1967

The Songs and Sonets of John Donne: an Essay on Mutability.

Barbara Ann Maynard

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/1304

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
MAYNARD, Barbara Ann, 1935-
THE SONGS AND SONETS OF JOHN DONNE: AN ESSAY ON MUTABILITY.

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Ph.D., 1967
Language and Literature, general
Please note: Name in vita is Barbara Kehoe Maynard.

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE SONGS AND SONETS OF JOHN DONNE:
AN ESSAY ON MUTABILITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Barbara Ann Maynard
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1959
May, 1967
FOREWORD

The number of poems included in the *Songs and Sonets* varies from editor to editor; accurate dating of the poems is impossible. Hence, various editors choose to arrange or divide the poems according either to the demands of their theses or to the studied arrangement made traditional by H. J. C. Grierson.

I have chosen to divide the poems into two groups—the negative and the positive. This organization is used to clarify and reinforce the central thesis. It is not a product of textual criticism.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance given to me by Professor Thomas A. Kirby and Professor Lawrence A. Sasek. I am particularly indebted to the patience, fortitude, and exceptionally careful criticism of Professor Esmond L. Marilla, my advisor and my friend.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWARD .............................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ..................................... iii
ABSTRACT .............................................. v

I. CHAPTER ONE ..................................... 1
   The Origins of the Renaissance Concept of Mutability

II. CHAPTER TWO ................................. 35
    The Negative Poems

III. CHAPTER THREE ................................. 126
    The Positive Poems

IV. CHAPTER FOUR ................................. 225
    A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................... 233
    VITA .................................................. 238
ABSTRACT

In his mythologies, philosophies, and imagination man has constantly evidenced an awareness of mutability. During the years 1580-1627 this preoccupation was made acute by the convergent forces of the Renaissance, Reformation, and emergent science.

Because of certain philosophical views—mainly the reciprocal correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm and the placement of man on the great chain of being—man was able to see how mutability was operable in various areas of existence. Thus the perverse and seemingly inconstant elements of man could quite possibly indicate their parallel on a larger scale. Of the many treatises on the subject, the most optimistic approach to a reluctant acceptance of the concept was that despite the awareness of immediate change, a greater constancy prevailed. It was thus possible for man to find positive relatedness to his universe, his community, and to himself.

To the Renaissance mind, one major cause of mutability, whether in the universe or in microcosmic man, was the lack of balance of the formative elements. For permanence to exist, it was essential that the four elements be equalized. With this equality came meaning and direction to existence. A perfect state of nature was one in which there was no seasonal variation. But, as man empirically noted, there
were seasons, and for some time this observation served as proof of a degenerate world. However, another view emerged which in fact said that although there was undeniable inconstancy within the shifting seasons there was a larger constancy prevailing in that yearly cycles were predictable generalizations. By analogy man could reason that even though many times he could not immediately detect this constancy, by inductive logic derived from what was observable, he could assume that such constancy did in fact exist even though he was often unable to apprehend it.

The writings of John Donne reflect this emotional and intellectual confusion, explicitly in his sermons and Devotions and implicitly in his Songs and Sonets—poems concerned with the achievement of constancy in love. An awareness of mutability is apparent not only in his imagery but also in his tone and dialectic. His cynicism reflects an inherent belief in the transiency of the flesh as well as fleshly passions. The poems contain a search for meaning and stability within the love relationship, a relationship which often seems inherently fated to inconstancy, fated due to the natural decay of the body through age and death, absence, and infidelity caused by a disharmony of affection.

The poems can be divided into two groups, the negative
which investigate various causes for infidelity and the positive which assert means to procure a lasting affection. Although both depict conflicting attitudes toward the love union, in the summary poems such as "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," "The Canonization," and "The Ecstasy," Donne achieves a reconciliation of seemingly disparate qualities and his lovers realize a permanence of their union. They do this by subordinating the senses to the intellect, that aspect of man which is immortal.

Donne explains how the tension of the body and the soul is maintained. For in love, as in the elements which form the Renaissance universe, an imbalance of parts pre-determines mutability. The negative poems make this clear. In the positive poems the lovers, through sheer intellectual affinity and an almost mystical annihilation of ego, sustain an equality of affection in all phases of their existence and find that their love endures often beyond the grave and ultimately in its undying memory which is vitalized by succeeding lovers.
"And the woman said, The Serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." (Genesis, 4, 13.) Christian mythology attributes its temporal distresses and discomforts to the careless eating of a forbidden fruit. And contingent upon this fatal meal, together with the expulsion from the Garden of Paradise, man fled east of Eden to inherit a hostile earth reluctant to bear fruit, a land newly harsh and unresponsive to his wishes. Because he was doomed to suffer privation and death, his finiteness appeared most manifest. The perfection and the simplicity of the order of his prelapsarian state was lost, and his future was one of insecurity, confusion, impermanence, mutability and decay.

But long before a Hebrew scribe recorded the activities of our bucolic forebears, pagan mythology had already answered man's questionings concerning the temporality of his state, for inquisitive Pandora had opened the fateful chest and released mankind's torments. And Homer, drinking deep of the sacred well, more than once commented on the imperfections of human nature, and repeatedly remarked upon the inevitability of death. Also, in his descriptions of the Elysian fields, where seasons do not change and temperaments are eternally gentle, he illustrates
a profound awareness that stability is an ephemeral gift; the fortunate guest to these fields was brought solely at the whims of the deities.

Likewise, the Greek tragedians consistently uttered choric homilies to remind their audiences of the frailty of human nature, its utter impotence before the strength of the ordered logos, whose changeless direction men but futilely seek. There is the constant reminder that all things on earth are subject to change, and in order to survive divine or temporal retribution man must apprehend the illusive absolutes which will preserve him. Thus, tragedy upon tragedy occurs because of the weakness of the human mind, subject both to corruption from without (Ate) and to corruption from within (hamartia). Existence in this moral and intellectual confusion is adequate matter for tragedy. The Greeks comprehended the problem, if not the solution to it.

Hence, in both our pagan and Christian mythologies, we see attempts to explain the lot of man, why he must live a life of physical suffering and emotional turmoil, and why he must inevitably experience physical death. The answer to this question involves several areas of investigation, chief among them the concept of mutability. And very generally, we can say that mutability is change, a movement from one state to another. Logically, an alteration can be for the better as well as for the worse;
but, for the most part, throughout literature particularly, mutability has been understood in its pejorative sense. The idea of change and impermanence suggested a decline. Order and permanence were incorruptible; chaos and impermanence were corruptible. Although this idea of change precedes the ideas of the two principal philosophers of fifth and fourth centuries Greece, mainly in the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis, literary history is particularly indebted to the studies of Plato and Aristotle concerning the concept of mutability, two philosophers who were absorbed into the Christian Pantheon during the Middle Ages and whose authority remained prominent throughout the Renaissance.

Of the many legacies permeating the literature to be discussed in this paper, Plato contributed more than a few. Naturally enough, his most basic philosophic tenet contains within it more than mere implications of a concept of mutability, for Plato conceived of two worlds; one of which had ascendancy over the other. In the well-known Parable of the Cave, Plato illustrates his Theory of Ideas, that there is the world as we know it, the sensory world—the world of Becoming—and that there is a world superior to this, the world of Ideas—the world of being. These ideas are abstractions which by self-definition are absolutes. And being absolutes, they are unchanging; herein rests their perfection. By their very perfection, then, any other world must inevitably be
imperfect since it is not part of the ideal world which is perfect. Hence, our world, the world of sensory perceptions, is only an imperfect imitation of the true world of Ideas. And being inferior, we are consequently subject to change and impermanence, if for no other reason than the fact that we are not absolutes. Thus, the most fundamental belief of Plato presupposes mankind to live in an inferior state. And as if it were not psychologically debilitating to believe oneself existing in a world originally created inferior, Plato emphasizes that because our world is one of sensory perceptions, which often and easily mislead us, our ability spiritually or mentally to apprehend the world of Ideas is seriously impaired. Therefore "that which is apprehended by intelligence and reason is always in the same state; but that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason, is always in the process of becoming and perishing and never really is."

Another Platonic contribution to our literary heritage, and one which intimates inferiority, if not mutability, is the concept of Plenitude. Plato's supreme

---

entity—the Ideal Good, or Truth, or Beauty, or Wisdom (the terms are here synonymous)—had such an expansiveness, such a fecundity of capacity, that it generated of itself, and like a continuous and never evaporating waterfall, it outpoured its "emanations" which spilled upon Chaos, those creations being nearest the fount receiving the abundance of emanations and those farthest from the overflow receiving the least amount. Thus the more removed from the source, the less perfection the creation possesses.

We can comprehend a universal duality as it emerges from his many dialogues—the world of Being and the inferior world of Becoming—whose tension produces an order and a purpose within total creation. But where Plato is often mystically abstract, his pupil and occasional dissenter, Aristotle, is usually academically concrete. Aristotle shows us the physical limits of the sensory world; each heavenly body is placed into its orbital sphere, and comets and meteors are denied the freedom of translunar space. With Aristotle there is only one real world, the one in which we live, but within it are contained both perfection and imperfection. And in this single world all created entities are driven by some inner urge to become superior to what they already are. Matter, then, is the raw, inferior material, but it has potential for achieving its ultimate reality or form. Hence, according to Aristotle, the real (form) and the non-real (matter), corresponding
to the Being and Becoming of Plato, are contained in a single world and do not refer to two separate universes. Thus Aristotle's absolutes are the forms realized from the catalytic agent of potential operating upon matter. The common example to explain these terms is the study of the acorn's growth; the acorn, which has actuality (matter), also has potentiality for achieving its proper form as an oak tree. In Aristotle's single world picture, the potential for mutability resides within the created universe. If error, corruption, or fallibility occur they are due to the constituents of the matter and matter's conflict with its potential. However, he divides this single real world into the celestial and the terrestrial. By means of Aristotle's penchant for details, we learn of the shoddily mixed elements which comprise our terrestrial globe and causally from the improperly mixed elements, mutability occurs on our planet.

To Aristotle, the stars are ageless and indestructible; he is basing his assertion on the fact that no extant records denote any change in the general parts of heaven, whereas any casual glance about the terrestrial globe will immediately give evidence of physical decay. Therefore, the moon, appearing perfect in surface configuration, and all above it are accordingly deemed immutable. Also the heavens are characterized by circular motion, the circle then being considered a symbol of perfection, while the earth was believed to exist without
movement. Thus immobile earth as the center of the universe was farthest from the heavens, and according to E.M.J. Tillyard, interpreting the implications of this Aristotelian astronomy, this geocentric position in what was a pre-Ptolemaic system was not to be envied, for it made the earth the "cesspool of the universe, the repository of its grossest dregs."

By the first century, the idea that the world and its inhabitants were inferior to previous states of human existence found expression in the Metamorphoses of Ovid. The very title of this allegedly profane volume implies change, and in the opening book of this compendium of mythology, Ovid discusses the origins of creation. Similar to the progeny of Adam, the sons of the Golden Age begat Silver, which in turn begat Brass, which in turn begat Iron. In the mythology of Ovid is yet another variation of the theme of change, here pessimistically for the worse, for Ovid's mankind had degenerated from a once perfect time. Sin and error had removed Roman man from his golden indulgence, and the iniquities of life were to be his penance for assumed transgressions against divine dictates.

---

Such nostalgia did not end with the pagans. Into the Christian era passed the works of antiquity and the subsequent absorption of their ideas into the Christian metaphysical framework. Paean-born Augustine, whose conversion from an early libertine manhood to that of devout cleric more than once has been compared with that of Donne, absorbed the teachings of Plato and the later Neo-Platonists of the Alexandrian Academy. Throughout his Confessions, particularly, he dwells on the transiency of this life, emphasizing that original sin has left man bereft of perfection and that his unholy lot is to grow old, to suffer, and to die. As immediately as the first book of the Confessions we find him saying, "... O Lord, except that I do not know where I came from into this mortal life or (should I say?) into this vital death." The other-worldliness of Plato, and even more so of Plotinus, is echoed in his many references to the subordination of this temporal world to the perfection of heaven. Thus, the Platonic achievement of the Good becomes, for Augustine, the Christian desire for salvation and entry into heaven. Again, stressing the mutability of our terrestrial life, he says, "for in thy

sight no one is clean of sin, not even the infant whose life is but one day upon earth." (Book I, Ch. 7, 23).

He refers to his enduring life as "the clanking chains of mortality," emphasizing in Christian terms the Platonic desire of the soul to be free of the prison of the gross, material shell of the body so that it can return to the realm of the Ideal in order to achieve its perfection.

What is then earthly is mutable; what is heavenly is complete and unchanging. Inherent in this desire of the soul to return to God, we have a restatement of the doctrine of Plenitude, which here derives much from Plotinus--that the "emanations" flowing from the World-soul (Plato's Absolute Good) flow in graded degrees of purity. Among these entities, the Plastic Forces contained within the outpouring emanations are the individual human souls. Matter is last in the descending scale of excellence. Because like substances experience a mutual attraction (the soul desires heaven), inherent in the soul's desire to achieve this salvation is the admission of the inferiority of the body to the soul--an idea which remains at the crux of Christian theology.

With Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Christian Platonism becomes as much of a literary influence as a purely ethical one. Boethius had been a pupil of the Platonic Academy before the Christian emperor Justinian closed in in 529, and his years of imprisonment at Pavia gave him ample time to articulate his philosophical scrutinies. It is unnecessary to emphasize the popularity of the *Consolation* throughout the Middle Ages and into the seventeenth century. Although the work deals with a painful awareness of the brevity of existence, Boethius has little of the pessimism which might easily germinate from a study of the limitations of the world. For Boethius was mainly a Platonist and thereby carried with him an intuitive assurance that man's better part, his soul, can essentially achieve eternal bliss. Ovid was pessimistic when he described the deterioration of the ages of mankind, but Boethius showed that to interpret meaning and purpose in life only by simply witnessing the visual evidence of mutability about us is to be deceived by the senses which are part of our adulterated physical make-up. He emphasizes that adulteration or corruptibility is limited to the physical. The intellect can lead man to an appreciation of the unchanging--an emphasis on the soul's superiority to the body--and with Plato it is the rational part of man, the soul, that can return to the ideal world. This immortal, and thus indestructible, soul is the agency, the bridge between these two worlds. The more serious
love poems of Donne make use of this belief or faith in the soul as the link between two worlds.

Nor was Boethius the last of the scholastics to have done with the philosophers of Athens, for in 1230 Pope Gregory IX called together three theologians for the central purpose of studying the works of Aristotle in order to determine what principles of his were consistent with Christian theology and could thereby be included in Christian studies. About this time, under the tutelage of the now Aristotelian-oriented Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas early became a devotee of the pagan philosopher, and through the voluminous theological treatises of St. Thomas medieval Christianity absorbed the Aristotelian doctrines as effortlessly as it had digested the Christian Platonism of Augustine some centuries earlier. St. Thomas presented "the Aristotelian view as a mean between two extremes. One is the theory of Democritus, which reduces all knowledge to sensation and imagination, the other is the Platonic outlook, according to which sensation provides no more than the occasion upon which the understanding climbs to contemplate the spiritual world of forms." From the

sensory experiences, then, the higher faculties of man which are contained in the immortal soul transcend the inferior form and are "intrinsically independent of matter." Thus, restated is the earlier idea that the visible body is less perfect than the invisible and eternal soul. In Christian terms we see both the Platonic and the Aristotelian ideas. The visible world, whether the world of becoming or the world of Matter, or the temporal world, is imperfect; the invisible world, be it that of Ideas, Being, Form, or God's heaven, is perfect. "St. Thomas denied that this is the best of all possible worlds, even if he agreed with Candide that it was the best of all actual worlds." To St. Thomas only God is immutable because only God is eternal; his equation of eternity with immutability is quite like Plato's conception of permanence—a philosophical equivalent found in the absolutism of his Good. In both Plato and Aristotle we have a creative force which generates his artifacts in time. In the love poems of Donne we will see how he, too, equates the eternal and unchanging aspects of love with an essence that is tantamount to the physical.

6 Loc. cit.

7 Ibid., p. 151.
So, with the philosophical ascendancy of Augustine and Aquinas throughout the Middle Ages, the pagan ideas were assimilated into the Christian theological canon, and there remained (with the exception of occasional short-lived heretical movements) a certain universality of belief until in the early sixteenth century the restless spirit of a German monk who, like Erasmus, was dissatisfied with the worldliness of the papacy and, unable to remain mute about this venality and licentiousness, made known his complaints. Although there had been many reformers before Luther, from St. Dominic to Wycliff and his Lollards to the fiery-toned Savonarola, with Luther the Age of the Reformation was more than merely precipitated. This formidable religious movement not only re-examined the legislative and judicial procedures of the Church but put renewed emphasis on the literal interpretation of the Holy Scripture. The Bible and the individual conscience became the touchstones of this mushrooming protestant movement. And Luther, reflecting with melancholy upon the various lessons taught by the past, saw an "unbroken history of what may be called 'degenerative cycles' of man and of the world," which, from careful Biblical study, was determined to have been created in 4000 B.C.

