, Harvard University, quoted by Gardner, p. xxxvi.

19 "Jonson and Donne," p. 278.

20 "Did Jonson Write 'The Expostulation' . . . ," p. 432.


p. xxxvii.

"Jonson and Donne . . .," p. 278.

Jonson's editor, C. H. Herford, would have liked, he says, to have claimed the four Underwood elegies (xxxviii-xl) which have been the objects of literary dispute for his poet, but could not because they are pervaded by "... the mystic passion, shot with splendour and with gloom, which womanhood provoked in the genius of Donne." If what he says were true of these poems, it would be difficult indeed to regard them as Jonson's creations. For Herford certainly seems correct in saying that Jonson's "highest mood toward women [i.e. as expressed in his poetry] was an intellectual admiration," and the traditional Jonsonian misogyny is unquestionably present in a number of his poems. But Herford's view is the result of his exaggeration of certain qualities in these poems, qualities which are not typically Jonson's, but which Jonson easily adopts—as appropriate to this kind of poem. These qualities tend to appear atypical in this case, I believe, because he is adapting his talents to a genre which he became interested in through Donne and because he retains touches of Donne in his own work.
There are two groups of elegies within Jonson’s *Underwood*: (1) xviii-xxii (though xx, xxi may not properly belong in this classification), which are essentially non-Ovidian poems made up of what seem to be the standard "Elizabethan" conventions; (2) xxxviii-xlili, the more Ovidian "disputed" elegies, including the satirical elegy "Let me be what I am" (xlii). We shall look first at the latter poems (excepting xlii), which have close relationships with "The Expostulation," (xxxix) and offer the closest comparisons with the work of Donne. We shall see that all three of these elegies are "sincere" parting messages, the first (xxxviii, "Tis true, I'm broke") pleading for the mercy of his offended mistress, the second (xl, "That Love's a bitter sweet") professing his discretion in her absence, the third (xli, "Since you must goe") expressing simply his despair at her leaving. We shall use the latter poem as the basis for a comparison with Donne's valedictory technique. It will become apparent that, despite their many resemblances to Donne's work, these poems are fundamentally consistent with the indubitably Jonsonian group of elegies (xviii-xxii) placed earlier in the *Underwood* canon (probably indicating a different period of composition). We shall see, for instance, that both groups are dominated by a rhetoric of flattery, a rarity in Donne's work. The final portion of this chapter will be devoted to the satirical elegy, xlii "Let me be what I am," which I shall argue to be the masterpiece of the collection.
In "Tis true, I'm Broke!" (xxxviii, entitled simply, "An Elegie"), we are in the Ovidian world of secretive love intrigue and are reminded of poems such as Donne's "Jealosie." But Jonson's poem is an abject, flattering plea to an offended mistress. The speaker has betrayed her confidence, apparently by revealing their love while drinking with his friends. Drinking is an activity which is of no interest to Donne in his poetry, but it is common in Jonson. Jonson has some precedent for this in the Roman elegy; Ovid, for instance, refers at a number of points to the drinking at the social gatherings where he and his paramors often meet, and devotes a section of the Ars to the effects of liquor upon love-making (I. 589-602). Though Jonson does not give as full an indication of setting as does Donne, we do get a sense here, as in the next poem (xl), of the Jonsonian world of the London tavern.

The argument of the poem progresses smoothly, but it encompasses a curious combination of themes when considered as a whole. It combines the themes of secrecy and parting, and in this reminds us of such poems as Donne's "On His Mistress." The bulk of the poem (lines 7-106) does not deal explicitly with either theme, however, but with that of forgiveness (because he has broken her confidence), and this relates to the theme of secrecy, which remains implicit throughout the poem, but the relation to the parting theme is peripheral. That the separation of lovers theme is not
intrinsically related to the subject matter of much of the poem is suggested by the fact that the reader is given no inkling that the poem is a parting message until the last nine lines (114ff.).

This is a fundamental difference between this poem and one such as Donne's "On His Mistress." In Donne's poem, the emotional energy generated by the lovers' coming separation is brought to bear upon their appraisal of their relationship. The anxiety of their past clandestine love-making and their anxiety over the continued need for secrecy even in absence contribute to the dilemma of departure. It can be argued that Donne has meshed several conventional themes to produce a psychologically interesting situation. In Jonson's poem, the breach of secrecy serves primarily to generate the long appeal for forgiveness; there is no indication that this "fault" cut deeply into the emotional fabric of their relationship. Until the end of the poem, the anxiety of the speaker is sufficiently accounted for by the simple fact of his estrangement from his mistress. Presented as it is, his plea for her mercy does not require further provocation. The parting message at the end thus gives the appearance of not being intrinsically necessary to the rest of the poem. To call it an after-thought would be much too strong, and perhaps misleading, for it does give a satisfying symmetry to the overall structure of the poem, and this is probably Jonson's purpose in using it. The speech begins
dramatically with the speaker suffering a dark night of the soul, completely disoriented, contemplating suicide; it continues with a long plea for the favor which will deliver him from his plight, and concludes with a parting message, which shows him again in darkness, but resigned to his suffering and confident of their future relationship. Needless to say, this symmetrical argument, with the long amplification of a theme at its center, is a very different thing from the tortured monologue of Donne's speaker.

The method by which the poem is developed, extended amplification, primarily by analogy, is standard in Jonson and very different from the more associative movement of Donne's monologues. The argument consists of an ordered series of propositions, each developed in some detail through figures of speech and analogues. Donne never works this way in his truly dramatic poems; he reserves this kind of poetic exposition for poems such as "The Comparison" and "The Anagram," which are witty developments of a stated proposition. The interest of Jonson's poem is in the appropriateness and ingenuity of the rhetorical figures he can marshal for his argument. The forgiveness argument outlines very neatly: (1) 1-20, her power over him, and the need for mercy in her use of that power; (2) 21-34, admission of his guilt; (3) 35-52, the essentiality of their bond, developed through two analogies-- parent-child, 39-44, the body-limb, 45-52; (4) 53-66, unnaturalness of her withdrawing the "gifts" she
has given; (5) 67-106, divine analogy—she must imitate God and temper her justice with mercy; (6) 107-112, completeness of his dependence upon her. Relative to a Donne monologue, this constitutes a rather leisurely amplification of the speaker's plea. The supporting details support the argument on behalf of forgiveness per se, which is virtually an argument in the abstract; they do not relate to the emotions and circumstances of the lovers' relationship itself.

We have already noted Donne's tendency to have a strongly implied narrative in which the poem itself is presumed to be an episode. This elegy is typical of Jonson's method in that it does not particularize to any significant degree the circumstances which are assumed to surround the speaker's monologue. To see this clearly, one has only to compare this poem with Donne's "On His Mistress," in which the speaker alludes vividly to the past history of their clandestine affair and foresees future events in his vision of her betrayal. The imagined betrayal is itself projected as a dramatic scene in which his mistress's nightmare, also visualized, makes her cry out and arouses her nurse. In short, the poem assumes a narrative extending from the past into the future. In Jonson's poem, there is the faintest indication of a narrative; what there is exists only to provide an occasion for a finely executed poetic speech. The speaker's "offence," for instance, remains vague. Presumably, he has revealed the secret of their affair, for he
says "I will not . . . lay the excuse upon the Vintners vault" (ll. 21-22), and later "I will no more abuse my vowes to you" (l. 107). But one has the vague feeling that a mere slip of the tongue does not account for all his protestations. We must conclude that Jonson is not primarily concerned with establishing this circumstantial frame of reference.