With Luther's German translation of the Bible, areas of Continental Europe were provided with the Bible in their native tongues and no longer needed to rely on the clerical interpretations of the Latin Vulgate, the recognized Biblical text until the King James edition became the authorized Protestant version in the early seventeenth century. What impetus Luther gave to Continental religious dissension, the amorous dilemmas of Henry VIII were to do for England's dissatisfied, for the ruler's breach with Rome was just the catalyst needed to unite the reformers on his island. And although Henry was not partisan to the intrinsic goals of the reformers, they were welcome allies in his dispute with Rome. Therefore, shortly after his altercation with the Papacy, Archbishop Cranmer suggested than an English Bible ought to be published; until this time the only Bibles in English were that of John Wycliff which was not complete, and the edition of William Tyndale which was unauthorized and banned. Thus, in 1535 Miles Coverdale, under the patronage of Thomas Cromwell, completed his translation, one of many such translations which would eventually culminate in the King James Bible of 1611. The great interest in having such a book in English, a volume which would become the main literary as well as theological work to most Englishmen, would--through the new emphasis it was being given--remind man of his degenerate state and would recall to him, if it
had been forgotten, that he was merely dust and all too soon would return to such. No longer need he accept his curate's word for this; he could read it for himself.

Also, with the Protestant movement the Old Testament was as much stressed as the New Testament. The Hebrew Yahweh usurped the throne of the Hellenistic deity and the Absolute Good became the Absolute Judge. And a vindictive judge at that. Particularly in the persons of John Calvin and his followers we see the austere stress on the natural depravity of man, his innate inclination to do evil, and the world as a hostile and clever seducer of men. The temporal world was rife with sin and error. In the Middle Ages men sang the "Dies Irae" and perhaps reluctantly acknowledged the de contemptu mundi, enjoyed the ubi sunt poetry; but there was interspersed amid the fearful melancholy a certain lighthearted jollity which the rising Calvinist congregation did not inherit. The emphasis upon hard work, sobriety in the face of impending damnation, and joyless intensity characterizes the literature of these Geneva-oriented reformers.

Throughout the sixteenth century and through the first half of the seventeenth, then, certain ideas and movements coincide and this collision produced an easily detected tone, particularly noticeable during the latter years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and the early years of the rule of James I, the same years during which John
Donne is believed to have written his secular love poetry. These ideas coming from pagan and Christian sources merge to produce a prevalent pessimism, a melancholy, and a cynicism which is reflected not only in the homiletic literature but in the poetry and drama as well. The pagan contributions entered not only through medieval Christianity but also through the operation of the Renaissance itself; the fifteenth century humanist activities of such men as Grocyn, Linacre, Colet, and later of More and Erasmus—men who collected ancient manuscripts—also introduced the study of the works and the languages of antiquity. As a natural consequence of these novel studies, in the later sixteenth century many translators then put the pagan works into English. Allied with this was the not so lately developed art of printing which rendered the works more accessible, the continuation of global exploration, an abiding curiosity and joy in knowledge, and a greater awareness of the world and man's place in it than had ever occurred to the insular medieval Englishman. Naturally enough, this infusion of information produced diverse emotions, but not necessarily only those conducive to psychological deterioration. For the advent of new worlds, and antique literature which was not all ponderous philosophizing, could quite easily lead to emotions of a more sanguine nature.

However, coincidental with this revival of ancient
learning and the addition to modern knowledge came the stringent religious movements, accentuating man's baser qualities rather than his nobler ones. The acquisition of foreign land was often mistaken for a second chance at redemption while yet in this terrestrial prison. Numerous reports describing the Americas refer to them in terms of their being second Edens, filled with promise and rich reward for the old wor 1 Adam.

Meanwhile, simultaneously with the optimistic quest for redemptive knowledge and a paradise on earth, another current of intellectual activity, which was cluttered with the flotsam of superstitions and religious taboos accumulated through the centuries, was preparing to crest. This was the "new science"—the "new philosophy" which Donne, in his "Anatomy of the World," said would "call all in doubt."

Much has been made of the Copernican theory, which in effect rendered the old astronomical order of Ptolemy obsolete. Although he removed the earth from its central position in the known universe, Copernicus still presented a picture of a spherical universe which was nevertheless mathematically precise in order to maintain the natural tension which would restrain the world from tumbling into its elemental chaos. But it took more than the replacement of the earth as the center of the universe to produce a pervading melancholic atmosphere and to accelerate
the multitude of papers, tracts and treatises in the controversies which arose concerning the decline of the world, its evident mutability and inevitable decay. For despite any implications of the Copernican system that the earth was more degenerate than had been previously perceived (i.e., the already acknowledged immobile, dross earth now no longer retained even its unique centrality), to Copernicus the solar system and the universe remained virtually the same with respect to their geophysically affecting one another. "His world, though not geocentric, was still centred, still spherical in shape, still securely walled in by the outermost sphere . . . . So long as the whole sensible universe remained thus limited and boxed in, and so long as the planet occupied by man, whatever its spatial position, was still assigned a unique biological, moral, and religious status—a definite cosmic position within an ordered structure—the aesthetically and practically distinctive characteristics of the medi-

9

But in 1572, the very year of Donne's birth, something did occur to disrupt seriously the philosophical

9

status quo. Tycho Brahe discovered a "new star" in the constellation Cassiopeia, this cluster being in the realm of the heavens, which, since the Aristotelian reemphasis by Aquinas, was considered immutable. To the contemplative mind, believing in the observant eye, this occurrence indicated change in the one area hitherto considered incapable of change. Men were conditioned to the acceptance of change on their planet, but they had looked to the stars with hope and belief that a perfect world existed, even if it were not readily accessible. The absolute knowledge of such an existence gave consolation for his temporal plight. With this new discovery in the heavens and a rapidly growing interest in science, particularly astronomy, new theories presented themselves--some credible and some incredible--but with such torrential timing that the pendant world became more and more aware that certainly the millennium must be in the not too distant future. Thus, according to Lovejoy, the "truly revolutionary theses in cosmography . . . were five. These five . . . innovations were: (1) the assumption that other planets of our solar system are inhabited by living, sentient, and rational creatures; (2) the shattering of the outer walls of the medieval universe, whether these were identified with the outermost crystalline sphere or with a definite 'region' of fixed stars, and the dispersal of these stars through vast . . . distances; (3) the conception of the
fixed stars as . . . surrounded by planetary systems of their own; (4) the supposition that planets in these other worlds have inhabitants; (5) the assertion of the actual infinity of the . . . universe in space and of the number of solar systems contained in it."

With such theories in abundance it is no wonder that there existed a great deal of concern, particularly manifested in the voluminous literature of the later Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras, about the future of mankind, the purpose and meaning of existence, and man's physical and spiritual relation to this undefined intent.

And, as if visible proof of these assertions were lacking, the discovery announced by Galileo in the Sidereal Messenger (1610) was that the satellites of Jupiter "shewed the falsity of the old doctrine that the earth was the only centre of motion; it tended, moreover, seriously to discredit the infallibility of Aristotle and Ptolemy."

However, more important than the satellites of Jupiter was Galileo's revelation, two years later, that he had discovered

10
Ibid., p. 109.

11
"the presence on the sun of such blemishes as dark spots."

However, "the 'mutability' involved in their changes and form and position, and their formation and subsequent disappearance, were all distasteful to the supporters of the old views, according to which celestial bodies were perfect and unchangeable." And hadn't Aristotle stated that there could be no new changes in the heavens?

Now that the old world order was questioned, if not irrevocably impaired, it remained to find for these new ideas and their unsettling implications various vehicles for expression, certain means whereby the thinker and the writer might more cogently relate these novel discoveries to the world of man and do so in terms that man could comprehend. At least four "tropes" prevailed to serve as these means of communication, and although they were not particularly new to the times, they provided a method of explaining the significance of the newly introduced ideas with terms with which man was already familiar. These methods included the concept of a chain of being, the intimate correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the renewed emphasis on original sin, and chiefly the decay-of-nature motif and its ensuing controversy which would permeate literature up to the time of the Restoration.

---

12 Loc. cit.
By a writer's using references to the well-known image of a chain of being, especially incorporating the Platonic implications found in the Timaeus—that those creations farthest removed from the plenitude of the Absolute suffered most in inferiority of being—it is easy to see how the astronomical theories could be brought to serve as illustrations of this hierarchy of perfection. Astronomy, by revealing the infinite vastness of the created universe, removed man farther from the plenitudinous overflow than he had hitherto conceived himself to be before the advent of science. Before science expanded man's awareness of the vastness of the universe and thereby exploded the naive conception that the heavens were nearer than they are in actuality, man had often felt indeed just short of his angel state. Thus man's proximity to heaven became a factual delusion, and between himself and heaven appeared numberless infinites of space and heavenly bodies as yet invisible to the naked eye.

However, much more popular as a means of interpreting these heavenly signs, or, in the case of the less optimistic view, the heavenly omens, was the extended metaphor of the microcosm-macrocosm, in which man could find immediate identification between himself and the universe in toto or between himself and the planet he inhabited.

In a time when intrusive knowledge threatened to disrupt the belief in a world order, it is not unusual to
see the emotional need to find relatedness wherever one could find it. And this man did with vigorous emphasis on similarities between himself and his physical environment. For Paracelsus in particular there was a deep-seated "connection between man and the universe" which remains hidden in the "basic foundation of being." Paracelsus finds three basic areas in which man can relate to the natural universe—in "our sensuous-physical nature, our organism which appears to us as a natural being among other natural beings and is like nature with all other natural beings; our concealed . . . nature, which is a link in the chain of the whole universe, and therefore is not shut up within the organism or limited to it, but . . . received the workings of energy upon and from the entire universe; and our highest nature, our spirit . . . ." From the time of Thales (640-546 B.C.) most men believed that the world was thus animate, and that like man it lived and was susceptible to decay and even of death.


14 Ibid., pp. 203-204.

15 Nicolson, p. xvii.
Therefore, if man is but a miniature embodiment of the constituents of the universe—a little world "made cunningly"—and through his own empiricism admits his own mortality, then, according to the still popular syllogistic dialectic, his universe is also capable of decay. And if it can decay, it is capable of death. Tenaciously continuing his cause and effect rationale, he seeks a reason for the mutable aspects of both the world at large and the world in miniature. Here, again, the prominent attitudes of the Reformation converge to confirm what the new astronomy asserts. The current importance ascribed to the literal accuracy of the Bible served to reinforce man's own direct observations and the observations broadened by the telescope. It was the Fall—first of the errant angels and then of man—then, that served as the principal explanation of man's decay. Man, with his pride and complacency, had continued the breaking of the symmetry of the heavenly pattern which had been altered by the revolt of Satan. It then followed that just as man, the microcosm, "underwent a resultant corruption, so did the world . . . ." Evil entered through the sins of our first

parents and man, according to the rapidly increasing acceptance of Calvinist teachings, was innately depraved. Aside from natural depravity, he was also devoid of free will. Hence, the world around him merely complemented his degeneracy.

Thus, with this broken harmony, signalized in the betrayal of man's first covenant with his maker, came the broken harmony of the once perfect spheres of a changeless universe. And by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the idea of the decay of the world had grown to depressing proportions. At the threshold of this century, the various mainstreams carrying evidence of mutability merge to give emphasis to an idea which of itself had existed in the minds of men throughout recorded time. Traceable in the course of man's intellectual history is the repeated fearful suspicion, often allied to a "philosophical conviction," that both his immediate and his cosmic environments are gradually deteriorating. Plants, animals, social traditions, religious conventions all appear to decline, and "this sensible decay of the universe . . . is confirmed by the unresolved conflicts within man's mind. He has before him the tragic disparity between the ailing world he lives in and an ideal world" for which he emotionally yearns. Furthermore, with the

---

17 Victor Harris, All Coherence Gone (Chicago, 1949), p. 1.
Renaissance anonymous medieval man realized himself as an individual. And from this new point of view the cosmic problems took on new perspectives.

With these multiple, disheartening ideas, now united with what was felt to be scientific proof, we find that one of the prevailing attitudes of the ten years before and after 1600 was one of melancholy, together with a pessimism which often declined into fatalism. We need only study the drama of the time to determine the prevalence of allusions to imminent chaos, the world's infirmities, and a rottenness in the microcosm which relates to that found in the heavens--The Malcontent, Antony and Cleopatra, Troilus and Cressida, and particularly King Lear and Hamlet. Spiritual confusion more often than not was the underlying thesis in a treatise. For a lengthy record of the writers obsessed with such themes of chaos and mutability, from Chapman to Spenser to the controversialists Goodman and Hakewill, one needs to consult the early chapters of Victor Harris's All Coherence Gone. What the new science had invalidated with respect to theological principles it did precious little to replace. Aristotle had become intellectually suspect and Bacon was but initiating his critique of the idols which kept man from exerting his right reason and by so doing to steady himself. Until the problem of this scientific "iconoclasm" was resolved, the theological muddle would continue.
With the intuitive knowledge of the pagan philosophers now in doubt—the familiar stabilizing dogmas of medievalism—scepticism and a subsequent reassertion of common sense, combined with a study of the inner person, became the means to lift late Renaissance man from his melancholic confusion. But in this troubled interim, which embraces the time of the composition of the Songs and Sonets, man sought this spiritual readjustment with whatever means he had. Montaigne, on the Continent, chose to express his spiritual alienation through his highly personal essays; Donne chose more fictional demonstration in poetry—the steady progression from the thematically inconsistent and often flippant elegies, epigrams, and lyrics to the solidity and consistency of his religious poems and his sermons. A pattern reasserts itself, but in the meantime there must be the preliminary sketches.

With the breakdown of established order and without the immediate reassertion of a satisfactory raison d'etre, it is not unnatural that such witnesses of an unstable existential framework should see "nothing about them but the corruptions of a sick time," and that "the meditations on the brevity of life" should be so prominent.

"The breakup of the feudal hierarchy and of the medieval Christian community are institutional aspects of the dis­solution. Further, the movement toward the heightened individualism carried with it an inclination for self-anal­ysis and introspection, ironically productive of anxiety and the feeling of personal isolation."

The years which cover the composition of the Songs and Sonets are permeated with certain intellectual cur­rents more prone to produce depression than elation. "To feel oneself born into an 'age too late' was the great emotional aftermath of the Renaissance." They are tran­sitional years, too, for within the succeeding fifty years this pessimism and preoccupation with the sober aspects of life will be replaced by the careless immorality and op­timism of the Restoration. Thus Donne is a transitional figure, not merely because of the age in which he lived, but because of his education and his biological and social heredity. Perhaps no other one person is so representa­tive of his time, not only in personal actions but also in


possessing the ability to articulate what it is that he has inherited. It was Jonne "who gave utterance to the discontents and libertine consolations of the intellectuals who had outgrown the old verities and the old ideals."

Not only was he born a Roman Catholic in a rabidly Protestant England, but because he was born into a tenaciously Papist family, Jonne early studied under Jesuit supervision. He not only learned the works of the early Church Fathers, Augustine and Aquinas, but he was also versed in Jesuit casuistry—the argumentative practice he employs as the structure of both his prose works and many of his poems, the flippant as well as the serious. Also from the Jesuits he developed an appreciation of broad interests. Consequently, from the Catholic element in his family he gleaned knowledge of the medieval concepts, particularly an awareness of the *memento mori* precepts, perhaps the medieval scepticism concerning female utility, and an Augustinian concern with personal guilt and depravity. He was an exceptional scholar—once alluded to as the Pico della Mirandola of his age. His multi-lingual facility gave him access to the classics as well as to the reading of the medieval mystics, where he would encounter

21 Bush, p. 129.
Plotinus and other mystic writers whose ideas would be used in his study of the phenomenon of ecstasis. His library holdings reveal a definite interest in Spanish literature—particularly the lives and works of the Spanish mystics. Because he was also a Hebrew scholar he could study the Old Testament in three languages. His wide reading and his having a medical doctor for a stepfather also acquainted him with the science of his time.

In his works written before 1612, he reveals a knowledge of Kepler's *De stella nova in pede serpentaris*; he makes references to this work in the *Biathanatos*. In *Ignatius' Conclave* he reveals a knowledge of Copernicus and Brahe as well as an awareness of the most recent publications of Galileo and Kepler. With his broad reading background, together with an amazing vitality and continuous intellectual curiosity, a retentive memory, and his critical self-analysis, he demonstrates characteristics of that nebulous character called Renaissance man.

Again, with his ever-increasing morbidity and preoccupation with death, which would become an active principle in his later works, but of which we can detect the

22

symptoms in his early love lyrics, and later in his prose, Donne reveals that he is still the medievalist. He embodies the old and the new, and often the old forces are at variance with the new and produce a mood of disillusionment, scepticism, pessimism, false heartiness, and more than occasionally a bitterness which is anything but humorous. His poetry, frequently dealing with the tension between the body and the soul, is as much modern as it is medieval.

While writing the Songs and Sonets and aside from being a person involved in an intellectual and emotional struggle with the colliding thoughts of his time (and this is a popular critical portrait of Donne), he was also experiencing a conflict more intensely personal than that of being solely a figure struggling within a philosophically chaotic era. He was in the throes of conversion from the Catholic faith of his family to the Anglican faith of his country. And aside from this religious quandary, he was simultaneously faced with the frustration of not being granted the economic preferment he so desperately desired. Caught between the pragmatic ideals of the bourgeois and the religious scepticism of his foundering faith, his search for spiritual direction of necessity involved him in an intense study of the theological works of antiquity. The adoption of Protestantism involved him in the sober admissions of the Reformation. Before embracing a new faith,
he needed to evaluate seriously the existing one as well as any theologies heterodox to Catholicism. He could not remain oblivious to the rigid tenets of Calvin and Knox. Thus he was faced by the double frustration of temporal disillusionment in the area of court recognition and economic stability and the bleak prospect of a rapidly waning religious equilibrium.

From multiple sources he would learn of the ideas of mutability and decay in both the terrestrial and celestial realms. We can see explicit evidence of such effects in his sermons, which keenly emphasize the ephemera of this world, particularly of the body, and show what has been called a neurotic preoccupation with necromantic description. But such preoccupations do not appear without certain symptoms which will designate the nature of the syndrome. In his Devotions and earlier prose pieces, and in many of his holy sonnets we see explicit references to mutability and decay, usually from the introspective position of the speaker using himself as the agonizing microcosm. The "Anatomy of the World" and "The Progress of the Soul," Donne's first and second anniversary poems to commemorate the passing of young Elizabeth Drury, also show a definite awareness on the part of the poet that the age is not one of pure jubilation. To find earlier expressions of this psychological bent which will afflict the Dean until death, we then turn to the Songs and Sonets.
For in their deceptive humor, their cleverness and their sobriety, we can detect these symptoms of melancholia which will become most manifest after the poet's ordination.

The central thesis of the Songs and Sonnets is contained, to a great extent, in the exploration of the constancy— or the lack of it—of women and men in love. The poems in the collection are all connected in some way with the anatomy of love, and the approaches to it reveal a fluctuation between a constant and spiritually edifying state and love as a destructive, chaotic, and disillusioning force. It can be Dionysian (purely sensual and thus transitory) or it can be Apollonian (chaste while yet sensual, ennobling, and everlasting). The ancient divisions into the transitory and into the eternal find metaphorical analysis in the poetry of the pieces, pieces whose total pattern at first appears inconsistent but which in reality demonstrates that there is a constancy within inconstancy.

Donne illustrates that the tension between body and soul, or mind and senses, need not become a logical fallacy. There need not be an either-or tug-of-war as in the debat literature of the Middle Ages. The body can complement the soul and in so doing becomes essential to it.

The want of constancy, the having of it, the sheer preoccupation with the multiple approaches to it, the analysis of constancy (constancy in love) comprise the
theses of these poems. Since love has long been recognized as a vital and animating force in the continuation of human existence, what better framework wherein to cope with the anxieties of an age. Thus Donne offers a unique handling of the perplexing and often disillusioning effect of the concept of mutability. In so expressing himself within the confines of his intellectual and spiritual milieu, he will then make use of certain poetical and philosophical conventions wherein to frame his solutions. The concept of Platonic love, the medieval religious conception of the role of women, Petrarchan courtly conventions, and the vehicles of science-oriented conceits serve to mold the tenor of his metaphor. An analysis of these poems in the light of the intellectual atmosphere of the late Renaissance is now in order so that we can see how Donne reveals himself in the proper perspective of his times and not, as he is so often depicted--the witty innovator, the clever rake, the neurotic libertine.
CHAPTER II

The Negative Poems

Women! This coin which men find counterfeit!
Why, why, Lord Zeus, did you put them in the world,
in the light of the sun? If you were so determined
to breed the race of men, the source of it
should not have been women.

... But not, to bring this plague into our homes...

Although these statements were made in the fifth cen­
tury B.C., the implications of Euripides' Hippolytus are
even more applicable to much of the love poetry of John Donne
than to the inordinate passion of Phaedra for her stepson,
even if the citation itself is revealing of only one view
that Donne projects of women— that they are inconstant,
fickle, and that this instability is due to the character of
the beloved herself. Since at least the time of Protagoras,
the inferiority of woman to man, not only in her physical
composition but in her spiritual and intellectual components
as well, had been elaborated upon from proscenium to pulpit,
both in verse and in prose. She has been called soulless;
she has been deemed the plague of mankind. Plato, when
speaking of the return of the Intelligence (soul) to its
prior state, remarks that if the soul did all that it was
appointed to do on earth, it would certainly return to its

---

1 Euripides, "Hippolytus," trans. David Grene,
The Complete Greek Tragedies (Chicago, 1960), III, 159.
reward, but if it did not, "if he lived ill, he would pass into the nature of a woman, and if he did not then alter his evil ways, into the likeness of some animal . . . ."

Plato generously places woman above the brute animal, but nevertheless she becomes merely a tool for the soul's salvation, a functionary for spiritual expiation.

By incorporating the pagan implications concerning the merit of women and placing liberal interpretation upon Holy Scripture, Christianity in the Middle Ages placed due emphasis on women's being the source of all evil. Homily upon homily reminds man to beware the serpent Eve who still exists to betray the innocent and unwary male. Favorite stories from antiquity deal with the various temptresses, of which Eve has become the archetype--Medea, the Sirens, Circe. A woman thus becomes indistinguishable from her ancestor Eve who was considered the source of all corruption. Women are scorned for their fickleness and deceit, and singular tales of the constant wife continuously appear as exempla to illustrate the fact that woman needs to curb her naturally licentious and deceptive nature. Patient Griselda and forbearing Constance are the exceptions to the portrait of medieval woman as she appeared even before the cult of the

---

Virgin would degenerate into the creed of courtly love. And into the Renaissance the castigation of women continued. Hugh Latimer had denounced "the sex as designed by Providence to be underlings, and Knox's invectives were still remembered." It is not extraordinary, then, that Donne with his intense and careful study of theological works would be quite aware of the unquestioned inferiority and dubious virtue of women. And if we can believe his biographers as well as his own autobiographical innuendos, he had also acquired much of this knowledge first-hand. Therefore, subject to deductive reasoning, it followed that the love the woman could feel would then remain inferior to the love of the man to which she aspired.

Even in the still burgeoning works influenced by the courtly love conventions, under impetus from Petrarch and his imitative sonneteers, we must remember that the codifier of the rules for courtly behavior, Andreas Capellanus, made more than a few deprecating remarks about the nature of women. In his thematically ambiguous third book

---


of *The Art of Courtly Love* he announces that "a woman does not love a man with her whole heart, because there is not one of them who keeps faith with her husband or lover; when another man comes along, you will find that her faithfulness wavers." Indeed, his whole third book is a condemnation of women, particularly emphasizing their inherent inability to remain constant in love.

But, we have seen that the years during which the *Songs and Sonets* were composed were a period of transition and because various, often antithetical views are prevalent in such times of intellectual upheaval, we can look for more than one attitude toward women, especially toward woman in love. Simultaneously with the oracular utterances of Plato concerning the inferiority of women, in his *Symposium* and in the early part of the *Timaeus*, he dwells on the nature of love and how it can enoble one. According to Plato, there is a hierarchy of love; in order for a lover to realize his goal—which in Platonic lore constitutes the possession of the good—he gradually needs to achieve the apex on this scale of love. This achievement of ideal love begins on the sensual level; it culminates with the high-minded. Thus love, of necessity, evolves from the appre-

---

ciation of the senses. Man's purer part, his soul, instinctively desires this realization of the Good. According to Diotima, the wise woman of Mantinea, "there is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation--procreation which must be in beauty and not in deformity; and this procreation is the union of man and woman, and is a divine thing; for conception and generation are an immortal principle in the mortal creature." Thus the immediate sensual gratification becomes something eternal and ennobling, because "to the mortal creature, generation is a sort of eternity and immortality, . . . love is of the everlasting possession of the good, all men will necessarily desire immortality together with the good: Wherefore love is of immortality."

This praiseworthy aspect of Platonic love, as well as Plato's other contributions to the development of philosophy and literature, passed into Christianity. Just as the erotic love poetry of the pagan poets was transcribed into hymns to the blessed Virgin, so did the worship of the Virgin, in connection with the sexual seclusion afforded

---


7 Ibid., p. 153.
by the medieval walled citadels, provide for another modification of the Christian Platonic attitudes toward women—the conventions of courtly love. In the latter part of the twelfth century Andreas wrote his small book which explained the codes whereby one could become an accomplished courtly lover. With Andreas, whose subsequent literary influence was to be great, we find an elaboration of the ennobling aspects of love, a central point to be expanded and exemplified by Petrarch and the hordes of sonneteers who would not only imitate his poetic devices but who would also take perverse pleasure in the pains of unrequited love. The true courtly lover, who maintained all the ethics of his frequently adulterous liaison, could indeed exclaim, "O what a wonderful thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of character! There is another thing about love that we should not praise in a few words: it adorns a man . . . with the virtues of chastity, because he who shines with the light of one love can hardly think of embracing another woman . . . ." When Donne is accused of mocking this convention in "The Indifferent"

8 Andreas, p. 31.
he particularly mocks the logic behind the use of the word "chastity," and it is not surprising that critics have found a certain similarity between the most "witty" poems of Donne and the dramatic monologues of Browning. The dialogue of "The Indifferent" is more revealing of the speaker's character than of the subject matter the character discusses.

But there is one element of courtly love that Donne did not mock, an attitude very much a part of the Provençal troubadour poetry, which is simply that with this conception of love came an accompanying emphasis on order. The outstanding virtue of the true lover, writes Maurice Valency in his study of medieval love poetry, is "the quality called mezura, measure, that inner restraint which governs the appetites and keeps them subject to the intellect." One typical characteristic of Donne's love poetry, whether in praise of honest love, or in scorn of inconstant love, is that the poet remains intellectually in possession of himself.

The analysis by Andreas and its application to romantic love formed the heart of the Petrarchan sonnets to Laura.

Petrarch emphasized the constancy of courtly love, the continual homage to one woman irrespective of its physical rewards. The sweet despair of non-consummation was evidently enough to satisfy the Petrarchan suitor. And in this fashion the Petrarchan swain hopelessly wooed his Idea, his Delia, his Phillis, and his Stella, as aesthetically frustrated as the lovers on Keats' Grecian urn. It is not so striking then that Donne should be so aware of this convention since he was writing his own love poetry during the years of the Elizabethan sonnet vogue. Nor is he alone in his pert censure. We need only look at Shakespeare's "Sonnet CXXX" or the seventeenth century Cartwright's "Platonic Love" to have an indication that Donne's was not and would not remain the only dissatisfied voice.

The Platonic attitudes toward love entered Renaissance England through yet another source than Petrarchanism. Italy also produced the Florentine Academy of the Neo-Platonists. And there, under the leadership of Ficino and Mirandola, the tenets of Platonism were expanded. One of the basic doctrines of Neo-Platonism was "the reality of an earthly beauty apprehensible to the senses as compared to a heavenly beauty apprehensible to the soul." The

---

means whereby a man could achieve this supreme bliss was through the agency of a woman. Plotinus had initiated the "progressive ascent of the mind to the One with the sight of a beautiful lady; the Italian Neoplatonists arranged this ascent to proceed by six steps from the perception of feminine beauty to the enjoyment . . . of the Universal beauty." But the conversion of the senses into something spiritual did not originate in Plato exactly as the Neoplatonists would have it; the senses can lead to intellectual appreciation, but a woman is not necessarily the means to effect this end. According to what we read in the Phaedo we see that the purity of the soul is destroyed through the sense perceptions; thus "Platonic love" as we have come to know it is in actuality closer to the Egyptian than to the Greek--more Plotinian than Platonic. This idea of a ladder of love, with its intricacies, is derived mainly from the Italian Neo-Platonists, and was made "visible through the poetry of the seventeenth century, to assert the primacy of the soul in life--an attempt which was made by the metaphysical poets especially in their treatment of love." This intimate relation between the body


and the soul forms the subject matter for Donne's more serious poems.

If the near mystical raptures of the Neo-Platonists captured the imagination of their readers, particularly their interpretation of the Plotinian conception of *ecstasy*, the extreme popularity of Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* acted as a comprehensible medium for their dissemination. And during this time of flourishing translations, Thomas Hoby gave to England his translation of this book. Although the book was to deal mainly with the education of a prospective courtier, and in that sense can be termed a courtesy book, the fourth division of it, which contains the famous speech by Pietro Bembo, stresses the Platonic "latter of love," illustrating the various stages wherein a lover can move from sensual appreciation of woman to a contemplation of ideal beauty. Thus, in Renaissance England certain attitudes toward women, love, constancy in love, and the role of the senses became manifest. Donne, aside from being the avid reader he was, would have absorbed Platonism from reading Augustine alone, but could not have failed to absorb the influx of creative potential from the Continent. Because he was well-traveled, multi-lingual, and intellectually curious, it is easy to see how these many ideas first became known to him and then operative in his love lyrics.

In Chapter I, then, we see how the concept of mutability promoted a prevalent mood which spanned the time
of the composition of the Songs and Sonets. How then does love, the anatomy of it, and the emphasis on women and love relate to this depressing picture of alteration and decay? At first glance, the natures of each seem irreconcilable, but then the reconciliation of opposites is at the heart of the metaphysical method of expression. As mutability connotes change and impermanence, mainly on this globe, and it man the microcosm is either a reflection or an originator of this change, then the properties of man might also be subject to variations. We are psychologically aware that with the exceptions of fear and abdominal hunger, the next passion designed for survival of the species is love. Mutability as it affects this emotion would then deal most probably with the perfection of it in some way, and the perfect state of love would be one of constancy; the mutable elements would pertain to the imperfect or inconstant nature of love. And here are the two major themes permeating these love poems.

Where constancy is either absent or in serious jeopardy, the prevailing tone of the poems is one of cynicism, pessimism, and at times, as in "The Apparition," one of abject bitterness; whereas in the poems complimenting the more durable elements of love the tone is one of joy and jubilation. With respect to the philosophic attitude toward mutability in general there ran the gradually emerging idea that through change there appeared a constancy; that is, man could simply observe the seasons and see that although
there was change the change occurred in a cyclic pattern so that there was a constancy prevailing. In fact, this idea was a definite reply to the seventeenth century controversy concerning the reality of the decay of the world and was a solution reached in many of the poems of Donne, singularly implied in "The Ecstasy," and explicitly stated in "Love's Growth."

By the completion of the analyses of these love poems two theses should emerge: that the tone of the "less serious" pieces, rather than primarily reflecting Donne's cleverness and literary iconoclasm, is actually a product of the prevailing awareness of mutability, even as it extended to the act of love itself, and that in these poems there emerges a deepening awareness of the potential of love as a unifying force—a constant, wherein the mutable aspects of love are relegated to the senses and the immortal and eternal soul receives due emphasis, but without disparaging the importance of the body. Donne concludes his study of love on the affirmative note that both the body and the soul are components of the whole person—he has become neither the sensual renaissant pagan nor the ascetic medievalist. As a product of his age of transition, his Janus-like world of both the medieval and the modern, Donne combines the literary and philosophical elements of both; in so doing he remains a man of his times.

For ease and clarity of discussion, the poems studied will be divided into two groups—those suggesting or em-
bodying a negative attitude toward love and those stressing a positive view. In this manner we can not only understand Donne's double vision of love but also are able to realize his reconciliation of the emotional problems spawned by a conscious awareness of mutability. We will begin with the poems particularly expressive of the negative approach.

As if dispensing a charm, in "Go and Catch a Falling Star" Donne makes use of folklore when he enumerates the seven impossible achievements to be accomplished by the listener, the eighth to be the most absurd of all—the location of a faithful woman. With a lyric rhythm that lacks his characteristic harsh diction and difficult syntax, Donne jokingly comments on the inconstancy of women. He tells his listener that if this audience desires to witness strange or unusual appearances he should then travel until he is quite old and when he returns to recount the marvels he has beheld. Donne remains confident that no marvels that the listener has encountered will include a faithful woman. If, the poet cynically remarks, one is found, he would indeed make a like journey to encounter such a phenomenon among women. But he concludes with a resigned sigh that even though she might have been faithful at the moment of her discovery, she will certainly not be so by the time he arrives. Usually placed first among the Songs and Sonnets, this poem contains one of Donne's central themes, that women are inconstant, but it does not yet illustrate the depths of
bitterness to which the poet can descend. Here he uses none of the repellent conceits to describe metaphorically his attitude toward infidelity. In "To and Catch a Falling Star" there is yet no dwelling on the unwholesomeness of women's inconstancy.

In "The Message," another brief poem commenting on the unfaithfulness of women in love, the tone shifts from a mild rebuke and becomes more serious. The address is to the deceitful woman herself; the poet demands that she return his eyes and his heart to him. The complexity of metaphor, the argumentative structure, and the abrupt, almost aphoristic ending are more characteristic of Jonne's style than the somewhat Cavalier manner in "To and Catch a Falling Star."

In the first stanza the poet requests his mistress to return to him his eyes—which he feels have dwelt on her too long. However, immediately succeeding this demand, Jonne pauses in order to reflect upon all the other visions the eyes have beheld other than the woman. Because they have additionally witnessed false passions and superficial displays of courteous interest (both fabrications of the mistress) he feels now that his eyes have been rendered unfit for ever being able to differentiate the genuine from the artificial. His eyes have been corrupted and so exist as unreliable instruments for determining true love. Therefore, if they can no longer serve him, he pragmatically decides to leave them with his mistress, especially since
they are identified more with her character than with his own. The woman has ruined the poet's ability to appreciate genuineness in the love relationship; because she has corrupted a vital part of him (his eyes) he is unable to function as a whole person. In Jonne's time the eyes were still considered to be windows of the soul; hence, the perversion of the physical organ had repercussion on the spiritual being. In Jonne's poetry the eye-image constantly recurs as a highly sensate means of communication between the body and the soul; consequently, for a fulfilling relationship, the eyes need to be as pure as the essence (soul) they reflect.