Another revealing difference between both the thought and the language of Donne and Jonson can be seen through an examination of the use of religion in a poem such as this. We have noted the ethical basis of Jonson's thought. Though he seldom deals with religion per se, when he does employ religious themes he does so in an orthodox manner. Both here and in Donne's "The Bracelet" a speaker implores his lady to forgive him, and in both cases her forgiveness is spoken of in terms of religious redemption. We have seen how Donne uses the language of religion with an ingeniously witty irreverence. The subject matter of "The Bracelet" and this elegy are so different that the comparison should not be pushed, but the point is that when he uses religious analogues in his argument Jonson consistently incorporates them into a basically straightforward statement of a lover's devotion. Note the explicit use of divine parallels to his mistress's behavior in the following instances. He has asked her: "Could you demand the gifts you gave, again!" (l. 55) He argues that would be as if Heaven
Should ask the blood, and spirits he hath infus'd
In man, because man hath the flesh abus'd. (ll. 65-66)

This argument could perhaps be read as comic hyperbole if by "gifts" he meant presents or love-tokens, but he is probably referring to the gift of her love itself, referred to as her "Favours" and "bounties" in the previous lines. His argument here is a piece with his earlier statement, "God and the good, know to forgive, and save" (l. 19) and the long appeal beginning at line 67. He plays on the theological meaning of "grace" as he refers to himself as "The subject of your Grace in pardoning me" (l. 28). She is, like God, the moving force behind his being:

How all my Fibres by your Spirit doe move,
And that there is no life in me, but love.
(ll. 111-112)

We have seen how the religious analogues in "The Bracelet," used with cynical wit, have the effect of conveying a sense of despair with love, whether human or divine. Jonson's use of religion tends to have the effect traditional in Petrarchan love poetry (though Jonson in general rejects Petrarchism); it would be a great mistake to over-emphasize this tendency, but it does have the general effect of idealizing, or at least greatly elevating his mistress and his love for her.
"That Love's a bitter sweet" (xl. "An Elégie") is, like "'Tis true, I'm broke!"—cast as a parting poem. Its opening (ll. 1-8) and conclusion (ll. 49-50) deal with the departure theme, but the subject of its body is that of secrecy. The poem's argument consists of a series of vows by the speaker to keep his lover's confidence, with observations as to how the knowledgeable secret lover conducts himself. He is really a praecceptor amoris, teaching one of the lover's necessary arts, though the poem is not set in the mold, but is presented instead as a direct appeal by the speaker to his lady. It is a delightful, extended discourse on the "art of secrecy," the chief interest of which is in Jonson's ability to take the overworked theme of the parting of lovers and make it the occasion for a witty digression upon one of its conventions. There is a good deal of implied humor in the speaker's determination to drink and have a good time in order, he insists, to better conceal his grief at her absence and thereby keep the secret of their affair. This is no moment of crisis, as in such Donne parting poems as "On His Mistress," or of reaffirmation, as in "His Picture."

The argument can be regarded as a kind of reductio ad absurdem of the lovers' parting: the normal situation finds the lover venting his anguish while asserting the permanence of their feelings, which is all that makes his despair tolerable. In this poem, the lover foregoes the despair
altogether, stressing that the best way he can show the
depth of his feeling for her is to have a good time. If he
were to be morose, others would guess his feelings and he
would betray her. The preoccupation with secrecy, part of
the game of love-intrigue since Ovid, is treated outright
as a game of wit, a sport—reasons the speaker—which is
meant to be enjoyed. The vivid opening statements set up
the reader for the rhetorical tour de force of extracting
humor from a painful situation. Though the initial state­
ment of "thesis" is highly typical of Jonson, the contrast
of the "sweet" sensations of love with the "bitter" and
"sower" ones of parting is much in the manner of Donne.
With the following "But," however, the speaker begins his
vows to "drowne" the memory of parting by often drinking
her health "by stealth/ Under another name . . ." (11. 9-10).
The bitterness of parting is soon diluted almost out of
existence.

This drinking motif sets a pattern for the poem. For
it is full of liquid images, the most notable of which, and
an example of Jonson’s figurative language at its best, is
the "Creame-bowles" passage.

No Mistress no, the open merrie Man
Moves like a sprightly River, and yet can
Keepe secret in his Channels what he breedes
'Bove all your standing waters, choak'd with weedes.
They looke at best like Creame-bowles, and you soone
Shall find their depth: they're sounded with a spoone.
(11. 25-30)
As Herford and Simpson point out, Jonson had already used the comparison of a carefree man to a river in *Every Man Out*:

...you would haue me
(Like to a puddle or a standing poole)
To haue no motion, nor no spirit within me.
No, I am like a pure, and sprightly river,
That moues for euer, and yet still one flame.
(II.iv.110-115)

As Nell Jonson notes, in her argument that the poem is certainly Jonson's, Jonson had used the "Creame-bowles" figure in his *Discoveries* (or *Timber*). He speaks there of mere rhymesters, or "Womens-Poets," whose verses are "as smooth, as soft, as creame; / In which there is no torrent nor scarce streame." You can sound the depth of these wits, who are but "Cream-bowle, or but puddle deepe," with your middle finger. In the passage in the poem under consideration, we can see a typically Jonsonian synthesis of the two separate figures we have quoted from his other works. He has combined the stream and cream-bowl images in two similes to fit a new rhetorical situation. In doing so, he has ingeniously raised an old contrast to a higher power. First, the contrast between running and standing water (as in Donne's "Change") justifies his "running around" during her absence. Then, by contrasting the river itself with the bowl of cream, he is able to characterize the conventional mourning lover as not merely stagnant, but trivial and effeminate.
Jonson's version of Donne's compass metaphor offers a further insight into his use of figurative language. The similarities between the following unusual image and Donne's "stiff twin compasses" ("A Valediction: forbidding Mourning") seem too close to be coincidental, and I believe that Jonson is to some degree parodying Donne's image.

But the grave Lover ever was an Asse;
Is fix'd upon one leg, and dares not come
Out with the other, for hee's still at home;
Like the dull wearied Crane that (come on land)
Doth while he keepes his watch, betray his stand.
   (11. 31-36)

I use the term parody here to suggest that Jonson is deriding not the sentiments of Donne's poem, but the mechanistic figure which, with his classical sense of decorum, he may well have regarded as inappropriate to a serious love poem. (Jonson's poem is itself a love poem, but, I am assuming, one lighter in tone.) It will be recalled that in Donne's poem the soul of the speaker's mistress is the "fixt-foot" which "leanes, and hearkens after" the always-attached, separated foot, the speaker himself. Donne's point is in the flexible firmness of the relationship: it can bear infinite "expansion" without suffering a "breech." Jonson's figure does not explicate quite so neatly, but clearly it is meant to ridicule the "grave Lover" for his joyless inflexibility. He is "fix'd upon one leg," but this compass will not expand: perhaps he is just so emotionally dependent
that he must always be "at home," or perhaps he fears cuckoldry. It may be that the figure of speech is meant to relate strictly to the secrecy theme: because of his emotional stiffness, the lover's feelings are transparent and he must thus reveal his love. In any case, like the "dull, wearied Crane" he is too literal-minded about how to maintain what he has and thus reveals it, presumably to lose it. The intelligent, carefree lover is like the lapwing, who flits about freely, leading predators away from his nest. The passage is on the whole a very clever synthesis, using Donne's figure, but in a negative way, to portray the conventional lover, and adding to it the characteristics of the ass and crane.

The poem as a whole is an extremely interesting example of Jonson's use of a conventional literary form for his own ends. The assumptions of those critics, primarily Herford and Nell Johnson, who take all four poems in the group as highly serious, are puzzling. Johnson, I believe, mistakes at least the tone of the poem in her statement that in it we see "Jonson's knowledge of the intricacies of the progression of love . . . ." The poem is, like Jonson's other elegies, an essentially static discourse: there is no sense of progression in it, either in the movement of the poem itself, or in the relationship which lies behind it. The poem is not indeed about love, per se, at all. Its intricacies are not those of emotions and human relationships, but of
thought and metaphor. Its interest is in its poetic wit, the novelty with which a gifted poet can treat a conventional subject.

The fourth poem of the "disputed" group of elegies, "Since you must goe" (xli, "An Elegie"), combines several conventional motifs in its treatment of the theme of the parting of lovers. We are reminded of the use of images of darkness to convey this theme in the presumably Donneian "His Parting From Her"; this comparison is appropriate because some of the problems of that poem are also present in this one. Most strikingly, the lines of demarcation between the rhetorical units of the poem are somewhat too obvious. An introduction (ll. 1-4) sets out the subject and the speaker/auditor relationship, and the rest of the poem is divided between three distinct figures: (1) departure as darkness, ll. 5-12, (2) the exchange of hearts, ll. 15-18, (3) absence as death, ll. 19-22. As we noted in our discussion of "His Parting From Her" and "The Expostulation," Donne's more associative movement seldom results in such convenient divisions. Equally foreign to Donne's method is the use of an explicit—and here somewhat lame—introduction to the subject:

Since you must goe, and I must bid farewell,
Heare, Mistress, your departing servant tell
What it is like: And doe not thinke they can
Be idle words, though of a parting Man; (ll. 1-4)
It should be noted that there is an apparent flaw in the poem's dramatic situation: the speaker first announces that his lover must go, and then describes himself as her "departing servant," a "parting Man," suggesting that he is the one leaving.