In the second stanza, the structure is very much the same as in the first; the initial two lines again request the return of a possession, now the heart, but the first word of the third line serves once more to reverse the plea. He becomes aware that his heart, as did his eyes, has lost its innocence and has been corrupted. It has been taught to disparage confessions of love and to break the sacred love vows. Therefore, under these altered conditions, she may as well keep the heart, for the poet has no use for this debased organ. However, in the third and final stanza, he again changes his mind and returns to his original request to have his possessions returned to him, mainly so that he may have the physical properties with which to appreciate her unhappiness when the tables are
turned and she has been betrayed; with such depraved possessions he can appreciate misfortune, because, he implies, it takes a depraved heart and eyes to garner such joy from the unhappiness of another. The implication is that had his eyes and heart remained honest and innocent he would be unable to take such delight in the woe of another. By this request, the eyes and the heart become literally as well as metaphorically essential because he wants to actually use the eyes to witness her unhappiness and his heart to feel the accompanying emotions such a reversal would produce. The poet reveals that his eyes and his heart have indeed been so tainted that he can now enjoy both the sorrow of a woman betrayed by love and especially relish the melancholy of the woman who had been his own mistress. The situations have been reversed and by the conclusion of the poem the poet has taken over the woman's role as the impassive and callous beloved and the mistress has become the unhappy lover. The poet is now able to "laugh and joy" when she is in anguish for someone who has proved to be as false as she.

Certain additional attitudes contained in "The Message" will become pronounced in the poems dealing with the negative aspects of love—the gle of the poet upon either the witnessing of poetic retribution upon his mistress or the expectation that his mistress will in some way suffer either emotionally or physically. In the poems of this type there will be none of the "tear sighs" of the Petrarchan
lover. The betrayed lover will certainly experience emotions prompted by his mistress' inconstancy, but they will be mainly emotional reactions of bitterness, extreme condemnation, or at best a casual cynicism. It has been suggested that the return of the heart and eyes, accompanied by his wry excuse for doing so, is merely a gesture faking this casualness, an attempt to distinguish and disguise a deep pain and simultaneously to avoid an open display of wounded pride. The final maneuver on his part, then, is one of saving his reputation, and the subject matter is therefore the preservation of male vanity. However, at no point does the lover become a figure commanding pity and there is little of the romantic about him; he is the sophisticate whether deliberately casual and indifferent or whether feigning indifference. In any event he is in command of the situation and there is no suggestion that the fickle mistress cannot be replaced.

The tone of "The Bait" is quite different; it is a half-joking acceptance of the fate of being captured by love. He is caught by his mistress in much the same way that a fish is delighted by a bait which it is incapable of refusing. Although Donne says that the fish which refuses the bait is wiser than he, he does not bitterly or ruefully emphasize this deficiency on his part. Throughout the poem he speaks of his mistress with hyperbolic praise reminiscent of Petrarch, particularly when he admits that her eyes are brighter than the rays of the sun.
Again, the lightness of the verse, also apparent in its rhythmic structure, is seen immediately in the first stanza when he invites his mistress to live with him and be his love, but here he deviates from the Marlovian progenitor by substituting the Marlovian enjoyment of the sports of love with the intimation of sharing the sport of angling instead. And why not? If she proved irresistible bait for catching a man, how much better she should fare in enticing the fish which possess none of man's rational faculties as cautions against foolish ensnarement. There is only mock regret at having been "hooked."

Though "The Bait" shows yet another side of an attitude toward love, the enjoyment and excitement existing simultaneously with an intimation of regret, in "Community" a more definite attitude toward women is revealed—that they may indeed be the bait that hides the barb. However, in this instance the attitude is more coarse than courtly. The poem purports to be a defense of man's sexual exploitation of women.

Donne begins the poem with a philosophical argument concerned with those things which are absolutes and those which are not. He says that good is an absolute and because of the nature of goodness we love it. But evil is also an absolute, and because of its intrinsic nature we shun it. When decisions which involve absolutes are to be made, they can be easily expedited. However, Donne argues,
there are some matters which are neither all good nor all evil; to judge them in either capacity is to make a relative decision. And the limits of this relativity are set by man's "tancy"—a completely subjective perspective which severely jeopardizes the actual validity of this view.

Jonne applies this relativistic approach to the appraisal of women as objects to satisfy man's lust.

In the second stanza he asserts that if "wise Nature," calling her wise to imply that there is a purpose for the actions of this creative force, had made women either all good or all evil, men would be able to know easily which to spurn and which to accept. However, Donne continues, since she did not so create women, if a man wants to distinguish between a virtuous woman and a vile one he will have to do the selecting on a trial-and-error basis. In effect, he cannot discover the right woman unless he makes use of all of them. This sampling of his is metaphorically described in terms of food, whereby the satisfaction of the sexual appetite carries no more ethical responsibility than the satisfaction of an abdominal craving. Women belong to men in the way that fruit does; he enjoys what he wishes until he is satisfied and then discards the rest. By this callous approach to the merit of women—by comparing them to inanimate fruit—the poet illustrates a coldly intellectual attitude on the part of the speaker to love which is the cohesive force. By his implications in these lines,
Jonne anticipates the dictates of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, albeit coached in arboreal argot, that women are men's playthings; he thereby denies their humanity not only as individuals but as essential members of the species. Not only does the argument admit a defense of lust, but ironically makes Nature the excuse for it; in his dialectical framework he has illustrated that Nature cut the pattern and he is merely playing his masculine role. Hence, by this exploitation he is, in his sophistical argument, merely behaving in a natural fashion. The implication remains, then, that any actions contrary to these would be unnatural.

Again making use of his legal and scholastic manipulation of logic, in "Woman's Constancy" he also illustrates his knowledge of the requisites of a papal annulment. But here, as in "The Canonization," "The Relic," and particularly in "The Ecstasy," he makes use of these Catholic terms in that he applies them ironically to the situations in the poems. Among the grounds for a papal annulment from the sacrament of matrimony are that either party be coerced into the union or that either be not of sound mind at the moment of granting consent to the union. In "Woman's Constancy" the poet mocks the logic of his mistress with respect to dissolving their affair, declaring that he can easily invalidate her argument, but declines to do so because he might want to make use of the same logic at some later date.
We know that at the outset of the poem, the poet is suspicious of the woman's fidelity because he projects just what causes she will give to excuse what he feels to be her imminent inconstancy. He cynically remarks that since she has loved him one whole day, emphasizing the brevity of the union, which in itself reflects the poet's suspicions concerning the ability to maintain faithful love, he wonders what she will say on the morrow when she stops loving him.

He then projects her excuses. Contained in them are the reasons one gives for requesting the cancelation of the binding vows of lawful wedlock. Will she claim that she lacked self-composure at the moment of consent—that she was not mentally in command of herself, which, ironically, she would not have been if their union was limited to the physical. Or will she claim that her oaths were made in "reverential" fear, perhaps of the god of love. In this, as in many another poem, Jonne juxtaposes the Christian with the pagan, the spiritual reverence one holds for the ubiquitous monodeity with the sensual attraction of the God of Love—the embodiment of Eros-Aphrodite. He then supposes that she will use the excuse that since death ends true marriages, those with church or civil sanction (thereby releasing the living mate to find another partner), so sleep, which is an imitation of death, just as their union is an imitation of marriage, should dissolve their
affair. Logically the mistress is applying conditions of separation where they do not belong; she is merely dabbling with semantics. She is not married; therefore, the excuses for dissolving the "marriage" do not hold. She is merely playing the sophist and Donne, who not only recognizes sophistry but can master it—particularly since he is projecting the entire vignette—is quite cognizant of her duplicity.

Making use of his adeptness with the paradox, he reminds her that by being false, which is evidently her true nature, she is then being true; but he utters the warning that since he is partner to the union, he too has recourse to the same dialectic and if he chooses he may also use it. In "Community" Donne illustrated, often grotesquely, man's superiority to women. He does so here with special emphasis on man's ability to intellectualize aspects of the female psyche, to penetrate the feminine subterfuge, and to be only a dupe willingly for the sheer expectation of certain triumph.

Another poem in which Donne subtly entices his audience to recognize an appeal to common sense is "Confined Love," in which he defines not only the origins of a demand for sexual monogamy but also the nonsense of such a custom. He places the blame for these conditions on some remote male ancestor who, out of certain vague feelings of sexual inferiority, decided to vent his mysterious hostilities on
women, and the most sadistic punishment he could contrive was to deny a woman more than one lover. Here we find the implication that women are chiefly creatures of base appetites. According to this mythology purported by the unidentified dissenter, the laws requiring monogamy arose and man has been suffering from them since, mainly because they deny the polygamous nature of man any sexual license. In order to refute this at length, the poet appeals to an empirical study of the other creatures about him; tonal implications show that these creatures are inferior to man in the scale of being and yet are given freedoms that man is denied. The poet wishes to know the cause for this apparent injustice.

His final appeal to reason ironically incorporates a direct address to the senses, that sexual good cannot realize its potential unless it is made use of; unless tried it remains similar to what Milton would term a "blank virtue." However, Donne increases his emphasis on sensual enjoyment by stating that sexual pleasure is not complete sexual satisfaction unless a man indulges in a libidinous greed whereby he can achieve satiety; he must have the freedom to gorge himself with orgiastic sensuality. A monogamous union then will not suffice, and women ought to be the unrestricted dominion of men and not rationed as mere allotments.

As in "Community" the implied attitude toward women here is a view of them as possessions, and the sexual
license argued for denies any order or constancy of the perfecting elements of love. Ironically, he bases his case on the premise that since man acknowledges himself to be superior to the brute, he ought to have at least the same freedom. But the freedom he argues for is one that is most characteristic of the brute. Love here is rampant and lustful; it reflects a depraved view of both love and women. The attitude expressed in this poem is far removed from those of any poetry bordering on either the Platonic, the Marian, or even the courtly love approach. The bestial rather than the heavenly characteristics of men are stressed.

Less bestial, perhaps, than the prevalent attitudes in "Confined Love" is the pessimism of the poet thinking rather than the poet feeling in "Love's Exchange." The setting involves a prayer from a devotee to his god; however, the deity here is demonic rather than redemptive. The poet addresses the God of Love, Eros, reminding him that a soul has been given and according to arcane conventions and covenants, an exchange on the part of the deity ought to be forthcoming. But it obviously is not, and the poet speculates on just what is his due; at the conclusion of the monologue he not only realizes why he will remain unrewarded, but in what manner he can wreak retributive justice on his godly betrayer.

In the first stanza he poet addresses Love personified, and in the nature of his reproach suggests the
implication that Love cannot be trusted. He reminds Love that he gave him his soul and that any other "devil" would reciprocate with an exchange; but Love does not possess even a demon's honor. The poet has given all to love and entreats his due. In the second stanza he mainly emphasizes that he is not requesting any more than should be allotted to him. He reminds Love that others have given less than he and have been rewarded and that he is not being unreasonable in his request. Still we do not know until the third stanza just what boon the poet wishes.

In this third division, then, the poet becomes more specific and asks that he be given the weakness of love—the inability to discern the truth behind a romantic relationship, the ability of passion to delude the reason. He wants to remain blinded in both his senses and his intellect to the fact that his mistress does not care for him and is oblivious of his heartache. In this way he can salvage his pride by remaining ignorant. He does not want to know the truth; here is the irony since obviously he does know the truth and does not wish to accept it. So the only alternative, in order to maintain this relationship and to make it personally tolerable, is to find some way to remain oblivious to the actuality of the situation. Only Love offers him resolution because the passions are able to dominate the reason and at this moment the poet would prefer to be in a state of less intellectual acuteness.
However, until the opening lines of the fourth stanza, we do not know why the poet is being so ill-treated by his god. With the removal of suspense, and in his revelation, we see his pessimistic attitude toward love in more intensity than the first-stanza allusions implied. He admits that if Love does not reward him, this is just, because he would not trust any of Love's actions in the first place. He implies the inconstancy and fickleness and emotional treachery of the god. The binding force, which is love in Platonic philosophy, is not present. The mutable aspects, its inherent destructiveness and evil--by the very use of the word "devil" with respect to the deity--show the Satanic qualities of love. Also in this stanza we learn that the poet has been a rebel to love; he had resisted the militant approaches of love and just as a small town, when finally besieged by an overwhelming power, cannot ask any conditions of surrender, so he cannot either. His mind moves him to this conclusion; he does not turn into the irrational and desperate lover. He speculates on the situation, remains cynical and pessimistic, but he has no Petrarchan madness to spare him the insights of his intellect.

The lover here, as in most of Donne's poetry, is the sophisticated intellectual. As a barrister before the bar he takes both the roles of prosecutor and defense; he analyzes his merits and his defects and judges the penalty accordingly. He admits that under the circumstances of
his being an unwilling servant to love, he can not "article for grace."

From his own admission that he has no right to ask for mercy, he stresses the fact that by his very reluctance to become a follower in the court of love, he had forced the deity to action—to produce a woman who would ultimately tempt him into submission. Then ensues the description of the woman's far-reaching powers; the emphasis is on the vitalizing power of the woman, on her capacity to precipitate such hyperbolic praise and extreme actions as a change in religion, induce celibate men to abandon their cloisters, and reanimate the dead from their tombs. Much of this ability of love, the stress on its vitality, can be found in the [acchae], in which the god Dionysius illustrates to his unwilling laity that he can produce frightening as well as spectacular results when women are possessed by his essence; Donne's analysis of the drive of physical love, his own description of the "green fuse" which drives the flower, is here more akin to Euripidean psychology than it is to the usual analogue of Marlowe's Helen who possessed the face that launched an armada and fired the "topless towers of Ilium." Donne's cataloging of the god-inspired woman can be found in several of the choric passages in the [acchae]. Likewise, the insinuated description of the god of Love himself is quite like that of Dionysius in Euripides' play.
Jonne concludes in a fashion typical of his poems, all highly structured according to judicial argumentation. The terse, aphoristic ending not only reveals that the poet has retained command of his senses but that he is irreverent and spiteful in his retaliation to the god himself. For Jonne concludes by saying that Love is angry with him but does not kill him; hence, he can become no martyr to love as he is in other poems. His punishment, then, is to serve as an example to other rebel lovers. Accepting this as his penance-reward, he does not abandon himself to lamenting how his heart is broken. He cleverly, with subtle logic (speaking in medical terms), says that if those yet unborn devotees of love are supposed to learn about the effects of love from his body when he at last expires— he uses the image of an autopsy whose function is to provide knowledge of the patient's pathology or his anatomical make-up—they will not get much of an education by studying his marred corpse. Thus the purposes of Love will be frustrated. A destroyed carcass is a poor one to study. Once more there is the metaphysical juxtaposition; Love becomes the loser by having illustrated to him that he has been self-defeated. If the poet was to serve as an example of the rebel lover made unwilling subject to love, Love's allowing the mistress to mistreat him ruined the experiment, for he has become too "emotionally mutilated" for the students to gain much knowledge.
The rebel lover appears again in "Love's Deity," a poem similar to "Love's Exchange" and again reminiscent of classical mythology, particularly of the Pentheus tale as recounted by Euripides. Immediately, in the first stanza, there is the reference to a former time when love especially was perhaps stable and constant; there is the allusion that love existed in a better time when Donne says that he wishes that he could talk to some lover's ghost that loved before the God of Love was born, for surely then love was not fickle and the devoted lover was rewarded with the faithful affections of his mistress. But times have changed, and the new god, aided by custom, now rules. But this new god is a tyrant god. With this idea, we can see the classical influences as they appeared in Greek tragedy. In *Prometheus Bound, Antigone,* and in many of the extant Greek plays, but mainly in the *Bacchae,* we have the comments that a new god does not know how to curb his power and all too soon becomes a tyrant. In *Prometheus Bound* the Olympians have replaced the old order of the Titans and Zeus, although he does not actively appear in the play, is a tyrant. But with respect to this particular poem, Donne refers several times to the love god as a young man with the proverbial incapacity of youth to restrain his powers. He is often cruel. We need only read the *Bacchae* to see the young Dionysius, unbearded and deceptively beautiful, as he cruelly destroys Pentheus who denies Dionysius his position as a newly arrived cult god.
Pentheus, like the poet of "Love's Deity," was the rebel and the atheist, and he was destroyed. Here is where Donne digresses from mythology.

He tells us that the new god and his religion is one of near treachery, for in this religion the woman whom Donne loves does not return his passion. He appears resigned that this is the "destiny" granted by Eros. In the second stanza he analyzes this personally painful power of the god, commenting that he is certain that those who established Eros as a god had no intention of giving him as much power as he has and that the initial role of this god was to pair off mutual lovers. "Correspondency/ Only his subject was," and that love cannot be true love until there is some equality—the perfection of the matched union, the union ultimately achieved in "The Ecstasy."

After acknowledging the primary functions of the god of love, and already intimating that the god has not fulfilled these responsibilities, he then proceeds to elaborate upon the usurped powers of Eros, showing that his reign is tyrannic and suggesting that a revolution might be a solution to this inordinate servitude. He echoes Sophocles and Aeschylus in saying that every newly established god extends his powers farther than their limits, almost to the point of imitating the god of heaven himself, by attempting to take on the omnipotency of Jove. He then concludes stanza three by saying that if we should acknowledge this tyranny and "ungod" this infant ruler, harmony of the
affections would probably be reinstated. The poet would then either change in his affections by not loving the woman who does not love him, or the woman's passions would change so that she would love him in return. In any event loving or not loving would then be uniform.

One would then suppose that this resolution would content the poet and that the conclusion of the poem would logically deal with the methods whereby the god might be deposed. Not so with Donne. In the soberly flippant last stanza he calls himself a rebel and an atheist and by being such he has no basis for complaint; he has not believed the tenets of the religion of love in the first place. For, he admits that he has not felt the worst that love can do, and if he attempted to accomplish this revolution, and if he succeeded, in any event the outcome would be worse than the tyranny because he might cease loving altogether. And he would rather love in vain than not love at all. Or, what would be even worse—and with this he reverses the complaints of the early stanzas—his mistress might love him. He admits, upon this additional concentration, that he does not want her faithful love after all because, and this next comment emphasizes his cynical attitude toward the constancy of love, she has a lover already (the earlier Donne before the removal of the tyrant) and that by loving Donne (the Donne after the transformation) she would be committing a falsehood, which, to the poet, is worse than hatred for him.
And it would indeed be a falsehood if she should come to love him, mainly because she denied him earlier.

Thus, in any event, the woman remains an object of cynical distrust. And Love, accompanied by the descriptions of a cult of love, remains a new deity, one who usurps his powers and plays the tyrant. There is the brief surmise of the existence of a prior state of love, when it was mutually faithful and when man was at peace with his passions. But the new entered and with it came a deception productive of cynicism and pessimism. If Jonne was here aware of the speculative Hellenes he would then be reminded that during the replacement of the old by the new there was an interim of chaos. For the early irresponsible and vindictive Zeus of Prometheus bound developed into the thoughtful and protective god of Sophocles, just as the old order Furies of the Oresteia bow before the establishment of the Areopagus; but in that interim of exchange there occur often chaos, confusion, and disillusionment. Donne writes a witty, sophisticated poem, but inherent in its juxtapositions and paradoxes is a philosophical portrait of his age.

"A Jet Ring Sent" simply reiterates the condemnation of women as being false in love, and emphasizes a man's enduring constancy. The ring is meant to symbolize their relationship; it becomes the objective correlative of their love. In the brief scene which comprises the action of the poem, the lover has received a jet ring from his mistress;
such souvenirs of affection were often exchanged. The poet addresses the ring with a comparison of its characteristics with those of his love; he says that it is not half as constant as his heart and, although it is far more brittle than his own, it is not as brittle as the heart of his mistress. Therefore, since properties of each lover are reflected in the ring, the poet suggests that the ring represents their union. These properties are "nothing more endless," describing his love for her, and "nothing sooner broke," illustrating her love for him.

Still musing on the ring, which because of its circular configuration is also a symbol of unity and order, albeit ironic, he remarks that marriage bands (signifying here a true, spiritual union as well as the sacramental union) are not made out of jet, a material cheaply got and as cheaply wrought. He wonders why any material less precious than the minerals in a wedding band should represent their love. But the question is merely rhetorical, for the reality of the jet ring implies that their love is valueless—cheap—and that both the ring and the love are "nought but fashion," and therefore transitory, as passing as a fad, a mere infatuation, and can be tossed away when another vogue has rendered it no longer fashionable. But instead of discarding the ring, as he has implied that he ought to do, he places it on his finger for safe-keeping, for the woman who broke faith would surely break the ring should he return it to her in a retaliatory mood. To return
it, in any event, would indicate either anger or despair—both showing his mistress the depths of his disappointment. To keep the ring would be the suave technique and to keep it merely as a souvenir would reveal his amatory sophistication. Also the ring has the signature of truth on it and the lover, preferring truth to falsehood, would then be loathe to destroy it.

Just as the lover in "A Jet Ring Sent" manifests rational control of himself through his contemplation of the ring, the lover in "Love's Diet" illustrates how he, too, has developed self-mastery. The opening two lines, aside from being onomatopoeic, illustrate how grotesque is the excess of love. Using the conceit of human obesity, the poet metaphorically describes his ability to restrain his passions in terms of preparing a food diet and enforcing the disciplines necessary for a caloric reduction.

His unfettered love had grown to exaggerated proportions and had become repulsive in its corpulence, but the lover imposed certain restraints which brought his greedy love into proportion. The mainstay of this diet was discretion, the very thing which avowedly sensual love cannot tolerate. The implications are that love, unless checked by the deliberate sanctions of the intellect, becomes indiscreet in that it lacks restraints; the suggestion here is one of carnality which is rendered in the initial image of bloated, incapacitating obesity. The image is also, then, one of unwholesomeness.
After concluding the first stanza by asserting the nature of his diet, in the succeeding two stanzas he elaborates upon methods whereby the discipline acts in conjunction with this discretion. In an anti-Petrarchan vein, the lover allows his errant love only one sigh a day rather than the unlicensed overflow of maudlin tears, and he realistically admits that he, too, feels pain at this meager portion. But if his love should steal a sigh, and thus jeopardize its fast, the lover would convince his passion that the sigh was not meant for it, that the sigh was false, thus ruining the "meal" as subtly as a botulism microbe. If love wrung from its master a tear, the master so salted it that it, too, remained inedible, and if the love managed to steal a tear from the mistress as it had attempted to thieve the additional sigh, the lover assured his passion that it was not a tear at all and therefore was not its "meat," i.e., it would not become a meal either; the drink was counterfeit as was the sigh because the moisture issuing from her eyes, which "roll" for all, is not really weeping but perspiration from their promiscuous activity.

To strengthen further his love in its program of eugenics, the poet copies down whatever his love may write, but he burns the letters and does not forward them to the woman. And if the mistress should write, and that letter perhaps add pounds to his love, the lover proceeds to understate this attention, to emphasize what a small chance his
love would have to achieve consummation, for there are so many others whose loves have been given precedence.

Thus, in the final stanza of this colloquy, he rejoices that he has reclaimed his clumsy and ignorant love; his intellect has mastered his passions. The lover can now take passion as he chooses and he can sexually "kill" his game at his own discretion. In the poem Donne, aside from the intricate display of metaphysical conceits and other poetic devices, subtly shows how repellent passion can be when it is not governed by the intellect; likewise, he illustrates the pleasantly satisfying sexual life of the man who is able to command his emotions. (There is in him no chaos, no emotional turmoil.) The concluding image is that of the hunter "neglectful of sport" who has learned how to capture a woman's presence when he wishes it, for he has taught his "buzzard" love to obey his intellectual mastery, to "fly at what, and when, and how, and where" he chooses.

In "The Indifferent" the poet once more assumes the pose of the worldly sophisticate, and in so doing he makes extensive use of juxtaposing virtue with vice, parodies the medieval love complaint, and inverts attitudes concerned with Platonic and Petrarchan love conventions. All this he does under the guise of a reflective libertine.

Much has been made of the anti-Petrarchan elements in this poem; it is sufficient here to note that the aspects of Petrarchanism Donne most ridicules are those which are
most fundamental to this post-Platonic attitude toward women. The Petrarchan lover demanded constancy mainly in the lover and only secondarily in the woman, for she was quite often already betrothed, or wed to another, or actively courted by other swains. Thus the maintenance of constancy became a virtue because if this constancy were upheld, the lover then possessed a chastity of sorts in that he was chastely bound to one woman. Hence, the emphasis on a monogamous union. Secondly, the Petrarchan courtly love conventions often merged with the Neo-Platonic high-minded appreciation of the female and thus the accent was as much on aesthetic appreciation of the woman as on the purely physical. In fact, since many of the heroes of the Elizabethan sonnets were unrequited in their love, their affections were of necessity geared to the chivalric.

Not so with Donne. He early derides these conventions. In the first stanza he defines the limits of his romantic preferences, and we humorously see that he has no limits. He can physically love a woman no matter what her color; he can love the woman made passionate by luxury presented her; he can equally love the woman forced by penury to prostitute herself. He can appreciate the woman from the country or the one from the town; he is not particular about her degree of education or sophistication. He can even make love to the woman who trusts her lover or to the one who constantly tests his fidelity; he is indifferent to the qualities of the objects of his attention.
The sole requirement he places on loving, and here he most deviates from the Petrarchanist, is that his mistress need not and ought not to be faithful. Differing from the approach used toward a like thesis in several other poems (in which he insists that he prefers his beloved to be faithless) in this poem Donne gives no reason for this desire. He is indifferent even to employing his usual syllogistic meanderings—which would imply a definite attitude, whether positive or negative.

In the second stanza, in which he continues to address a plurality of mistresses, it is more cogently illustrated just how Donne has perverted the values of the Petrarchan lover to reflect his own. Constant love becomes a "vice" rather than a virtue, implying that his libertine promiscuity is for him the virtuous path. If the Petrarchanist could invert vice with virtue by calling a fundamentally adulterous union chastity, so can Donne treat his semantics with equal ease. "Variety" becomes his virtue, at least with respect to the religion of love, for variety is deemed love's "sweetest part." However, in this second stanza, immediately after Donne accuses his listeners of their vices of constancy, he asks why, if they must have a vice, they cannot find another one; the vice that Donne then implies is that these women ought to follow in the paths of their mothers, intimating that the mothers were promiscuous and that the younger generation has morally deteriorated from the older. Once more the reverse of what one
would expect is presented. The ordinary censure of a young woman is to follow her mother's example with respect to morality because the mother is supposedly morally upright and so fit to serve as an example. Here the situations are reversed and the daughter is constant; it is emphasized that she should imitate her parent and become inconstant—the state ironically welcomed by the poet. There is a reversal of the natural order.

In the same stanza, Jonne denies the Platonic emphasis on intellectual love by using words of highly sexual connotations. Letting the women know that men are not true, he implores them to let him "know" sexually twenty women and that the women should, conversely, know as many men. He then insists that they "rob him" of his vital spirits—illustrating the Elizabethan belief in the debilitating effects of sexual intercourse since the act removed the vital spirits which cannot be replaced—but not to fetter him with faithfulness; he wants to be a free agent in his love-making as well as in his acquiring of love partners. To conclude this stanza, with its strong emphasis on the sexual nature of love, he asks if he must be faithful to a woman simply because he has made love to her, thus intimating that the act of love involves no vows such as was the wont of Petrarchan lovers. Also, since he addresses a plurality of women, the possibility of his remaining constant to one (on the basis of having loved physically) renders the situation absurdly hyperbolic. In such a situation any
admission of mutual affection between these lovers in order to constitute some kind of binding agreement could not possibly be met with honor and fidelity.

The poet invokes the goddess of love, Venus, who embodies all of the connotations of pagan sensuality, for her attributes are not those of the Diana of the Petrarchan sonnets, attributes more characteristic of the Blessed Virgin than of Aphrodite. Venus, unlike Eros, in other poems, listens to her proselyte and contemplates his complaint—that women are becoming, unlike their mothers, constant. Venus investigates the implied phenomenon and soon returns to admit that there are a few "heretics" in love who would attempt to establish their minor reformations by demanding constant love. But Venus has cleverly countered this religious heterodoxy by allowing these few dissenters to maintain their constancy; but she in turn will make the situation such that the women are then untrue—an etiological piece to explain the existence of inconstancy. The blame for its existence is once more placed on the love deity, here Venus rather than the male Eros. But, similar to the failings of Eros, Venus too has made her decisions according to the complaints of men. As in "Love's Deity" man has either created or holds some influence over the god, who appears more of his making—and thus more pagan—than part of the cosmic whole.

The theme of "Love's Usury" is in many respects like that of "The Indifferent," for once more the poet abandons
himself to the desires of his god (Love) with the stipulation that he not be rewarded with constancy. He only endures constancy as the "usurious" repayment exacted by the god for favors bestowed.

And similar to the thesis of "The Will," much of the repayment given by the poet will benefit himself rather than the one to whom he gives requitement. Immediately in the opening stanza, Donne promises the god of love that if he be allowed to love at once, for "every hour" that Love will spare him "now" the poet will allow twenty in return. But, humorously, the usurious return will benefit Donne as well as his deity because of the time extension of his prowess in love-making. By promising to continue loving in his old age, he is in fact accomplishing something he personally desires. But until this time of senile passion arrives he desires freedom in sexual expression, to "travel, sojourn, snatch, plot, have, forget." He also wishes to resume an earlier (evidently aborted) affair as if nothing had halted its continuance.

The second stanza is particularly akin to "The Indifferent" in that the poet enumerates the various types of women with whom he is capable of infidelities. However, he requests that he "love none" of them; in this context he means love with respect to losing his heart seriously to any of these women. Again we see the careless libertine desiring irresponsibility in passion. He wishes to be
able to break promises to his mistress, perhaps mistakenly seduce his mistress' maid and then to be able, without qualms, to confess this to his paramour.

Thus, Donne concludes, the bargain with Love is an advantageous one on both parts. He is willing to endure the absurdity of excessive sexual activity in old age, to play perhaps the lecher, if this must be the price to the god of love. In fact, Donne is so anxious to comply with the high interest rates charged on this loan of love that he will even endure the constancy on the part of the woman—he will "bear it" submissively. However, until he is old he prays that he may be spared the unpleasant position of not only falling in love himself, but falling in love with someone who is capable of returning his mutual affection.

With the bawdy humor of "Love's Usury" and "The Indifferent" it is difficult to see the poems' relation to any approach to the theme of mutability, other than that they possess the element of inconstancy as well as a casual treatment of the values which represent order as opposed to chaos, the chaos of unlicensed promiscuity. However, with such a syntactically difficult poem as "The Paradox," one which more acrimoniously examines inconstancy, we meet images Donne will use quite frequently in poems whose alleged aim is to deal with love. These images are those of the charnel house, necromantic pictures suggestive of physical decay. Donne is very fond of speaking to ghosts,
leaving wills, projecting funerals, dictating legacies, exhumings, graves, and performing autopsies; this early memento mori grows to grotesque extremes in such prose works as his Devotions and in his sermons.

But negative reaction toward love, spoken of in rather macabre diction in "The Paradox," is to pose the question why no one can say that he loves or that he did love. The poet has literally died for love, if we apply an Elizabethan connotation to the word "die." A double reading can be applied to the opening assertion that no lover is able to say that he loved. If Donne intimates a reference to the courtly love tradition, he would then be suggesting that the lover cannot reveal his love because this would violate one of the tenets of courtly love—secrecy. Likewise, if this is so, no other person can "judge" or detect a "perfect" lover, if that lover had successfully negotiated this secrecy. However, the remainder of the poem suggests the stronger interpretation; when the lover physically loves, the ensuing loss of the vital spirits, those animating forces within the blood which serve as the vitalizing agent for man's existence, are lost, and once lost they cannot be restored since the body is unable to provide or manufacture additional ones. Man is born with a measured portion of these vital ingredients and when they are spent, the man dies. It was believed that these spirits could escape the body through various channels, particularly in the form of sighs or any other rapid
breathing. Hence, the physiology of love-making would indeed hasten the demise of these agents. Thus, when a lover loved, he could indeed say that he died both in the sense of shortening his life span by the release of these spirits and that he also experienced immediate "death" in the loss of the erection following consummation, or perhaps, too, death in thus absenting himself from the sight of his beloved when he abandoned the bedroom.

The speaker in the poem is "some old lover's ghost" who because of his amorous activities has become his own tomb and epitaph. He has been "love-slain." Literally, the organization of the poem moves as follows: the speaker comments that no lover can say that he loves nor can any witness offer just comment on whether or not the lover does love; that the lover in general believes that no one else can be in love but himself; and he reiterates that he cannot state, even in the past tense, that he loved, for if a person is dead he obviously is not living to report the occurrence and hence the use of the past tense would be an anachronism. Likewise, as the lover dies with the love act, he cannot use the present tense either. Pausing with the reader in this quandary, he explains that "love with excess of heat" kills as surely as does death with its excess of cold. Here is a clearer reference not only to the expenditure of the vital spirits, but that the lover consumes himself with his own passion and is, therefore, in another sense destroyed by the very force that nourishes
his love. This thesis of the poem has much in common with Shakespeare's "Sonnet LXXIII." Furthermore, he implies that love mainly affects the young, those who are still in possession of the physical capacity for sexual love, the "heat" whereby they destroy themselves.

Donne then puns on the word "die" on line 9 by first referring to literal death when he says that we die but once, which, unless we are Lazarus, we do. Nor can a man experience sexual death but once; each subsequent act necessitates another death, but in the lifetime on one love act there is only one death. And, if he means that even if the very last person who has loved has died, and admits that he has died twice, he is a liar, i.e., "who ever says that he died twice, first through love, and then through death is simply lying." To clarify this, Donne illustrates that after the first death, the one by love, if the man thinks himself yet living, it is all illusion, an illusion which merely beguiles the senses. His proof for this assertion remains with one of the few images from physical nature that Donne uses—that this false second life is the same in kind as the light that lingers after


14 Loc. cit.
the sun has set; it is mere reflection of an animating force which has declined. Or it is like the heat left in solid matter after the fire has died down, perhaps a warm brick at the hearth, which remains tepid some hours after the fire has burned itself out. Therefore, this second life is unreal. Any second death, such as actual death and not the metaphorical, is merely beside the point.

For all poetic and lyrical purposes the lover has died after the love act. Therefore, the poet emphasizes that he loved only once and then he died; this means that he is metaphorically dead, and in this framework he is poetically his tomb because his body serves as the receptacle for his deceased soul-love. And since he is in a state of death-in-life he can serve as his own epitaph. The paradoxical situation, then, is that he is dead but he is not dead, the clarity of the paradox resting with semantics and syntax.

Again, in "The Lamp" there recur not only the death imagery, but that of the autopsy as well, for the first image describes a projected view of a group of people viewing the dissection of the poet. In order to alleviate their curiosity about the cause of the poet's death, they are preparing to examine each part of the cadaver. However, rather than discovering some physiological discrepancy, the onlookers witness instead a picture of the poet's mistress as it is embedded in his heart. After the introduction of this image, the poet addresses his mistress
directly and by use of hyperbolic analogy asks if she supposes that a certain and sudden "damp" of love--a fatal chill--will then issue from her portrait and so alter the senses of the audience, too, as it evidently did for the poet's, so that the entire group will die. If this should happen, then the aura of the mistress will have been responsible for a massacre rather than the single homicide of the poet himself.