It should be instructive to compare the use of the darkness motif—the dominant motif of the poem—here with its use in a Donne poem such as "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucies Day." In Donne the darkness of the single night of despair is extended by a perfectly comprehensible emotional logic to a cosmic darkness. Jonson's image moves first in that direction, but retreats. After an explicit simile comparing parting with an eclipse ("It is as if a night should noone-day," l. 5), he hyperbolizes his feeling by extending the period of darkness to half a year, as experienced by people who live at the poles. But the darkness does not become cosmic, for Jonson backs off and makes light of his own figure by affecting to take it literally:

What fate is this to change mens dayes and houres,
To shift their seasons, and destroy their powers!
Alas I ha'lost my heat, my blood, my prime,
Winter is come a Quarter e're his Time
(11. 9-12)

He lightly upbraids her for bringing these inconveniences upon the world, playing havoc with people's schedules (the exact meaning of "destroy their powers" is not clear) and his health—by unbalancing his humors. The general point
is clear, and we can accept the general appropriateness of the figure to the speaker's mood; it must furthermore be acknowledged that there is no necessity for Jonson to extend the darkness analogy to the cosmic realm, since his mistress has not died—as Donne's had—but only departed. It should thus be clear that there is a tonal difference between the two poems: Donne's is obviously heavier. But the difference in literary method is nonetheless significant: the reader of Jonson is always aware that the figure is no more than an analogy; it does not tend to become a figure of thought as it does in Donne.

A similar point can be made in reference to the poem's second major figure of speech: the lover's loss of his heart to his mistress and his desire for its return (ll. 13-19). Let us compare Jonson's use of it with Donne's in "The Message":

Send home my harmlesse heart againe,
Which no unworthy thought could staine,
Which if it be taught by thine
To make jestings
Of protestings,
And crosse both
Word and oath.
Keepe it, for then 'tis none of mine. (ll. 9-16)

Donne cleverly manipulates the reader's expectations. First, his speaker makes the unorthodox demand that his heart be given back. Then he changes his mind, saying: keep it if it has been corrupted by your deceitfulness and cruelty.
He will go on to decide he wants it back after all, not because he regards it as "harmlesse" or pure (as in line 11), but because it has been steeped in her corruption and can thus enable him to recognize and comprehend deceit. Donne is thus torturing a convention, violating the reader's expectations of the figure, pushing it toward becoming a figure of thought.

Jonson uses the figure in an essentially straightforward way, with a semi-dramatic twist in the middle:

My health will leave me; and when you depart,
   How shall I doe sweet Mistris for my heart?
You would restore it? No, that's worth a feare,
   As if it were not worthy to be there;
0, keepe it still; for it had rather be
   Your sacrifice, then here remaine with me.
And so I spare it . . . . (11. 13-19)

All of this is connected to the darkness section by simple coordination: "and when you depart,/ How shall I doe . . . for my heart?" He first fears the loss of his heart, since that would mean the possessor of it would be gone, but then fears its being restored, because that would signify that she does not want it any longer. Thus he would rather live with the disadvantages of its absence, resigned to regarding it as a "sacrifice" to her. The figure is clever, yet easily apprehended, and gracefully stated. It points up the significant psychological fact of the threat represented by love: the giving of some portion of oneself can result in its loss. But the figure remains unmistakably within the
control of the rhetoric of compliment. There is a touch of
grim reality in Donne's depiction of the dis-heartened
lover's attempt to put himself back together again. He im-
plies that it is not always better to have loved and lost;
the awareness of the deceit and betrayal which often charac-
terize human relations can leave the psyche permanently
tainted.

Jonson's lover is subdued at the end of his speech.

Come what can become
Of me, I'le softly tread unto my Tombe;
Or like a Ghost walke silent amongst men,
Till I may see both it and you again. (11. 19-22)

He will be like the lover in Donne's "Valediction: for-
bidding Mourning," who will "make no noise,/ No teare-flood,
no sigh-tempeests move . . . ." But the quiet tone of Jon-
son's lover is not that of Donne's, who has a philosophical
confidence in the indivisibility of the bonds between him
and his love. Neither does Jonson's lover endure the in-
ternal crisis of Donne's elegiac lovers in poems such as
"On His Mistress." He is resigned to his fate, and is still
quietly flattering. Because she has his heart, he will
either die quietly, or walk about ghost-like, hoping to be
delivered from his ambivalent state by her return. Departure
is not here a crisis which draws upon all the resources of a
relationship, for in spite of his rejection elsewhere of
Petrarchism, and in spite of the misogyny of some of his
other poems, Jonson accepts the fundamental Petrarchan assumption that the proper rhetoric of love-poetry is that of praise of the lady. Departure here is essentially another occasion for flattery, and Jonson's fundamental literary interest is in the poetic skill with which he can work within such rhetorical limitations.

With Underwood xviii, "An Elegie"—"Can Beautie that did prompt me first to write," we move to a very different poem from those we have been discussing. It is a characteristically Elizabethan poem, dealing with a problem of love, but with none of the particularity or raciness of the Ovidian elegy. Nell Johnson writes admiringly of this poem: "Jonson in the guise of the sophisticated lover, only too aware of the traps Nature lays for him whose passion outweighs his discretion, examines with great dexterity and depth of psychological understanding the reasons for loving a particular woman." She finds that "Jonson's knowledge of the psychology of sex and love is astonishingly modern."

Jonson is indeed dealing with the problem of disillusionment in love, the discovery that the force which inspires can also perplex and threaten. But he deals with it discursively, exploring it through a series of essentially abstract statements which are concretized by figures of speech.

Jonson's expository method is, as we have seen, a different order of poetic development than the monologue method
of Donne's elegies. In this poem, we have the following argumentative pattern: (ll. 1-8) statement of the problem—amplified through a series of questions and a simile, (ll. 9-10) preliminary solution, (ll. 11-12) posing of problem (which turns out to be only an apparent one), (ll. 21-24) application of analysis, resulting in a new affirmation of love. The form is very symmetrical: basically, two equal sections of analysis (ll. 1-8, 13-20) are followed by four-line sections of application (ll. 9-12, 21-24). No Donne elegy outlines so neatly. Equally remote from Donne's method is the use of the verse-epistle form (see lines 1, 24); the only instance of this in Donne's elegies is the dubious "His Parting From Her." Neither does Donne have any use for the personifications of Love and Fortune.

In Jonson's poem, we see the speaker struggling with, and apparently coming to grips with, the nature of love. He is discovering love's darker side. He has assumed his lady's beauty to be an emblem of true love, but now finds she can "threaten, with those means she did invite." As the water-distortion simile illustrates, he is aware that his emotions have affected his vision of reality:

That as the water makes things, put in't, streight,  
Crooked appeare; so that doth my conceipt;  
(ll. 7-8)

He is perplexed to find things so out of joint, for in his naivety he had assumed that in an ordered universe providence
would guide those who love sincerely. Fortune, the medieval personification of the changing course of worldly events, would provide the proper circumstances for the growth of love. But he has now begun to fear that the whole experience is a matter of chance, love and fortune both being blind.

The dilemma of the figure who has become embroiled in the complexities and deceptions of love is familiar to us from Donne. Utterly different from Donne, however, is the fact that the character exerts control over his situation and reaches a positive resolution of his problem. Fundamentally different to begin with is the moral choice available to him. He can stand above the fray, retaining his integrity, or he can, like Chaucer's Troilus or the characters of his "Monk's Tale," surrender to the whims of Fortune. He recognizes that the blindness of Love and Fortune, like that of justice, means not that these personified forces are necessarily chaotic, but that they are neutral and amenable to human guidance, just as justice must be administered through the use of human eyes. Unlike the Red Cross Knight, he will not fall into the way of "error" (l. 13), but will himself lead love and fortune; that is, he will exert moral control over the relationship in which he is involved. Jonson's speakers do not get lost in the maze of love as Donne's do; the point of view of the poem and its very form indicate that the situation is within the control of a conscious intelligence.
"Though Beautie be the Marke of praise" (xxii, "An Elegie") is even further removed from the Ovidian mode than the elegy we have just examined. The form of this poem is indeed not that of the elegy at all: it is written not in heroic couplets, but in what are usually called "In Memoriam" stanzas, iambic tetrameter lines rhymed abba. Like most of Jonson's elegies, this is a poem of flattery, but it is unusual in its use of the conventions of the religion of love. Love is personified as a deity and worshipped in temples filled with garlands and sacrificial altars. The addressee in the poem is also a "Dietie," the successor to the fallen or dishonored god, "In whom alone love lives agen . . . ." (she is referred to, awkwardly, with the masculine pronoun in line 25, an unfortunate consequence of identifying her with the deity). To this hyperbolic praise is added an unusual twist: the lady addressed is being flattered, the reader learns to his surprise in the next-to-last stanza, in the hope that she will help the speaker win another lady.