Following the introduction of this supposition the poet devotes the remaining two stanzas to a metaphorical description of the battle of the sexes, in which each partner is armed with certain deadly weapons. Donne attributes to the woman the courtly weapons of disdain and honor and to himself the equally courtly characteristics of constancy and secrecy. These four possessions are requisites for the Petrarchan lover if he wants successfully to obey the dictates of his love codes. However with Donne these qualities remain imaginary, mere poetic chimeras which he can easily dispense with. Speaking of these courtly characteristics in terms of either mythology or simple folklore, he calls "disdain" a giant, "honor" an enchantress, and his own constancy and secrecy giants and witches, too--all products of the imagination. His personification of these qualities is reminiscent of the moralities and the allegories of the medieval period; but Donne is no medievalist here. He refuses to take these characteristics seriously.
After commenting on her possessions, which he implies are contrary to the accepted rules of war—for they give her the immediate advantage over him—he requests that she cast off disdain and honor and thus better equalize the battle. He dares her to kill him without these aids. For, he warns her, he can as well present his own giants in the forms of constancy and secretness. But, he says that he does not intend to muster these defenses nor can he, for they do not exist. Thus he wishes to be killed, if he must suffer this love-death, at the hands of a woman decked solely in her naked womanliness, and that if she will surrender to him in "passive valor" she can certainly kill him; naked, in her sexually stimulating appearance, she has odds for any man and killing him should be no difficult task. Thus, at the conclusion of the poem "kill" takes on the sexual connotations in much the same way as did "die" in "The Paradox." In any event, the man will die at the hands of the woman since he is the aggressor and her seductive wiles are enough to cause him to commit sexual suicide.

In "The Funeral" there are the images of the shroud and the grave which serve as contrasts to the attempt to ward off physical as well as spiritual dissolution. As in so many of Donne's poems, we see the intermingling of life and death, as if they are interchangeable. Too frequently the souls are able to move from the world of the dead to the world of the living and back again; time and its entire
dimension is often manipulated by Donne to stress the binding strength of love, both in the physical and the intellectual aspects, and to emphasize that love possesses the power to transcend the grave. In "The Funeral" the moribund poet pleads to the person who comes to shroud him not to disturb nor question a mysterious wreath of hair which he wears encircling his arm, for it is an enigma, a talisman of sorts, which the poet calls his "outward soul."

This wreath, then, takes on a triple nature; physically, it is the visible representation of his mistress who has died. Metaphorically, it is an externalization of his love, and metaphysically it is the enduring element of his existence as a person—it gives him identity. This wreath acts, moreover, as a "viceroy" in that it has been left by his ruler-mistress to guard her possessions, his limbs, from dissolution. Implied more directly in the succeeding stanza is the idea that the mistress is or possesses most of the soul of the lover. Soul transference or spiritual transmigration are popular vehicles for Donne's themes. Since the poet is once more love's martyr, the wreath becomes a relic of his "sainted" mistress and as such could possess certain supernatural powers which, to be effective, must operate within a framework of the willing suspension of disbelief. Evidently the lovers have in some way "died" for love, and the poet's problem is to interpret the significance of the woman's love token.
However, if the first stanza indicates a positive view of love, the second division soon removes that illusion. It is here that the poet admits that he is not quite certain just what the motivation was for receiving the wreath. If it was meant to unite his parts—to serve as the cohesive force—in order to reconstruct the whole man (here the wreath would then take the role of a soul), who has fallen into atrophy in her demise, then he admits that this outward soul can do better at reanimation than he can, for if she is his soul, he is merely the body and by his own intimations, then, the body is less powerful than the soul.

"For if the sinewy thread," his nerve endings which designate the sensual-physical properties of man, should drop from the brain and reanimate every part—as perhaps a puppeteer would do when he resumes command of the puppet—those nerve endings can "tie up those parts, and make me one of all." But evidently this is not enough to prevent his dissolution. However, the wreath whose hairs, unlike the falling and hence downward motion of the nerve endings, grow upward as he says—from some superior brain—which would suggest the hierarchy of the chain of being, namely that spirit is superior to matter, would then have superior power; the drossiest elements arrow downward and the more noble wing upward. It would be apparent in this medieval framework that the wreath would be more effective in reanimation since it possesses the properties of the soul.
such as incorruptibility. But, the poet conjectures, perhaps the wreath was given to the woman only to intensify a sense of loss to him; this would then suggest cruelty rather than compassion on the part of the departed woman.

We must remember that in the first stanza Donne has already suggested the dubious efficacy of the wreath by saying that it is mysterious and "subtle," that its recognized function is not known. And an outsider was requested not to speculate on its presence, but the poet, since he is partner to this love-match, is able to speculate about it and to attempt to discover just what miracles this relic, if it is a true one, will produce. He then concludes the second stanza by wondering whether the wreath is to serve mainly as a reminder of what has been lost, and in this instance would then operate in much the same manner as the black arm bands worn at funerals; only her band is more intimate since it is not only a part of her person but a part suggestive of her more physical properties. Thus as prisoners are manacled when they are condemned to die, in order to prevent either escape or inordinate frenzy, so her wreath is also a manacle to him not only in its actual encircling effect, but in the metaphorical sense that he is inexorably bound to her even in death. If Donne is being expressly macabre, we can interpret his image of the poet's awaiting his shroud while wearing the personal remnant of his mistress as closer to participation in necrophilia
than metaphysical conceit, for in many respects a connotation of this image is reminiscent of the discovery scene in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily."

Be that as it may, in his concluding lines the poet becomes more explicit in his curiosity and decides that whatever the woman meant by it--miraculously to preserve his body from corruption or cruelly to remind him through eternity of his loss--he wishes it to be buried with him. Because, since he is by his own admission love's martyr, others might mistakenly seize on this wreath and it could breed idolatry; here I interpret idolatry mainly to mean false worship not only in the sense that relics were intended to be merely venerated and not worshipped--adoration of the relics would defy religious sanction and thus become idolatry--but rather that the laity would attribute worship falsely in that there is a good chance that the mistress did not mean something ennobling by her gift, but could very well have acted from spite or some other graceless motive. Thus adoration would result in idolatry because the relic was not a true one.

So, in conclusion, he finds himself with diverse emotions; he can either accept the wreath in all humility and with servitude and attribute to it all that he believed in stanza one, or he can be defiant, resting his case on his speculations drawn in the second stanza, which would then mean that his final actions would be that since, or
if, she would not revitalize him (in their death union) nor maintain a vigil for him, and thus abandon him to remain a partial person, he will bury the relic with him and thereby make her a partial person also.

Continuing his use of death imagery as the basis of his poetic conceit, in "The Legacy" Donne is once more the dying poet cruelly treated by his mistress; he is the constant lover who wishes to will something to his beloved even though she has been responsible for his death. Her ingenious means of homicide are described with reference to the emotional death experienced at the absence of a lover; here, the absence is perhaps made the more fatal because the love is of the physical. In "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" we know that Donne there cautioned his beloved not to be sad at parting because only lovers whose sole relation to one another is physical, could experience a sad breach. Sublime love—ethereal as well as physical—is not altered by temporal absence. However in "The Legacy" the poet stresses that when lovers are parted they do experience a death of the soul; and Donne particularly has a death of the soul, which he explains is the fact that in his enduring love he gave his mistress his whole soul; thus, being without a soul, he dies. Having established the event and conditions of his demise, he remembers that at the hour of his passing, i.e., when he absented himself from his mistress, he both told her something and bestowed a legacy
upon her. Even though he is now dead he should be able to be his own executor and he himself the legacy.

Making use of the paradox and his typical subtle semantics, he says that "my self'(that is you, not I)/Did kill me'.' Here he implies that she is his own ego because he has in the utmost limits of constant love surrendered his identity to her; he is her possession. Thus, the mistress as well as the poet himself are responsible for his death, since the "self" of the poet and his mistress are one. He then acts as executor and prepares to send his heart as the legacy he promised. He once more have the dissection image but instead of finding a hollow breast denoting that his heart is absent or stolen, there is actually a heart present. But before noticing this "heart," Donne at first sees nothing, and thus experiences--since he remains the constant lover in death--a second death in that he thinks he can not provide for his mistress in his will and thereby she will feel cheated.

But such is not the case, for in the pivotal final stanza, the one in which Donne usually focuses his irony and his barbed retort, the poet admits that he does find a heart or "something like a heart"--there has been a transference--for what he discovers is an imitation heart (to be revealed soon as belonging to the mistress), specifically described as having corners and not the rounded ends which symbolically designate perfection and wholeness. In addition to being a counterfeit heart, it is indifferent,
being neither a very good imitation nor a very bad one. Thus the heart remains one of mediocrity, being denied the adulation of perfection or the perverse flattery of being poorly made. The fickleness and inconstancy of the mistress is intimated by saying that the heart was "entire to none, and few had part." He supposes that it was perhaps, then, as good as an artificial heart could be, but being artificial it is imperfect and false.

The final irony is that the poet is unable to leave the legacy promised since his own heart has been taken and he has been left with this unstable copy; the remains that he has been left, the heart of the mistress, because it is too fickle and inconstant is such that "no man could hold it." Therefore the mistress's own possession is not able to be returned and, consequently, she inherits nothing.

If the tone of "The Legacy" is calculated indifference, the attitude toward love in "The Will" involves a more embittered attitude. It is a scholarly poem in which the gifts willed by the dying poet are either ones which will be wasted on the recipient, or presents that will merely frustrate the donee, or gifts that are patently absurd. In addition to this spiteful will, his final solution to his disillusionment in love will be to destroy not only himself but his mistress and love as well. This he metaphorically accomplishes through the familiar vehicle of the microcosm.

In one of the rare instances in which Donne makes use of mythology, he opens the poem with a request to the god
of love requesting permission to bequeath some legacies; not pausing for a reply or permission of any sort, he first wills to Argus his eyes if they are not already physically impaired. Because the mythological Argus has a hundred eyes, the gift of the poet is merely redundant. Likewise, he says that if his eyes are blind he will will them to Love; again the inutility of the gift is apparent, for Love is traditionally described as being sightless. He leaves his tongue to fame who needs none, and to ambassadors, notorious for their intrigues, he leaves his ears; but the implication is that the ambassadors have ears enough and Donne's are merely superfluous.

Continuing his generous donations, he gives to the planets his constancy; however, the planets, being above the sphere of the moon, possess constancy. To the Court he gives his truth, which, whether he refers to his truth in an ironic sense or whether he really means that he in fact possesses truth, the Court in any event will have no use for it. The implication is that truth is not only an uncommon commodity at Court but it is one possession that is not particularly desired. To the Jesuits, noted for their casuistry, he wills his ingenuousness and openness, the very traits they would have least need of, for the Jesuit order was intellectually suspect by Protestant England. To have the tongue of a Jesuit was to be practiced in the subtle art of dissimulation. And at the conclusion of this second stanza, he defends his malevolent gift-giving,
with the excuse that Love appointed him to love where his affection would not be received, only to give to a person who has an "incapacity" or no need of it. Thus as the poet has been frustrated in his gift of himself, he in turn will frustrate his legatees by giving them presents that they have no need of, or do not want. In effect, the very essence of gift-giving, as well as the very essence of loving, is thwarted and perverted and the end result is emotional frustration.

In the following stanza, he once more continues his bequests by willing his faith to Roman Catholics; the implication is that he either has no faith to give or that since the Catholics were under proscription in England, the inheritance of his faith would not in any way aid them. Nevertheless, in some way his faith is worthless to the Papists. If Donne is making use of the paradox, to give his faith away at the moment of death would not only leave a totally useless gift to the living world, but, more important, he would face death faithless and thus die an atheist, a rather ambiguous retaliation in that the poet would suffer the loss of his immortal soul. Redpath suggests that the reference is a possible attack on the Jesuit belief that faith alone will not merit heaven, and that good works are necessary also. If so, Redpath asserts,
it is not a very good barb since the Jesuits did not deny faith and a person would do well to make use of it. Thus, if Donne was willing faith under these circumstances he was giving a gift that would be readily appreciated and so the intended humor would be ineffectual. I contend that since Donne at this time was breaking from his Catholic past, the lines should be taken autobiographically to mean that he is indeed giving a worthless and empty gift since he no longer has faith in the Catholic religion itself--not that he is entirely faithless.

At the conclusion of the stanza he reiterates his remarks made in the earlier section—that Love taught him to do these ignoble things by forcing him to love a woman who did not return his passion. In this instance unrequited love does not lead to the Petrarchan adoration of the high-minded but debases a man's character and reduces him to a petty, vindictive creature often vermin on spiritual blasphemy.

In the fourth stanza, there is some modification of the structure, for the gifts, being worthless to the recipient, will be used by its possessor for the benefit of the poet; thus, these gifts are selfish ones. He leaves his reputation to his friends, knowing that friends will keep his reputation vital and, as friends, will perhaps enhance it. To the schoolmen he leaves his curious mind and to the physicians his ailments. Again, Love—through the agent of the mistress—has taught the poet to feign
generosity and magnanimity because his liberality is accompanied by the expectation of regaining more than he expended. This poem, a courtesy tract in verse, teaches not the courtly behavior revealed in a book such as Castiglione's, but selfishness and vengeance, and becomes a courtesy piece in much the same way that The Prince can be considered such.

In the fifth stanza, the nature of the gifts becomes less humorous and borders indeed on the appalling. He is no longer spitting an errant clergy or a wayward court. His character reveals moral depravity, something ethically deeper than mere social retaliation. To the dead men he leaves a physic book, a book on healing . . . when it is too late to be healed. To the madman in bedlam he leaves his works on moral counsel. The madman, being bereft of wits and termed mentally incompetent, cannot be held accountable for moral transgressions; hence, a work on moral conduct would be absurd, if not cruel. Also, to the starving, those in "want of bread," he leaves his medals, knowing that they are inedible, and useless to starving men. He ends this humorously inappropriate section by alluding to his age, saying that his mistress extends her favors to younger men and thus disproportions his love with much the same graceless attitude as he disproportions his gifts. His emotional and intellectual degeneration is paralleled by his physical decline.
The concluding stanza illustrates the vehicle of the microcosm and the doctrine of correspondence, that certain properties and actions of men are analogous to those of the universe. He announces that he will bequeath no more but instead he will bring about chaos in the world by dying. He is able to do this by alluding to love's being a property of man and if the man dies then the love must die also. Man and love and the mistress are part of the cosmic whole and when one part decays, then the rest also fall naturally into disorder, for the whole cannot maintain itself without the sum of its parts. Thus he himself would not only die but in so doing metaphorically would bring about the ruin of the world (albeit his microcosmic world) with him. And, consequently, his mistress's beauty will be accounted of little worth in a world where there are no other people, or no people in love. But she need not bemoan this destiny, for in this conceptual framework, she will be dead also. Thus Love's final lesson is one of self-destruction. But, viewing the situation from the microcosm, just as the poet's little world crumbles so does the larger. When the poet dies, Love and Donne's mistress—as they are part of his miniature world—die, too. Ironically then his very grief which kills him also effects the cure of his melancholy.

Once more dealing with the Petrarchan hyperbole of being slain by a woman's scorn, in "The Apparition" Donne
deftly moves from the Petrarchan courtliness to pre-Jacobean realism, and as in his *Elegies*, the realism here is sexual actuality. For the garrulous, ghastly lover is not planning to remain a tacit shade, but intends to return as an apparition to haunt his mistress, and the moment he has chosen for this encounter is immediately after she has completed the sexual act with a rival lover. He will then disconcert and crowd this libidinous couch with his terrifying presence. At this point the mistress will experience the inability to rouse her living lover, for when she shakes him to protect her, he will merely think that she wants more love-play, and in his exhausted ardor will feign sleep--thus once more placing emphasis on woman's sexually demanding nature. Alone with the apparition she will, because of her terror, be ghostlier than he; but, the poet will not reveal what he plans to tell at this unwelcome moment. The intimation is that what he will say to her will surpass his own terrifying appearance; he thus keeps her in suspense. He takes sadistic pleasure in allowing his mistress no forewarning nor protection so that until he becomes this apparition, her moments of anticipation will be frightening. Since he no longer loves her, he has no compassion, only revenge at his betrayal by this "feign'd vestal."

So deep is his distaste for her that he will not even threaten her with actions because that would only prepare her for the eventuality of this unholy meeting. He wants
to punish her with something odious, and the knowledge that this apparition might suddenly materialize when she has been made love to would certainly cast a dubious glow on her subsequent love pleasures. Thus, since the romance has been marred for the poet, he in turn is making certain that his mistress will not experience perfect enjoyment of her sexual infidelities to him. There are the familiar images of death—ghosts, the dying candle, and the emphasis on the impermanence of the love union. Women are licentious, deceptive creatures who promote disillusion and emotional disorder.