. . . [I] here intreat
One sparke of your Diviner heat
To light upon a Love of mine. (ll. 30-32)

Characteristic of both Donne and Jonson is such a use of novelty in the treatment of convention, but the inclusion of the "exil'd traine/ Of gods and goddesses" sets Jonson apart from Donne. As Jonson's editors have pointed out, the poem has a close intellectual texture such as we associate
with Donne, but none of Donne's "sudden splendours."9 The play on alloyed metal—a favorite of Donne's—in the second stanza and the free-will paradox (freedom in adherence to law) in the third are strongly reminiscent of Donne. But, like Jonson's other elegies, the poem develops in an orderly, almost leisurely manner. It falls into a neat, two-part structure: (1) ll. 1-28, a "Hymne" of praise as an offering to the lady, (2) ll. 29-36, a prayer that she will intercede for him. The pattern is basically that of exposition and application and bears a certain similarity to the argument of "Can Beautie that did prompt me" (xviii).

Two features of the poem suggest that it may have had personal significance for Jonson, but it is even more difficult here than with Donne's "The Autumnal" to decide what to make of the biographical possibilities. The poetic situation itself—flattering one lady to win another—is eccentric and suggests a specific set of background circumstances. The play on the auditor's name ("As Love t'aquit such excellence,/ Is gone himselfe into your Name," ll. 23-24) clearly indicates that it was written for a particular individual.10 But, as in "The Autumnal," the biographical problem is probably insoluble. In "The Autumnal," the many unflattering comparisons would seem to cast doubt on the theory that the poem was intended for Mrs. Herbert, whereas the poem's more tender sentiments suggest that it was meant for a close friend such as her. In "Though Beautie be the
Marke of praise, "there is nothing negative to militate against the poem's being a personal appeal, unless it be objected that the lady would be suspicious of his flattery because of his ulterior motive; but neither is there anything in the tone or texture of the poem to suggest any personal involvement. There is no intensity in it, and any auditor would easily recognize that its religious praise is so conventional that it could have no actual relevance to her.

The most important point to be made about the poem, for our purposes, is that it is grounded to a greater degree than any of Jonson's other elegies in ethical assumptions alien to Donne's love poetry. The poem praises not the lady's beauty, but her virtue, of which her beauty is merely an emblem.

Though Beautie be the Marke of praise,

Yet isn't your vertue now I raise. (ll. 1-4)

He wants the virtuous love of this lady to be kindled in his would-be lover:

Yet give me leave t'adore in you
What I, in her, am grievd to want. (ll. 35-36)

His own love apparently lacks virtue, while he, as one of love's "faithfull troope" suffers dutifully. We are tempted to envision here a situation like that of Shakespeare's sonnets, where the poet suffers the infidelities of an
Jonson's Elegie xix, "By those bright eyes," resembles the two previous poems at the outset, beginning with an utterly conventional motif, the catalogue of a lady's features, but it ends with an argument that could have come directly from Donne. The poem shows Jonson in top form, working as both innovator and traditionalist. His speaker is again a poet, as Donne's elegiac speakers never are, but his argument is an Ovidian one designed to seduce a married woman.

The elegant enumeration of a lady's features which begins the poem (ll. 1-10) would, of course, seem very out of place in one of Donne's elegies (he parodies this convention in "The Comparison" and "The Anagram"). A motif used constantly by the sonneteers, it is delivered from mere conventionality in this poem by two means. First, the catalogue is unified, and complicated, by a descriptive method which presents these features as details in a garden of Love. Cupid lights his torches at her eyes, fires his arrows from the stand (hunting station) of her forehead, flies through the grove of her hair, and bathes in the pools of milk and roses of her cheeks. In the final image of this section, her lips are like a bank of flowers where men may plant and gather kisses. Secondly, Jonson presents this enumeration of features in the rhetorical form of a lover's
oath. The speaker demands that his lady swear by all these sacred objects whether she loves him or not (l. 11). Jonson has thus raised a rhetorical compliment to a second and third power by presenting the already-flattering catalogue of lovely features in terms of a natural abode for the god of Love, and then having her swear by them as if by consecrated objects. Jonson at his best can be depended upon to employ even the most conventional devices in a cleverly unconventional way.

In spite of its ingenuity, however, this opening section is not dramatic—nor was it intended to be. Nell Johnson believes that it is dramatic and uses it as an example of Jonson's dramatic openings. She says that in the opening couplet "Jonson is considering with great depth of understanding the power of a glance to stimulate erotic feelings, and he does so with an image that is as witty as it is inviting." The couplet might indeed have erotic interest if given a real dramatic context within, for instance, a lover's interview such as Donne commonly uses. But we seldom have the sense of a real speaker-auditor confrontation in Jonson. There is no visual scene presented in which the lady is actually using her eyes to "stimulate erotic feelings"; they are not really even her own eyes, but the figurative eyes possessed in common by a thousand literary mistresses. The image of her eyes is of a piece with the parallel, conventional images which follow, none of which
has any dramatic element.

The rest of the poem consists of a series of arguments by the speaker as to why his lady should make love to him. The oneness of true love implies the need for physical union (ll. 13-14); through their love-making they will provide an exemplary pattern for lovers (ll. 15-18); since time will not stand still they must seize the day (ll. 19-21); finally, her possessive husband deserves cuckolding (ll. 22-28). All of these, with the possible exception of the *carpe diem* theme, are typical Donne arguments, though the rhetorical presentation of them is typically Jonsonian. Donne is not in the habit—as Jonson is—of listing appropriate arguments, stating each in a couplet or so (as in ll. 13-21 here), then moving on.

The final argument of the poem, however, closely resembles Donne in its complexity of thought and syntax and in its thoroughly cynical Ovidian attitudes.

> You have a Husband is the just excuse Of all that can be done him; Such a one As would make shift, to make himselfe alone, That which we can, who both in you, his Wife, His Issue, and all Circumstance of life, As in his place, because he would not varie, Is constant to be extraordinarie. (ll. 22-28)

This passage resembles several we have seen written in this complex, elliptical syntax (perhaps most notably lines 23-28 of Donne's "Change") in that it defies precise explication. It seems clear though that "Such a one" is the subject of
the final clause and that "Is constant to be extraordinarie" is its predicate, the whole referring to her husband, who himself offers the perfect excuse for their cuckolding him. The rest of the sentence develops an excellent paradox. Her husband tries all by himself to be absolutely constant—or tries through his own power to enforce constancy. But the lovers can enable him to have what he wants, the fixed status and mode of existence which is in no way exceptional ("he would not varie"). His wife, in order to do this, must be inconstant, and thus, by implication, bring him into line with the rest of society. Her husband, without knowing it, in desiring to be constant is trying to be "extraordinarie." This doctrine that constancy is unnatural can be seen in Donne's "libertine" poems, especially "The Indifferent." The poem is thus an extremely interesting blend of Jonson's own neoclassical style, a balance of simplicity and elegance, with the "metaphysical" style Donne had used in his elegies. It balances typical Jonsonian sentiments with amoral Ovidian themes.

Jonson's Elegie xlii, "Let me be what I am," has never to my knowledge been attributed to Donne, which is somewhat ironic in that it resembles Donne's work more closely than do some of the Jonson poems which have been ascribed to Donne. It closely resembles not Donne's elegies, however, but his satires. For the poem is not truly an elegy at all, but a formal satire on affection in fashion and poetry. It
is in the tradition of sartorial literature which includes Swift and Carlyle, but like these later satirists Jonson uses his satire on dress as a means of dealing with deeper issues, such as sexual and literary excesses. He satirizes fops and poets in a manner reminiscent of Restoration comedy and Donne's Satires II and IV. Though the poem is in many ways not a true "elegie," it is the masterpiece of Jonson's poems that are so entitled.

Because of its generic peculiarities, the poem is of considerable interest for our subject as a whole. Though its essential characteristics are those of verse satire, it is not likely to be accidental that it is called "An Elegie," that it is grouped with the elegies in the Underwood collection, and that to a considerable degree it resembles the Donneian elegy in its tone and subject matter. The association of the two genres here suggests that they may have been assumed to be related in the literary thought of the early seventeenth century. If this was indeed the case, it lends support to the assumption implicit in our earlier examination of Donne's elegies that those poems are related to his satires in their attitudes and technique. Assuming a strong satirical element in the elegies, I attempted to show that Donne uses his dramatic speaker ironically, satirizing through him certain attitudes toward love current in the love poetry of the 1590's. The voice in Donne's satires is that of a dramatic character, a figure involved with and
in tension with the world he criticizes. In the elegies the voice is likewise that of a dramatic figure, speaking in monologue and expressing his own feelings in what he takes to be lyric style, all the while serving unknowingly as the instrument of satire on the conventions of love.

Jonson would at first seem to be doing nothing of the kind, and indeed there are many essential differences in his approach and attitudes. The first dozen lines represent a fairly typical Jonson opening: a formal introduction of the topic. The speaker also introduces himself, and he is in many ways very different from Donne's satiric persona whose point of view is very limited. Jonson's speaker is fully cognizant of his role and has omniscience and authority, to which he asserts his full claim in the opening part of the poem ("I doe claime a right/ In all that is call'd lovely . . . "). Moreover, the speaker, as he describes himself in the first couplet ("fat" and "old"), seems to resemble Jonson himself so closely that it hardly seems worthwhile to refer to him as a persona. To a great extent he speaks as the traditional satiric voice, the voice of the Roman satirists, which will be heard continually in the eighteenth century from those writers who will take on the role of Socrates's gadfly. From his privileged position, he speaks with the voice of the poet, who in his "fine frenzy" attacks his subject as an act of love:
There is not wonne that lace, purle, knot or pin,
But is the Poets matter; and he must
When he is furious love, although not lust.

(ll. 16-18)

Having acknowledged all this, however, it is then necessary to see that Jonson is at the same time playing a role and that he has a definite rhetorical purpose for doing so. He strikes a kind of bull-in-china-shop pose at the beginning:

Let me be what I am, as Virgil cold,
As Horace fat; or as Anacreon old;
No Poets verses yet did ever move,
Whose Readers did not thinke he was in love.

(ll. 1-4)

That is: in spite of the fact that I am a fat, quarrelsome, old man, I must affect the lover's role in order to be listened to. He envisions himself as an unlikely-looking rival for the young poets, whom he can equal in the vigor and grace of his verses, though they are his superiors in physical grace. He presents a ludicrous image of the young poet sitting hour after hour upon his Pegasus, trying to take up inspiration from the fountain of the muses as a horse drinks water from a pool. He pictures himself glaring out from under the poet's ivy garland, using its divine powers to spot his rivals and critics, whom he will presumably then destroy with his wit. He is parodying the stance of the poet as he feigns to be adopting the role himself. More importantly, he is not just an ungainly figure playing the lover; for the lover's role is itself a deceit. He is really
setting the reader up for a love poem, then delivering a satire. The point of his playing about with the figure of the love poet becomes clear after line twenty-five, when the reader is surprised to learn that Jonson is not going to deal with love, or even with the dress and affectations of ladies--familiar enough subjects of love poetry, especially disillusioned love poetry. His real interest, oddly enough, is in men, specifically men who affect the role of poet in the same way they affect fashionability in dress and manners, men whose effeminacy manifests itself in their curious sexual habits.

The poem has been too superficially regarded as a satire on women. Jonson's editor Herford thought that in it and in the elegies which precede it (and what he says is no more true of them than it is of this poem),

... Jonson lays bare the savage cynicism of which in his dealings with them [women] he was at no time incapable, and which was even his normal disposition towards all but certain exceptional members of the sex. When he undertook in this mood to analyse the constitution of woman, his crucible was apt to yield few ingredients but vanity and lust. His most forcible expression of this temper is the so-called Elegy: 'Let me be what I am' ... .13

Herford may be right about Jonson's general misogyny, but he is clearly wrong in assuming that this particular poem is his "most forcible expression" of it, or even that this is a central theme in the poem. 14
Jonson does not dwell upon the ladies who wear "a velvet Petticote, or a Gowne," but upon various male figures who indulge in clothes fetishism. We see the tailor whose chief erotic delight is to have his wife put on rich clothes and make love to him in them before they are delivered to his customer, "his Letcherie/ Being, the best clothes still to praeoccupie" (ll. 42-43). We look with Jonson and his listener through a keyhole and watch a groom make love to his lady's wardrobe (ll. 51-64). It should be noted here that there is a certain inconsistency in that Jonson began by addressing "Fathers, and Husbands," (1. 11), but later is obviously speaking to a specific individual: "Thou didst tell me ..." (1. 59). These differences are not irreconcilable, however, and more importantly, by presenting the groom's actions as having been conveyed to him via the voyeurism of his listener, he cleverly implicates this gentleman in the perversities of the society he is satirizing ("Thou ... wert o're-joy'd to peepe/ In at a hole, and see these Actions ..." ll. 59-60). This adds satirical force to the end of the poem, where he turns upon his listener and upbraids him for being unduly concerned with the dress of his wife and daughter.

Jonson reserves his most effective satire for the "Songsters." He has already developed an interesting variation on the more familiar moral objection to "luxury" in clothing--the use of rich apparel as an incitement to lust. In the
scenes he has conjured up in the first half of the poem, the tailor is moved to lust for his wife only because she is wearing the rich gown: presumably he would have little interest in her if she were wearing nothing at all. The groom is obsessed with the clothes in their own right, not because they have touched the skin of his mistress. Incitements to lust, such as fancy clothing, pose one kind of problem for the moralist; an artificialized kind of lust which has no interest in plain, healthy sex itself poses quite another. The clothes perhaps represent for the artisan and the servant the wealth and elegance they are in constant contact with but never really taste. For the courtier and the would-be poet, clothes seem to embody the exquisite tastes, the standards of fashionability which are the sine qua non of their existence. The parallel themes of perverse sexuality and the obsession with dress are ingeniously synthesized with the theme of poetic affectation. For these songsters are writing love lyrics, but their real subject is clothing. The lines (61-65) depicting the groom as playing in "prose," though he would have done so in verse if he were literate, form a clever transition from the affectation of dress to that of poetry. The poets, like the groom, have no interest in the wearers, only in the clothes themselves. The groom did at least find sexual expression for his fetishism: having kissed passionately the shoes and slippers, he proceeded to
Court every hanging Gowne, and after that,
    Lift up some one, and doe, I tell not what.
           (ll. 57-58)

The poet, however, operates at an even further remove from real sexuality as he translates his passion for clothing into his "art."

                                  witnesse he

That chanc'd the lace, laid on a Smock, to see,
And straight-way spent a Sonnet; (ll. 65-67)

The verb "spent" has, as one editor correctly but prudishly points out, the meaning of "expended" or "uttered," but it also certainly has its other meaning here of "ejaculated."
The French-hood and scarlet gown of the mayor's wife presumably represent provocative apparel:

                                  . . . that other

That (in pure Madrigall) unto his Mother
Commended the French-hood, and Scarlet gowne
    The Lady Mayresse pass'd in through the Towne,
Unto the Spittle Sermon. (ll. 67-71)

The principal irony is probably not that she wears them to church, but that the poet responds by recommending her appearance to his mother. The exact meaning is uncertain, and it may be going too far to suggest an incestuous joke, but it would appear that Jonson is at least ridiculing his subjects as being unweaned sexually.

Jonson goes on to create a parody of foppish banter, as he describes three "poets" who are vying in singing the beauties not of their ladies, but of the silks displayed in
their favorite parts of town. He has them sing out in exclamatory praises such as would be used in reference to a lady's beauty, but which here refer only to clothes, no reference whatever being made to those who wear them. With the exception of those of the mayoress, they would appear not even to have been made into clothes, but only displayed as wares:

0, what strange
Varietie of Silkes were...on the Exchange!
Or in Moore-fields! this other night sings one:
Another answers, 'Lasse, those Silkes are none,
In smiling L'envoye, as he would deride
Any Comparison had with his Cheap-side. (ll. 71-76)

The vision of the gallant enamored of Cheapside is almost apocalyptical:

And vouches both the Pageant, and the Day,
When not the Shops, but windowes doe display
The Stuffes, the Velvets, Plushes, Fringes, Lace,
And all the original riots of the place: (ll. 77-80)

It must be assumed that when he says "not the shops, but windowes," he is not referring to the windows of the shops themselves, for then there would be no point to his distinction. (Also, to the best of my knowledge, store display windows had not yet come into being.) He apparently sees in his vision the day when splendid apparel and materials will be displayed not only in shops but in the windows of all the city's buildings and homes.
In the final set of images, the satirist makes direct, vindictive judgments upon his victims:

Let the poore fooles enjoy their follies, love
A Goat in Velvet; or some block could move
Under that cover; an old Mid-wives hat!
Or a Close-stoole so cas'd; or any fat
Bawd, in a Velvet scabberd! (ll. 81-85)

Nell Johnson has mentioned Jonson's talent with the grotesque, and this passage is surely one of the most striking examples of his use of grotesque figures for satirical purposes. These lines might be paraphrased as follows:

Let the poor fools . . . love a goat (literally a goat, or a lecherous person) clothed in velvet, or (since they don't care about real sex anyway) a block (literally a block--perhaps a barber's or hatter's block--or a blockish, sexless person) could arouse them just the same if adorned with velvet, even if it took the form of a velvet mid-wife's hat or a velvet-covered chamberpot. Or, a fat bawd sheathed in velvet would suit them equally well.