Jonne can easily define various approaches to the love relationship, and in most of the poems thus far studied the mistress is cruel and inconstant, which condition reduces the lover to intellectual logic-bending in order to adjust to the situation. For in none of these poems does the lover become a victim of melancholia. He remains in possession of himself, mainly after intellectualizing and thus sublimating his emotions. And throughout these witty peregrinations, the tone has run from sophisticated nonchalance to gross disdain and hatred. But there has been some means of sublimation whereby the poet can maintain a self-sustaining approach to his refusal. Shakespeare and Sidney, among others, sought to immortalize their passions in verse, but their artifices did not so much rechannel their passions as objectify and preserve them.
In "The Triple Fool," Donne attempts to project his feelings into verse and by so doing to quell his grief. He admits that he is a fool for being in love and that he is a fool for saying so in poetry. Whereas other poets resolve their intellectualizing by the solution that love's pains be embodied in verse, Donne shows that he is even more the fool for thinking that a verse would put to rest his passions. Verse is not the panacea because someone will appear and set his poem to music and sing, and the coldly intellectual words will come alive and in the sensuousness of music and song will stir painful memories. Consequently, hearing his passion so revitalized, he will once again experience the message of his verse. He reluctantly admits that he has been outsmarted by his own wisdom; here the tone, being self-oriented, is different from that of the other poems of negative love in that the emphasis is more on the poet than on his mistress. She has merely been the catalyst for his intellectual exercise.

If in "The Paradox" the lover who admits that he does love or did love is to be called a liar, in "The broken heart" he is "stark mad," particularly if he admits to being in love for an entire hour. Here, though, the poet makes a point of stressing that love is not so short-lived because of its inherent mutability but rather that a lover may experience more than one love encounter in an hour--the emphasis is on the devouring quality of love as well
as its element of "decay." Once more the poetical conceit deals with the exchange and subsequent mutilation of a heart. Other griefs do not affect the entire body as love melancholy does; therefore, it is fitting that love be personified as a tyrannical, huge fish devouring helpless smaller "fry." Evidently if love were not this greedy creature demanding the whole of a person, how else could the poet explain the loss of his heart, for the heart is the core of being. In this poem the heart does not even reach the mistress before love rudely shatters it into a "hundred lesser faces."

But the poet has found some means to reconcile himself to his broken heart; for matter is indestructible and all matter serves a purpose by its destruction, according to the Paracelsan ideas prevalent at the time. Thus the poet can put the shattered remains back into his breast; however, the order has been severed and the pieces do not unite, and since there is no unity, the only purpose his heart can now have is mild affection ("like"), or desire ("wish"), or "adore," with all of the Platonic implications of this word, but it can no longer perform its function of loving. Hence, paradoxically Love has killed love.

Continuing his preoccupation with the psychology of the love act, in "Farewell to Love" Donne contemplates the reason for man's psychological and physical debility immediately following sexual relations. He wonders why man
must experience this evanescent demise of sexual desire when certain beasts and fowls do not. Also involved in his pondering is the intimation that the dream or illusion of love is perhaps more deceptively fulfilling than the act itself, an idea also emphasized in somewhat less difficult syntax in Shakespeare's "Sonnet CXXXIX."

For in the first stanza Donne presents an example of himself in youth when he had not yet experienced physical love; he then thought that there was "some deity in love," some sacred quality. So he did idealize love. With his special use of the past tense, we can infer that his ideals have changed now that he has experienced the act itself and somehow his illusions have been, if not shattered, then impaired.

Employing a series of analogies to illustrate his early ignorance, he first compares this innocence to that of the atheists calling upon an unknown power when they are at the moment of death, drawing the psychological conclusion that those things which are not yet revealed to a man are then coveted by him. Conversely, when experience replaces innocence, these once-special goals become either forgotten or taken for granted.

Secondly, he compares his awakening to the small child's admiration of a toy bought at a fair. Its possession is at first productive of joy, but the sheer possession of it, having removed the pleasure of anticipation, becomes boring and the child discards the toy. Likewise,
lovers who admire and woo can maintain this intense anxiety, but once the object of their suit has been "had" literally, the love soon decays. Once the love act has been consummated, the intensity of the passion fades into emotional and physical depression. With his psychological probing, Donne concludes that the desire, prevalent before the act, was heightened by an appeal to all of the senses and that the imagined love act delighted these senses in totality. However, once the dream is realized, by the very nature of the act only certain senses have been pleased and these senses have been so completely unsatiated, and the other senses so entirely neglected, that the love act leaves behind a "kind of sorrowing dullness to the mind," what the modern psychologists clinically describe as post-coital depression. Thus, Donne penetrates the problem more deeply than does Shakespeare, who poetically commented that the lover "had in pursuit and in possession so,/ Had, having, and in quest, to have extreme,/ A bliss in proof and prov'd a very woe,/ Before a joy proposed, behind a dream."

Donne then wonders why men cannot remain as happy after the act as they were before. Again, his rhetorical question is answered by a realization that perhaps "wise nature" is doing what is best for man's well-being, for, even though there existed the belief that the sex act supposedly shortened a man's life the surmise is that, despite this, Nature probably intended the love act to be brief in intensity so that by its very nature lovers would continue
to have interest in sexual relations, and not, as the children in perpetual possession of a toy, grow tired of it and so cease the enjoyment of it altogether. Perhaps if the pleasures of the love act could be maintained over a lengthy period of time, lovers would tire of their play; the act would become trite, stale, and so fall into neglect. This neglect would lengthen the life span of the individual but would jeopardize the necessity of procreation. If this were to occur, Donne asks, how would man's posterity be insured.

Having completed this logical analysis, Donne decides not to seek what cannot be found, for if it were possible for man to find the answer to prolonging sexual activity, it might be to his detriment in the future as well as to his pleasure in the present. Thus the next time that he is overwhelmed by desire of beautiful women, he will imitate men in the summer's heat by seeking the shade. He will avoid self-destructive licentiousness; he will not waste his vital powers trying to capture what cannot be seized. But if these beauties prove too irresistible, and the poet continues to realize that he cannot, according to nature, prolong the sexual act, he will then be forced to apply an aphrodisiac to his sex organ. So, much akin to the moral Shakespeare uttered, Donne cannot abjure the heaven that will lead to this emotional hell, but somewhere between the two he is determined to prolong his enjoyment.
Amalgamating biblical mythology, Catholic ritual, and Petrarchan hyperbole, in "Twenkingham Garden" Donne describes the psychological state of the spurned lover, emphasizing how the humiliation of being jilted and the envy of being passed over in favor of another can envenom a person and reduce him to loathsome proportions.

The onomatopoeia of the first lines enhances the Petrarchan conceit of a lover's being made nearly deaf from his sighs and almost drowning in his tears; in such a distraught state he returns to the "spring" from whence his grief originated, perhaps intending to assuage his woe by a reconsideration of its origin. But he returns to this "spring" contaminated by the envy, hatred, and immoderate desire he brings with him and is thus a traitor to his cause. He qualifies and emphasizes the derogation of "self-traitor"; he calls his love a "spider love" because it "transubstantiates" all and can "convert" manna into "gall." Because the conversion is from a purer state to the epitome of ignominy, the envenoming quality attributed to spiders clarifies this change as being for the worse. Donne uses the term "transubstantiates," which relates to the Catholic belief in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist; this belief is that through the ritual words of consecration the host becomes changed into the body and blood of Christ, who is present under the appearances of bread and wine. However, Donne reverses the religious conception and the heavenly host becomes something vile. What has potential for sanctity becomes profaned by
the intentions of the poet. Then, too, Donne is perhaps working with the medieval and Paracelsan idea of transmutation, the alchemical change of an entity from one state to another, usually to achieve some amelioration; but knowing that Donne treats alchemy with continual contempt throughout his poetry, we may judge that his tone is sarcastic and ironic.

After introducing the religious connotations and yoking them with the self-destructive power of the non-human, Donne then cynically remarks that the beauty of the garden he has entered can truly be called "Paradise," for into it he has brought the serpent. The serpent here is ambiguous but in any event is representative of a threat to the security of Paradise. Two of the associations made with the serpent are first that of the seducer of the woman Eve—and seduction is the poet's desire—and, second, from medieval lore as a symbol of envy, the desire which now envelopes the speaker. The serpent introduces something unwholesome into the garden.

Because he is not self-deceived, the poet realizes his mingled emotions, but he is unable to cease his attachment to the garden. In order to remain in the garden and still not perish from his unhappiness at being there, and because he feels that the beauty of the garden mocks him to such an extent that he can no longer endure the humiliation of his unrequited love, he prays to Love to turn him into one of the ornaments of the garden—a fountain or the mandrake.
Hence, amid the Christian imagery we see the pagan god being invoked and as so many of the ancient myths recount, the god is being besought to metamorphose the mendicant into some object in order to escape some unhappy fate.

The stone fountain will ostensibly weep but will feel no pain at doing so; it is merely performing its function. Likewise, the mandrake, resembling man in contour and uttering a kind of human groan when tugged from the soil, is still only an appearance of a man but possesses the insensibility of the vegetable; the sexual connotations linger in that the mandrake is considered both an aphrodisiac and a fertility symbol. Of itself the mandrake has no feeling; it can only suggest passion and fecundity.

As a stone fountain, the poet will be visited by lovers who will take its liquid to their homes and (metaphorically) use it as tears to weep to their mistresses. But the jaded poet knows that only his tears, i.e., those from the fountain, will be true and those of the woman given in return to the lovers (alter-Donneas) will not since they will not "taste" the same as his. He is also skeptical that love is even revealed by tears, especially female tears. He insists that the emotion of women cannot be deduced from their tears any more than their identities can be accurately described from their shadows, indicating that the women have no substance. He concludes by referring to the origin of his grief, that his mistress by being true (probably either to another lover or remaining Platonic in her feelings toward Donne) kills
him with her fidelity. His passion being self-indulged, he is pictured as contaminating the entire area, feeling himself something less than human—the spider and the serpent or a fountain and a mandrake. In truth, love has "transubstantiated" the poet into a loathsome individual who has the woeful perception to realize his unwholesomeness and yet is unable to correct it.

The image of a blossom, aside from being poetically conventional, is highly connotative. A blossom is a symbol of love, possessing fragility, tenderness, beauty, and vitality; a blossom is also connotative of mutability, the short-livedness being stressed particularly in the conventional poems lyricizing the carpe diem theme. Perhaps in this latter respect, the image is most applicable to the love conflict in Donne's "The Blossom" where the poet does more than conventionally intimate that his reluctant mistress ought to gather her rosebuds while she may; the alternative to not making wise use of time can be shockingly depicted in images of the charnel house, old age, or depressing solitude—as it is in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress." Here Donne departs from the conventional by suggesting that his foolish heart find another woman who can appreciate the poet in his entirety and not for his "mind" alone, which restricts the poem from being merely an invitation to seduction.

Donne does not deride Platonic love but rather attempts to illustrate how its intentions can be misdirected; he does
this in his contrast between the mistress and his male friends. And in this contrast he intimates the unnaturalness of Platonic love between a man and a woman. It is not only frustrating but it is foolish, as foolish as a naked thinking heart, an oxymoron which denotes the non-productiveness of such Platonic love. It should be noted that the Platonic love criticized here is love that is mainly unrequited rather than a love which has achieved the ethereal by means of the senses; this Platonism is enforced. Hence the Platonism studied in this poem is a false Platonism.

When he addresses the blossom he comments essentially on the ignorance of the Platonic lover rather than on any vindictiveness or indifference on his part. He somewhat sorrowfully remarks that the "poor flower" which he has been watching for nearly a week—and in this time has witnessed its birth, growth and innocent enjoyment of the moment—gives little thought of its future, that it quite possibly may soon freeze and that this blossom on the bough will either fall or shrivel into non-being.

The comparison between the blossom and his heart points out that his heart, too, is existing in a state of innocence by continuing its watchfulness over the reluctant mistress, futilely waiting for the moment in which its passion will be fulfilled. Donne tells his heart that this waiting is pointless, and since he must take a journey to London, the heart ought to resign itself to abandoning a
hopeless task and also move on to perhaps more welcome areas.

However, the heart (passion) is not so eager to listen to reason and prefers to remain behind. The poet chides his heart by means of projecting its objections to leaving—that the business of a heart is loving. Ironically this is exactly what Donne is trying to make his heart realize, and having realized it, to depart and perhaps requite its passion elsewhere. Since the heart cannot listen to reason, Donne bids it remain, but wittily reminds it that a body without a heart can be as foolish as a heart without a body, for with what means can a desire realize itself unless it has the implements for expression. So, subtly, Donne in one of his impudently negative poems defines a central thesis to be illustrated in his most positive poems about love—that in complete love the body and the soul (heart) cannot be separate but each must contribute to the other in order to achieve mutual fulfillment.

With the first rebuttal to the heart's desire to remain (that a heart without a body can be frustrating to both the heart and the body), he adds that aside from this the woman will not know whose heart it is or, for that matter, whether it is a heart at all since she has none herself; here the heart becomes synonymous with sexual passion. If she uses her mind she may recognize some other organ, but it takes a heart to know a heart; a mind simply will not do.

In this way the poet bids a careless farewell to his
passion and remarks that in London he will become a
healthier, more wholesome person by being with men, al-
luding to the conventional Elizabethan attitude that male
friendship is superior to the love of a woman. He is also
more wholesome because "friendship" among men is more nat-
ural than the equivalent asexual friendship with women;
also, he is now without a heart himself and to seek the
female would then negate his thesis. Contained in this as-
sertion of his maleness is a recognition of the appropriate
basis of the male-female relationship. It is also anti-
Petrarchan in its censure of such sexually unrequited at-
tachments. In this poem Donne finds nothing ennobling about
a Platonic friendship. Not only is it frustrating to the
active male but a misplacement of the affections and a breach
of the natural order just as it is unnatural to divorce the
heart from the body. Without the "subtle knot" of both the
body and the soul (its tripartite nature containing the sen-
sual desires) the organism dies. It is the necessary inter-
locking of flesh and spirit which makes the whole person
and keeps him literally and metaphorically vital. Donne
subtly condemns the Platonic-Petrarchan relationship, which,
aside from supposedly ennobling one, also promotes a kind
of chastity because of the adoration of a single object.
Donne says that if his heart decides to follow him to London
he will give it to another "friend," using the word in an
obviously sarcastic and ironic tone, who will be happy to
take the poet whole, his mind as well as his body.
If "The Blossom" uses conventions peculiar to the carpe diem poets and to the Petrarchanist, albeit with Donne's own peculiar juxtapositions, in "The Primrose" he shows, too, his learning by manipulating the ancient Pythagorean emphasis on mathematics—the occult correspondence between numbers and ideas. In Chapter One, references were made to Plato's *Timaeus* and to the fact that Plato received new impetus in the Renaissance, for Plato in this dialogue makes much use of the mathematical contributions of Pythagoras. The Platonic use of Pythagoras, through Neo-Platonic interpretation of this doctrine of correspondence between numbers and ideas, became, when adopted into Christian theology, the idea that Divine Nature "is revealed to man through numbers and geometrical configuration." However, in Donne's "The Primrose," the emphasis on the religious gives way to stress on the secular.

Basically, in this poem Donne uses the conceit of a field filled with primroses, themselves a symbol of love, to comment upon his search for the ideal woman—his true love. In this conceit he dwells on the number of petals

---


of each primrose, seeking one containing the perfection of five petals. Again, according to the study of numbers, the odd numbers were representative of perfection since they could not be equally divided; according to this, we have come to refer to the Holy Trinity, the three theological virtues, the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, the nine gradations of the heavenly beings, the medieval divisions of states after life (heaven, purgatory, and hell—all corresponding to order, permanence and entirety).

In the first stanza, Donne draws an analogy between the field of primroses and their setting to the panoramic background of the universe, particularly the minute stars forming the Milky Way. In his edition of the Songs and Sonets Theodore Redpath emphasizes that this poem illustrates Donne familiarity with the Sidereal Messenger of Galileo in which the astronomer stressed the fact that individual stars make up the galaxy called the Milky Way, which means that this poem is a late one in the group, occurring after 1610, the publication date of Galileo's work, and more pertinently extends the composition of these poems into the Jacobean period—the time most concerned with the decay and mutability concept. Donne then says that he symbolically walks amid the field of flowers in order to select one which will be representative of his true love. Perhaps he is re-enacting the childhood game in which one plucks petals in the "she loves me, she loves me not" incantation, but with his own variation. Or perhaps he
attributes some animistic, again childlike, force to the flower. However, in his search he cannot find a flower with the five petals, but at first he is not truly certain that he wants the five-petaled one.

He states: "Yet know I not, which flower I wish; a six, or four." He is meditative, but it does not take him long to realize that either a six or a four will not yield him a true love. For a four would signify that this true love "less than woman be"; he is ambiguous in his reference in that he can mean that she is either frigid or that she is unfaithful or in some way lacking possession of complete femininity. Likewise six is an excess too, but not in deficit; for a six-petaled primrose would designate a woman who is "more than woman," that she would be beyond all thoughts of sex, namely interested in the intellectual aspects of love. This, too, would be unfulfilling, perhaps for the reasons cited in "The blossom." To Donne both types of women are "monsters," hence unnatural and therefore grotesque.

Donne, once more asserting a belief that falsehood is inherent in women, remarks that if he must settle for a false love--since he cannot find the five-petaled blossom--he would rather she be false by art (which can be altered) than false by nature (which cannot be changed).

The number five, beside having perhaps magical or mystical connotations, exists also as a mean between these two extremes; it consequently becomes the class into which
most women fall, since most women are neither of the extremes symbolized by the four or the six.