The lines are certainly open to different explication, since neither the imagery nor the syntax lends itself to a clear and logical reading. The images are frankly absurd, meant to suggest a preposterous combination of human and inanimate figures, all equally "objects" of passion because clothed in velvet. They are even more bizarre than the "originall riots" of the Cheapside poet's visions.

These semi-human forms are consistent with a pattern of grotesque imagery developed earlier in the poem. Jonson
at several points treats his human subjects in animalistic terms, comparing, for instance, the elegantly arrayed ladies of the town to horses in terms that would have amused D. H. Lawrence:

Put a Coach-mare in Tissue, must I horse
Her presently? Or leape thy Wife of force,
When by thy sordid bountie she hath on,
A Gowne of that, was the Caparison?

("Caparison" can refer to human clothing, but the OED gives as its primary meaning a covering for a horse.) He likewise depicts the poets as horses being whipped by Love—"Wrung on the Withers, by Lords Loves despight" (l. 63). Much subtler is his advice that his listener keep even his ugly daughters dressed in sackcloth or leather, "For silke will draw some sneaking Songster thither" (l. 25). The foppish poets here resemble rodents or vermin drawn irresistibly, as if by scent, to the silk. In keeping, their "Verses swarme/ At every stall" (ll. 27-28). The stall is the book-seller's, of course, but the image suggests flies swarming around the stalls of horses (whose presence—"Coach-mares," etc.—we have already noted).

Again displaying his mastery of tone and pace, Jonson switches abruptly from bawdy, comic raillery to a stern, moralizing conclusion.

I envy
None of their pleasures! nor will aske thee, why
Thou art jealous of thy Wifes, or Daughters Case:
More then of eithers manners, wit, or face! (ll. 85-88)
George Johnston, quoting O. J. Campbell, refers to this as the "scornful dismissal" which Campbell defines as one of the three essential features of a good satirical portrait. Jonson speaks here as the high-minded moralist, and his message is direct and effective. But even though he is lecturing his listener upon his concern for the dress and appearance ("case" = physical condition or exterior of a person) of his wife and daughters, Jonson has in the course of his lecture been having a good deal of fun addressing his wider audience, fashionable London society and the Court. In reference to his specific listener, he makes clear that he has not been concerned merely with extravagance, but with a moral and intellectual delusion many choose to live under. He has ridiculed that shallowness of mind which leads people to attempt to purchase wit and beauty at every stall or dress shop. He has ingeniously extended his ridicule of poetic affection and vanity to one of the most basic forms of human activity, sexuality. There are, of course, long-standing connections between these themes: appealing dress and even poetry can be instruments of seduction, and the typical subjects of popular poetry are love and beauty. The dominant impression created by the poem is not one of logical connection among moral themes, however, but of a general madness manifesting itself in a variety of ways, with sexual fetishism serving as a central symbol.
The principal differences between Donne and Jonson in their practice of the Ovidian love elegy have become reasonably clear. The most striking contrast is in Donne's conception of the elegy as an essentially dramatic mode. His speakers reveal themselves in monologue form from the "inside"; they do not have omniscience over their situation and are often thus not in full control of it. Jonson's speakers, who are not really individualized, speak in well-controlled discourses. They amplify clearly set out topics in clear lines of exposition, utilizing appropriate figures of speech. The movement of Donne's monologues is more associative, the movement of the speaker's thought following a psychological rather than a truly logical pattern. Figures of speech often are not strictly illustrative but tend to become figures of thought. This is not to underrate Jonson's figurative language: he has a remarkable facility for employing a conventional metaphor in a highly unconventional way, often synthesizing several figurative patterns into what becomes a new figure. Jonson's overall discourse tends to remain essentially static, however, whereas we may follow Donne's speaker through abrupt turns of thought and wind up at a very different destination than we might have expected. The two poets' speakers perform within distinctively different contexts. Donne far more often than Jonson gives us the sense of a specific situation, which he creates by two basic
means. First, he develops a strongly implied narrative which is presumed to transcend the monologue of the poem; the speaker alludes to actions and circumstances which have roughly the same function as the exposition in the first act of a play. Secondly, Donne uses details with a high degree of particularity, details which are assumed to refer to an immediate visual scene. Jonson does, of course, use plenty of specific images in his poems, but they are usually parts of figures of speech or examples within an argument. The reader is aware of their being illustrative, not somehow representational in the way Donne's often are.

We have seen in the course of this analysis the erroneousness of Herford's assertion that the attitudes toward women which pervade the "disputed" elegies (xxxviii-xli) are those characteristic of Donne. "Woman," Herford has said, is "the preoccupation of the writer. But to the author of the four 'elegies' woman is a daemonic power, exercising a mysterious spell which with all his efforts at gaiety of heart, he never evades . . . ." There are indeed suggestions in these poems of that love-hate, passion-revulsion paradox so common in Donne, but Herford exaggerates this element. Actually, the poems contain a combination not of "splendor and gloom," but of the more standard emotions of love-lament: frustration and flattery. The poems dwell far more on the positive feelings of the speakers for their ladies than upon any of the pains of love. The voice we
hear consistently in these poems is well-composed and articulate; there are no flashes of emotion, no "glimpse of the mystic passion" of Donne. Far from showing a "pre-occupation" with women, the elegies include women only as feminine pronouns. These ladies, to the degree that they exist at all, are not "daemonic," but content to serve quietly as the auditors of graceful and witty love poems. And in "Let me be what I am" (xlii) they must suffer along with the men who appear in the "originall riots" of Jonson's satirical "Pagaent."

Though both poets display a delightfully cynical wit, there is a fundamental philosophical cynicism underlying Donne's elegies, whereas Jonson's have as their basis (though this is seldom made explicit) an orthodox Christian morality. Donne in his elegies deals with love, and the ladies who are the objects of love, in terms of corrupted relationships. Jonson accepts as a working premise the traditional positive view of romantic love and the traditional rhetoric of flattery.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V


2 Herford-Simpson, II, 383.

3 Herford-Simpson, VIII, 585, li. 714-718.


5 "Jonson's Ovidian Elegies . . . .," p. 111.

6 p. 111.


9 Herford-Simpson, II, 388.


12 George Burke Johnston, in Ben Jonson: Poet (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), pp. 117-120, notes the satirical nature of the poem and gives some excellent background information on Jonson's satire on these subjects in his plays and other poems.

13 Herford-Simpson, II, 357-358.
14 Johnston, p. 81, has previously noted that at least half the poem is not about women, but men.


16 p. 82.

17 Herford-Simpson, II, 384.

18 II, 384.

19 II, 384.
CONCLUSION

In the preceding analysis of Jonson, we have seen that his work in the elegiac mode is masterful in technique, witty and intelligent in its treatment of the subject of love. My purpose has been only partially, however, to explicate Jonson's method. Refocusing our attention on Donne in these concluding remarks, I should like to emphasize that despite Jonson's extremely interesting use of the elegiac medium, his work does not approach the achievement of Donne. Specifically, Jonson's work reveals, by contrast, the extent to which Donne succeeded in creating a thoroughly dramatic form of love poetry and using it to explore a complex of corrupt attitudes toward human relationships. If my analysis is found to be acceptable in its essential features, it will hopefully stimulate a re-evaluation of the conventional views of these poems. We must conclude, I believe, that Donne was writing in the 1590's a kind of dramatic verse which has most of the characteristics of the dramatic monologue, a form we usually assume to have been a nineteenth-century creation. Even when Donne's elegies are not dramatic in the fullest sense (referring now to the "witty" elegies), they do employ a pose and a rhetoric which fulfill what Langbaum shows to be
the essential purpose of the dramatic method: "The use of
the speaker enables him to dramatize a position the possibil-
ities of which he may want to explore . . . ."¹ Langbaum
points out that though we exercise moral judgment upon the
speaker of a monologue, we hold this judgment in balance, at
least for the duration of our reading of the poem, with a
certain sympathy, or "understanding." In speaking of the
ambiguities of Browning's treatment of Bishop Bloughram, for
instance, Langbaum says, "I have tried to indicate that more
is involved in our judgment of the bishop than the simple
alternatives of for and against."² This kind of judgment,
he says, "cuts across the conventional categories, often
dealing in paradoxes—the honest thief, the tender murderer.
Above all, it brings no ready-made yardstick . . . ."³

In the course of this discussion, it has become abun-
dantly clear that there is no "ready-made yardstick" by which
to judge the characters of the Elegies. We have seen, for
instance, the mistakenness of Earl Miner's view of the clan-
destine lovers of "The Perfume." We found no evidence that
"This oppressive and inimical outer world is made, through
furtiveness and stealth, to give some room for realized
private passion and true human attachment."⁴ Certainly we
are not meant to admire most of these figures, except for
their verbal wit. But we have also seen that the opposed
view, such as Andreasen's moralistic treatment of the poems,
cannot be accepted. It will be recalled that she argues:
If Ovidian poetry was often read as philosophy-teaching-by-bad-example, then Donne's Ovidian poems probably are also the monologues of men who are meant to be negative moral exempla, models of what is to be avoided.

Most of the elegies simply do not read consistently as studies of lust, or cupiditas. There is indeed little in them that is really lustful; they do not focus steadily enough upon sexuality per se to be looked at in that way. Neither do the more affirmative elegies serve as examples of caritas. Their world is the same as that of the cynical elegies, their characters are dealt with almost as harshly, are their love-affairs are denied any element of idealism.

Andreasen's insistence upon taking an absolute position against the speaker runs counter to what is probably the initial reaction of any reader, who sympathizes with the speaker's skepticism toward moldy conceptions of love. But, exercising the judgment Langbaum emphasizes, we also see through the speaker's self-serving rhetoric. We see that his brash iconoclasm often reflects a crude insensitivity to the subtleties of human relationships.

The problem remains, then, as to what view we are to take of these works. Let me first make clear that I do not believe that it is possible to formulate any positive philosophical doctrine which is consistent throughout the Elegies. Andreasen tries to show that a doctrine of spiritual love is implied by Donne as a positive alternative to the attitudes expressed by the poems' speakers. But the present analysis
has shown that even in the most affirmative elegies Donne does not posit any spiritual values which allow the lovers to transcend the circumstances of their relationship. When we do have references to spiritual values, as in "The Bracelet" and "Going to Bed," they are of a comic nature and sardonic in tone. This is not to assume that the speakers' views are Donne's own. These dramatic figures use religious terminology, for instance, to flaunt their irreverence toward conventional values, which in itself is no more than the "liberation" of adolescents who in telling sexual jokes ridicule what they assume to be their elders' narrow morality. But the point is that in examining the rhetoric of these poems, and the implications which can reasonably be derived from that rhetoric, we have seen that Donne nowhere gives us leave to infer a positive point of view against which the speakers' attitudes are to be measured. Where we do seem justified in drawing general inferences, the movement of thought is, metaphorically speaking, downward. That is, it suggests a descent toward non-meaning, roughly the opposite of the Platonic stairway of love. It would be going beyond the evidence presented herein to refer to this as a full-scale metaphysical dilemma; it may well reflect a crisis in the intellectual life of the young Donne, but if so it is not worked out explicitly in these poems.

It might reasonably be assumed that we see in the Elegies the effects of a religious and philosophical
skepticism which has cast its shadow over other areas of thought and experience. It seems to me more in line with the evidence offered by this study, however, to regard the Elegies as an exploration, often using the methods of verbal comedy, of a specific area of human activity, sexual love, from which negative reverberations are felt over a wide range of subject. The cynicism bred by his unsuccessful experience in love corrupts the young speaker's view of the other areas of thought and experience which he touches upon in his monologue. We have seen, for example, his general sense of social alienation in poems such as "Love's War," an alienation which becomes almost paranoic in the poems of clandestine love, such as "On His Mistress" and "His Parting From Her." This cynicism is extended to religion in poems such as "The Bracelet" and "Recusancy." It produces an utter disdain for all standards of public morality throughout, but most explicitly in elegies such as "Change" and "Love's Progress." Most significantly perhaps, it manifests itself in a coarse insensitivity toward other human beings in poems such as "The Perfume" and "Jealosie."

There is a rather adolescent tendency toward oversimplification—an all-or-nothing quality—in such attitudes. Such an approach can lead, moreover, to a coarseness of manner and thought which is at odds with the rakish pose of wit and sophistication. We have noted the paradox in many of these poems of the character who prides himself on
his wit, his ability to construct ingenious conceits and make fine logical distinctions, yet who is oblivious to the grossest inconsistencies of logic and breaches of decorum. The speaker's rhetorical cleverness is a very tenuous affair throughout. The unexpected changes of direction, the violent mixing of metaphors, the shifts even of addressee are not, I think, accidental or indicative of hurried composition, but neither are they so aesthetically satisfying as the often dazzling play of wit in the *Songs and Sonnets*. They are Donne's way of presenting us with the operation of a mind which is clever, and knows it, but not fully in control of that cleverness. The young men of these poems seem often to be trying to exert control by rhetorical ingenuity over a world which they are not fully able to comprehend emotionally and intellectually.

They like to insist upon their rational approach to experience: they have a strictly pragmatic approach to love, having determined it to be purely a matter of the senses. It is clear to the reader that human relations approached in this way cannot satisfy for long, because they are at the mercy of the violent alterations of impulse. Desires become jaded, satiety can lead to revulsion, and thus we have the undercurrent of revulsion which we have traced in chapters one and two. This accounts also for the strangely un-erotic, or even anti-erotic, elements in these poems, which have been superficially regarded as statements of
frank sensuality. We have noted a coarseness, an insensitivity in them which is the antithesis of eroticism. The harsh, brittle imagery of the speakers' language is the contrary of the warmth, the intensity, the vivid tones and textures we associate with sensuality. In the wit of Donne's young rakes one senses a curious sterility, in spite of their apparently tireless sexual endeavors. One is somehow never fully convinced that their sexual banter has any relation to the actual intermingling of warm bodies and intense emotions.

These figures live in a very limited mental world, the narrowness of which becomes apparent when contrasted with the full canvas of Jonson's great satire, "Let me be what I am" (Elegie xlii). Jonson focuses much of his attention upon the affected young men-about-town who are, generally speaking, the same figures who appear in Donne's Elegies (though Donne's are not identified as "rimesters"). Donne focuses much more narrowly on only these rakes and limits himself to their love-lives. Jane Austen made a famous comment upon the narrow world of her fiction—"the little bit (two Inches wide) of Ivory on which I work with so fine a brush." Donne's elegiac world is perhaps even narrower. For though we have noted the high degree of particularity of the Elegies, with their abundant references to contemporary life and their glimpses of the London street, the social world of these poems is quite limited and the speakers' vision of it even
more so. One of the crucial differences between the Elegies and the Satires is that the elegiac speaker never sets himself up as an observer of the outer world, as the satirist must. The scene of the Elegies would seem, then, to be limited even further—to the speaker himself. The following comment by J. V. Crofts on Donne's work in general is extremely insightful, and seems to me to apply better to the Elegies than to many other works by Donne. I would argue, however, that it should be applied not to Donne himself in this case, but to his personae.

... he was a man self-haunted, unable to escape from his own drama, unable to find any window that would not give him back the image of himself. Even the mistress of his most passionate love-verses, who must (one supposes) have been a real person, remains for him a mere abstraction of sex: a thing given. He cannot see her—does not apparently want to see her; for it is not of her that he writes, but of his relation to her; not of love, but of himself loving.7

Donne will later describe himself in his Holy Sonnets as "a little world made cunningly"; in the Elegies he presents characters who seem to have accepted this notion in a comically perverse way. Their self-delusive egotism is as apparent in their attitudes toward love as in their fascination with their own wit. The elegiac lover's restriction of his vision is almost a parody of the desire of the lover in such poems as "The Good Morrow" and "The Sun Rising" to see the world of his love as a microcosm. In these latter
poems, the all-sufficient relationship "makes one little room, an every where." This vision of the lovers' microcosm has its basis in deep-seated emotional commitment; no such commitment is in evidence in any of the Elegies except those I have labeled as "affirmative," and even in them the lovers' relationship is not secure or self-contained, but at the mercy of circumstance. The lover in "The Sun Rising" tells the sun "this bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphære." The elegiac speaker makes his mistress's "centrique part" the center of his narrow universe, but—to paraphrase Yeats—it is a center which cannot hold.

The erotic journey of "Love's Progress" offers a useful metaphor with which to describe the narrow world of the Elegies. It must be kept in mind that these poems were written by a young man, with the full vigor and iconoclasm of youth, and that they present youthful characters involved in a traditional rite of passage. Though they regard themselves as sexual veterans, Donne's young men betray their immaturity at every turn. Their chip-on-shouler style is indicative of their involvement in a broader process of initiation, one which is social and intellectual as well as sexual in nature. The most traditional pattern through which this process has been depicted in literature has been that of the journey, or "progress." Often the journey has been a "rake's progress," a picaresque movement from innocence to experience, with sexual encounters serving as the commonest
initiatory device. We might compare Donne's picaro with two later sexual adventurers such as Defoe's Moll Flanders and Donleavy's Sebastian Dangerfield (*The Ginger Man*). These figures, like Donne's elegiac lovers, suffer an unmistakable corruption of moral vision, which is characterized by an indifference toward other human beings. To Moll Flanders, sexuality offers a means of economic survival; her frequent sexual encounters never become truly erotic because they are looked upon in terms of pounds and shillings rather than sensual enjoyment. Dangerfield, the amoral anti-hero (by now a clichéd role), accepts the sexual charms of a woman with the same attitude with which he pilgrfs her belongings when he leaves her. His escapades, like Moll's, never really become erotic because they are characterized not by passion but by a dearth of feeling.

There is a fundamental difference between the quest, if it is properly called that, of the anti-hero and that of the adventurer seeking identity, such as Augustine in his *Confessions*. The geographical movement of Augustine is paralleled in an interesting way with his spiritual development. The same general point can be made of Tom Jones, whose sexual escapades, moreover, are each given a role, direct or indirect, in his eventual discovery of his identity. Moll Flanders and Sebastian Dangerfield are essentially unchanged, however, throughout their adventures. Moll is richer and thus has been successful in her quest for economic security,
but her mentality is the same. Donne's picaros, though we see them in the three departure elegies preparing to go abroad, do not really move through the broad range of experience of the traditional picaresque traveler. "Love's Progress" is a parody of real travel, and "Love's War" asserts the speaker's determination not to venture into the hostile outer world. The wit of Donne's rogues is replete with metaphors of travel. In "Going to Bed," the lady's naked charms are the speaker's "America" and "new found lande." In "Jealosie," the lovers determine that in the future they will make love in some new place, like those who "themselves exile/Into another countrie." In "Change," we have seen the speaker describe constancy as "to live in one land," and promiscuity as "to runne all countries." We have examined earlier the digressions in "The Bracelet" (ll. 23-42), "Love's War" (ll. 5-18), and "On His Mistress" (ll. 33-43) in which the speaker presents a broad view of other lands and peoples. But travel remains, paradoxically, a static metaphor; it signifies nothing in the way of psychological or intellectual progress.

Donne's erotic traveler (treating the speakers for the moment as a composite figure) can be seen to have made real "progress" only, ironically, at the moment of departure. I do not believe that it is accidental that Donne cast three of the affirmative elegies in the form of valedictory poems and the fourth ("The Autumnal") as a "September song," a
poem dealing with loss not through travel but through mutability and eventually death. This, the Elegies seem to be saying, is the central fact about human love: even when it has taken on meaningful form, it is transitory and at the mercy of forces of circumstance. We have seen that none of Donne's "true" lovers has any illusion about the transcendence of love. The lovers in "On His Mistress" and "His Parting From Her," who are still immersed in the intrigues of clandestine love, can do little more than bewail their misfortune and engage in wishful thinking about the future. They have not shed the insecurities of the cynical lovers; they are perplexed, since they have found something of unexpected value in their sordid world and now seem about to lose it. The more mature lovers of "His Picture" and "The Autumnal" are resigned, grateful for what they have had, and guardedly hopeful about the future.

If Donne's elegiac world is typified by the narrowness of the geography of "Love's Progress," Jonson's may be characterized by the relative expansiveness of "Let me be what I am." It is not so much that Jonson's specific frame of reference is broader; we have indeed noted the greater particularity of external reference in Donne. But when Donne turns his camera upon the outer world in topical passages such as those in "Love's War" and "The Bracelet," his lens has a strong darkening filter. It produces a distortion which reflects the speaker's particular distortion of mental vision.
There is no comparable distortion of external reality in Jonson's elegies. The concern for secretiveness in several of them does not produce in the lovers a sense of alienation from the society from which they conceal their affair. In "That Love's a bitter sweet" (Elegie xl), for example, the speaker vows not to reveal his mistress's identity, but he does not allow their secret relationship to disturb his place in a stable social world. His whole point is that he can keep her secret because he has not let love affect his apparently vigorous, healthy social life. In keeping with his stable relation to his society, the Jonsonian lover accepts society's moral and religious standards and, in the form of his discourse, demonstrates his creator's acceptance of its literary traditions.

In examining the use of religious arguments in "'Tis true, I'm broke" (Elegie xxxviii), we have seen that Jonson's lover presents religious doctrines in an orthodox manner. There may be the lightest touch of irony in his plea that his lady imitate God in his mercy by being merciful to him. Insisting that she cannot in good faith demand back the gifts she has given, he argues that for her to do so would be

\[
\begin{align*}
\ldots \text{as Heaven} \\
\text{Should ask the blood, and spirits he hath infus'd} \\
\text{In man, because man hath the flesh abus'd. (11. 64-66)}
\end{align*}
\]

What irony there is in this is directed toward his listener, and to some degree himself; the divine order is left
untouched. He assumes that human beings may indeed abuse the flesh (there is no suggestion of an amoral sexual code in Jonson, except in Elegie xix, "By those bright Eyes"); certainly he assumes that they may abuse the ideals of love. Both the moral order and a traditional lovers' code are accepted without question. In "Though Beautie be the Marke of praise" (Elegie xxii), the speaker may be frustrated with the woman he desires, but his frustration does not lead him to question the traditional ideals of feminine beauty and virtue. He still assumes moral virtues to be the most worthy objects of a lover's praise and indeed hopes that those virtues (those of his listener, whom he asks to intercede for him) will bring harmony to his relations with his loved one. Though he puts his case in terms not of Christianity, but of the worship of the God of Love, he is accepting a set of ideals which have a solid tradition behind them. Even in the Ovidian poem depicting adulterous love (Elegie xix, "By those bright Eyes"), the social immorality of the situation is tempered by a poetic machinery which brings it within the realm of literary orthodoxy. The rhetoric of flattery which dominates the argument, the descriptive catalogue of the lady's features, and the use of elements of Cupid-worship combine to lend an air of respectability to the situation. The poetic treatment does not go so far as to idealize the situation; it does not create the idealized adultery of
courtly love. But it does dilute the moral cynicism inherent in the Ovidian situation to the point that it poses little threat to convention.

In contrast, Donne seized upon the note of sardonic mockery always present in Ovid's flaunting of moral convention and intensified it, making it the dominant tone of his poems. Donne's personae have adopted the Ovidian pose of comic cynicism, but have gone further than Ovid in cutting themselves off from all absolutes. Ovid had at least one solid frame of reference in the world of mythology. He alludes to traditional myths constantly, sometimes with irony but usually in the assumption that they provide a viable source of symbolic meaning. Jonson's elegies tend to be allusive in the same positive way. Donne's speakers allude fairly widely, but seldom do their allusions provide a solid external verification of the "truth" of the speaker's meaning. The standard sources of meaning--political, religious, scientific--are all used with equal cynicism. Donne has done far more than just forge a distinctive literary style in barring the "exiled train of gods and goddesses" from his poems. If any implication is to be drawn, it must be that all absolutes are suspect, if not irrelevant. Donne seems to be experimenting with the concept of the character who has committed himself to a purely experiential viewpoint and a highly relativistic set of values. As Sanders has suggested: "Reality--Donne is quite clear about this--is not to be located in some
invisible, spiritual world, but in the visible physical one." In short, we may well have in the Elegies an earlier version of the later Donne for whom the "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" (in The First Anniversarie, "An Anatomy of the World," 1611). Here it is not any philosophies per se which call all in doubt, for they are regarded as unverifiable by experience and thus of interest primarily in the play of wit. The world of experience is looked upon in these poems not with hedonistic joy, however, as might be expected of minds freed of traditional limitations. It is looked upon with a harsh cynicism, scarcely less than that of the Anniversaries. But here Donne is not operating on the cosmic level. The underlying pessimism of the Elegies is the result of the failure of human relationships, which are the central reality of the elegiac world, to provide a source of viable meaning.
FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION


4. The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 231. Miner does qualify his view somewhat by saying "The young man is not spared in any particular; he has enough faults to outfit more than one young coxcomb."


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