His difficult concluding stanza encourages women to "thrive" and "be content" with the number five because a woman need not go to extremes in her relations with men. Even the ordinary woman can achieve her potential for lust. He proceeds to elaborate a double means whereby the five can absorb the whole, or that women, promiscuous as they are, can take the whole of a man. When Donne says that "ten is the farthest number" he means two things: that the number ten is the highest number counted before ten becomes part of the consecutive groupings; i.e., ten plus one equals eleven, ten plus two equals twelve and so on, or that ten, thus being the highest number in succession can stand for the male, particularly if half of ten (five already shown in the primrose petals) is a woman. In his logic Donne is true to the Aristotelian medieval view that woman is man's inferior and her perfection, her achieving form, rests with the male. Thus, a woman may take half of a man in order to achieve the whole of a union (if she works on the principle that her five is half of his ten, and the typical Donne innuendo is that the half which the woman will take will be the sensual half).

Since all numbers are either odd or even and since both the odd and the even appear in the number five, this number five in miniature already encompasses the whole; thus, she may take all of a man. Or, "let woman be content
to be herself. Since five is half of ten, united with
man she will be half of a perfect life, or (and the cyni-
cical humour breaks out again) if she is not content with
that, since five is the first number which includes an
even number — one is not counted — ... it may claim to
be the perfect number, and she to be the whole in which we
18
men are included and absorbed.

In tone, these last several poems have been somewhat
cynical, lacking the fervor of deep-seated convictions
noticeable if for no other reason than that their clever-
ness of conceit and inventiveness of syntax take precedence
over the central thesis; the reader is more impressed with
the elaborate and intricate semantic structure than with
the ideas supposedly elicited by that structure. However,
in "Love's Alchemy" the uniqueness of metaphor, the richly
connotative diction, and the compression of action do not
detract from the argument which contains one of Donne's
bitterest indictments of love, women, and the devotees of
Platonic love.

His cynical disillusion with the pursuit of love is
early insinuated by his comparison of the lover seeking
the essence of the joy of love to the alchemist who is

18 John Donne: The Elegies and the Songs and
seeking his Elixir of life, the fantastic potion which will serve to remove the ills of the world. Donne divides his lovers into three groups: those who seek the ethereal in love, those who pursue love as a man plunders various mines in search of hidden wealth, and those who hope to find an enduring love in wedlock—the Platonists, the sensualists, and the romanticists. Donne's first conclusion will be that love is not only a mysterious goal, but by nature is transient, particularly love embodying physical desire—the instability of sexual orgasm. Like dreams, physical desires and their fulfillment are fleeting and not even the ritual of the wedding music can grant endurance to what is impermanent.

Immediately in the first stanza, Donne alludes to those who dig deeper into love's mine than he did. Aside from the sexual connotations, Donne mainly makes reference to those Platonic lovers who have pursued love past the sensual level where Donne has evidently ceased his pursuit. He wishes that these high-minded, aesthetic "miners" would then tell him what is the secret of true love, where the "centric happiness"—the core of love's alleged joy—rests. For Donne, intimating his usually abundant sexual activity, has loved, and gotten the object of his love, and has "told" or counted his conquests, but, he remarks with intense disillusionment, if he were able to make love and to continue his tally of these adventures until he is old, he is certain that he cannot find the hidden mystery, because the
idea itself is all "imposture"—there is no hidden mystery; the idea of such permanent bliss is myth. And those who then delude themselves into continuing the pursuit of a non-existent happiness are merely self-gulled. The duped lover is like the alchemist, then, who still has not realized his Elixir and who is foolish enough to "glorify" or raise false hopes from his experiment—his "pregnant pot"—whenever he finds a new ingredient for it. Donne, too, has found many new ingredients to add to his search—his multiple mistresses—but his own dreams continue to remain unfulfilled and merely expectant. So lovers, as duped as is the alchemist, dream "a rich and long delight," a dream that there is not only such a state as true love but that there can be continuous satisfaction in love-making rather than its always being brief and that the desire for sex can sustain itself rather than being a transitory fancy, which when satiate fades until the lover dreams once more. Thus the dreams of these lovers are in reality a "winter-seeming summer's night"; the heat is not sustained and the moment is brief. The central thesis in this poem is quite similar to that of "A Farewell to Love" as well as being once again similar to Shakespeare's "Sonnet CXXIX."

Donne's stanzaic patterns and conceits may vary, but his themes remain consistent, mere variations of an approach to the basically half-dozen or so ideas which permeate the Songs and Sonnets.

In this poem Donne does not have to convince himself
of the futility of the attempt to make permanent or to understand what can neither be made permanent nor be understood. What men seek is nonexistent. Hence, in the second stanza, he appeals to the reader's intellect (his own mind needing no persuasion) to cease wasting ease, money, reputation, and life (the Renaissance idea of the love act's ability to shorten life) because he will only be paying handsomely for something not worth the expense . . . "a vain bubble's shadow." Alluding to the belief that marriage will assure perpetual joy, Donne uses the hyperbole that if his servant as well as he should marry and thereby hope to insure this bliss, would their loves be then happy in equal proportions since they both followed the same ritual. If the Platonic lover's desires are sham so is the belief of the bridegroom that the ritual of marriage, assuming that certain gestures and formulated phrases are devoutly adhered to, can really engender a duration to the love act or to the love desire. In this instance the emphasis is mainly on the physical. Donne immediately switches to a rebuttal of the Platonist who foolishly swears that one does not marry a body but a mind. One division is as absurd as the other, revealing with renewed emphasis one of Donne's basic tenets--that in love the body cannot be separated from the mind (soul). Both are parts of the whole person. But if the mind and the body must work in unison to produce this "centric happiness" which Donne in this poem refuses to give credence to, then something must enter into
this formula to keep man from realizing this joy, since he obviously does not achieve it.

In theory, the idea of a mutual appreciation of mind and body that leads to everlasting bliss is believable; but in practice it is not tenable, and it is not tenable because of the inclusion of another of Donne's beliefs particularly registered in these negative poems—that the quality of women is inferior to that of men, that the woman is basically a lustful creature incapable of achieving the status of the high-minded, which, according to the Hellenistic description of a chain of being, she certainly is not.

On that ground, Donne concludes by warning his reader not to look for mind in woman, the ability to reach the spiritual fusion which can give immortality to a love union, for she has none of this ethereal quality. At their best women are merely "mummy, possess'd." Mummy has several connotations here and, as anticipated, none of them are conceived to flatter the feminine. Primarily, mummy was literally particles of the preserved flesh of Egyptian corpses, which were used medicinally to act as curatives. However, the connotation is that the woman is merely dead flesh, flesh treated by preservatives to give it the semblance of life but which in fact is not living. Further, women are merely dead flesh insofar as they lack the deeper qualities of humanity—the appreciation of the aesthetic—or Donne may go so far as to accept a medieval idea, although basically Protagorean, that women had no souls. In any event,
the mummy connotes the hollowness and a grotesqueness of flesh without the needed animation of a soul. Then, too, mummy was also thought to be a restorative for the loss of the vital powers expended through sexual activity. But mummy, like the elixir and potions of the alchemist, is a fraud. The woman is spoken of in terms of being a living corpse, one who promises what she is not capable of giving, just as the curative mummy purports to cure what it cannot.

Donne has so far used the most repellent images yet to depict the woman and what she contributes to the love act. Namely she takes but she does not give and the man who attributes to her any capacity for Platonic love is misled; he is attributing powers where there are none. A woman is incapable of desires other than those of the flesh, and Donne perhaps suggests that at the moment of sexual activity the lust of the woman so permeates her that had she any capabilities for spiritual ascendency her bodily desires supersede them, and by calling her possessed of mummy, he means that in love she is merely a body without mind. In essence, a mummified creature is what the woman is and as such she is horrible. Helen Gardner, however, suggests that the concluding lines can further insult the

---

19 Redpath, p. 53.
woman by showing that if a man is in possession of a mindless bulk of flesh, she might have some medicinal qualities if none other, intimating a belief that mummy restored the vital powers. However, if Donne uses mummy with the same degree of incredibility he gives to the powers of the alchemist, I would think that if he is suggesting this final insult, it is an ironic one since the mummy, like the possession of the alchemist, does not in fact work. Thus the emphasis remains on man's self-delusion, his fallacious idealization of elements—the woman and "centric happiness"—which do not deserve this elevation.

With less vindictiveness and disdain, Donne still continues his aspersions of the female in "The Curse," a relatively simple poem cataloging desired ill happenings to anyone who reveals the identity of the poet's mistress; if Donne is making use of the courtly love convention of maintaining silence and secrecy in a liaison, he is doing so with anything but courtly diction. He wishes to wither with curses the person who violates this secrecy, and until the concluding two lines of the poem, it is supposed that the culprit is another man, perhaps a rival lover.

However, by these concluding lines, the almost monotonous listing of curses is broken by the humorous retort

20
Gardner, p. 212.
that if the informer be a woman, these curses may be for­
gotten, for nature has already out-cursed the poet. Again
there exists a condemnation of women, an emphasis on their
low estate; due chiefly to the nature of the vile curses
hurled upon the presupposed male offender, we can easily
surmise what curses the woman has fallen heir to.

The two poems chosen to end the section on the nega­
tive poems, "The Flea" and "Self Love," not only incorpor­
ate most of the ideas present in these poems as a whole,
but also serve as models of the characteristic structure
and diction of the poems. "The Flea" is essentially a
poem of seduction, which differs chiefly in conceits from
Marvell's importuning of his coy mistress; the logic pro­
ceeds in as relentless a fashion.

A flea, like the compasses in "A Valediction: For­
bidding Mournin;," is not a conventional metaphor for romance.
But, more than anti-romantic in immediate connotation, it is
unpleasant. Yet Donne fancifully attributes a pseudo­
sacred quality to this parasite, thereby hoping to convince
his mistress of the urgency and specialness of his suit.
He attempts to illustrate how insignificant is his demand
of her, and that the woman is being absurd to refuse him
his desire.

The flea serves as a projected microcosm to the larger
scene not yet enacted. The flea has bitten both of them
and thus their blood is intermingled; he then tells her
that she has to admit that such an action did not cause
pain or shame and yet in its kind is a sexual union, a marriage even. From the mingling of the two bloods, and adhering to the belief that from the purest blood the male and female sperm were extracted, there is a metaphorical conception and thus the flea "pamper'd swells with one blood made of two," but this is, unfortunately, more than the two lovers are doing because she has not yet released herself to him.

Lest the mistress remain a bit suspicious of this scholastic argumentation and be eager to kill the flea, Donne, still insisting on the logic of the situation of the now-pregnant flea, begs her to spare the three lives present in the creature. His logic swells in accordance with his imagination as he attempts to persuade her that in microcosm they are even more than married; the flea is their marriage temple and a part of them is "cloister'd in these living walls of jet." Therefore, if she kills the flea she will be killing the poet, committing suicide, and committing sacrilege by the desecration of the temple.

However, the mistress in a moment of either bravado or disgust (for Donne does not identify her exact motives) purples her nails with the killing of the flea, and attempts to prove to the poet that nothing grave has happened, and thus she appears triumphant by believing that she has

---

succeeded in topping his wit. Nevertheless, Donne, in
typical fashion, will reverse her logic upon her. She had
used the rebuttal that by killing the flea nothing had hap­
pened; she did not feel the slightest bit altered. Donne
then compliments her, flatters her by telling her how right
she is and that she has just admitted that to have fears
is foolish. Likewise, by then yielding to him she will
lose no more honor than was lost by being bitten by the
flea. Ironically, then, Donne not only capitalizes on his
mistress's foolish attempt at mental display but indicates
that his mistress is going to lose very little honor by
yielding in to him in that, if the intimations are correct,
she has not much honor to lose any more than the flea had
very much blood to discharge upon being slain.

"Self Love" not only illustrates many of Donne's
themaitic strands, and not only serves as a possible link
to the attitudes expressed in the poems of a more positive
nature, but in providing this linkage the expression is
significant in that it is put into the mouth of a woman,
a woman who comments on the various approaches to love
manifested by the men around her, the same types of men
Donne has already played the persona for in the preceding
lyrics.

With balanced structure reminiscent of the Biblical
beautitudes, the woman describes these lovers as those who
refuse to acknowledge the intrinsic passion and respon­
sibilities of love and therefore fight against them. Love
is not entire, she maintains, if it is given grudgingly. She will not give herself to the lover who is so selfish that he merely sexually exploits women, for he is callous. She also condemns the man who chooses his mistresses because of their appearances, for this shows that he is shallow and can appreciate only one aspect of a woman. Nor will she accept the sarcastic or coldly intellectual lover who will be so insensitive as to mock her. Neither will she accept the man who pays for his love, for the woman then must give her affection as an obligation and not with genuine generosity. Thus the speaker concludes that she will, until she finds a man worthy of her love, maintain a love of her self.

Here, then, is an appropriate conclusion to the poems which take love lightly, reduce women to merely bestial beings incapable of deep emotions. Inherent in these lines is the idea, to be developed in the second half of the discussion of the poems, that love must be mutual if it is to be wholesome and rewarding and possess some durability. Likewise, it must be more than merely sensual. Each lover should recognize the partner as an individual and as an individual this person is then capable of sensitivity and thought. Love must also be given without any reservations, no expectation of gain, no sense of conquest, for love is not a game, nor a challenge, not something to be mocked nor to be treated with witty irreverence. These ideas, implied in the complaints of this unknown woman, are those expressed in "The Canonization," "A Valediction: forbidding mourning,"
and "The Ecstasy."

If, though, these are the ideas developed in the more serious poems of Donne, and the poems heretofore discussed reveal the less positive aspects of love, just what, with respect to the general idea of mutability, do these negative poems accomplish, other than serving as a thematic foil to the positive ones?

It is true that the images, with the exception of such poems as "The Funeral," "The Hill," "Love's Alchemy," and a few others, are not those glaringly attributed to discourses on mutability and decay of the world. However, it was thought that mutability was change, generally change for the worse and that this change could be witnessed not only on earth as a physical planet, but within the individual as well. And love is one of the vital properties of the individual. Thus inconstancy in love is a microcosmic reflection of impermanence on corresponding planes. Ever since classical antiquity there has been the emphasis on the duality of love; it is both destroyer and preserver, but contained within the duality were operations in which the larger scope of life illustrated a constancy. Change occurred but it was a patterned change; by the conclusion of the goodman-dakewill controversy it was admitted that within change there is a constancy and a perpetuation of the world order. In these poems of Donne the change in love is reflected, its alteration from the utmost literal level of the brevity of the sexual act to the most meta-
physical heights of two souls merging into one and so giving an immortality to love, a love which has altered but yet finds a means whereby it can remain constant.

On the more philosophical level, the women in these negative poems of Donne are illustrative of an aspect of the theory of mutability, for in Christian dogma it was the mythological Eve who first caused mutability to occur in the world-scene. And the women in these poems are in the medieval heritage of Eve and, colored by the Reformation, they become almost willfully destructive of man; in the poems of Donne they are willfully destructive of his love. In the psychological sense their insatiable licentiousness but shortens man's life by seducing him into promiscuous sexual activity. Women, in these poems, have corrupted love, have taken the utmost cohesive ability of the passion and perverted it.

Donne uses, of course, the familiar attitudes of the time by placing women inferior to men. This sexual subordination serves as an admission of a belief in the hierarchy of a chain of beings, and for those not resting upon the apex of this existential ladder they remain imperfect. Women, by being inferior in creation to men who themselves are not perfect, suggest even graver overtones of depravity and inconstancy.
CHAPTER III
The Positive Poems

However, if the alleged inconstancy of women is the provocation of Donne's acrimonious cynicism in the negative poems, women additionally possess personal characteristics whereby they can lend dignity to love and are thus able to contribute to its more aesthetic appreciation. In "The Funeral" Donne made use of the image of a wreath of hair about the arm of one facing imminent interment; at this point he not only employed images suggestive of mutability and decay, but he also indicated an ambiguity of the wreath itself—the question of whether it signified fidelity or cruelty. His all-encompassing suspicion toward women is the touchstone of this early attitude. In "The Relic"—a poem in which the poet elaborates upon a projection of himself after death—Donne repeats the image of the "bracelet of bright hair about the bone." Although this token is once more referred to as a relic, and the setting is again in the grave, the tone of this poem is vastly different from that of its predecessor and the emphasis on the physical scene of decay is not in any sense symbolic or suggestive of the love that the poet holds for his mistress. According to the poet's dialectic, this special nexus is worthy of veneration because the love which the couple had shared was Platonic (with the implications that what the poet
feels [as he envisions himself lying in the grave] is the essence of true Platonism and not the sighs and enforced unrequited passions of the Petrarchanist), an intense, mutual exchange of understanding, emphasizing the deeper qualities of the soul—a communion which achieves its potential in the final passages of "The Ecstasy."

However, despite the stress on the ethereal qualities of his love, Donne is still the realist and women are not suddenly made arbiters of intellectual beauty and mental joy. In the first stanza of "The Relic" we learn that Donne's mistress is an exception among women. Donne compares a grave's ability to embrace multiple burials with a bed's adaptation to multiple love-acts, signifying a sceptical awareness that just as more than one body can inhabit a tomb, so, too, more than one lover is able to share a bed with a woman. His metaphysical comparison derives from the pragmatic custom of emptying graves after a certain interval in order to "entertain" some "second guest." Aside from the conventional allusion to the grave as a communal tomb, Donne parenthetically remarks that the "graves have learn'd that woman-head" is "more than one a bed," thereby making his comparison acutely apparent. In view of this projected disturbance of his repose he hopes that when the time arrives for his grave to be re-opened the grave-digger will note the "bracelet of bright hair about the bone" and will then leave his remains undefiled.
perhaps thinking that a "loving couple" remains in the aperture and that the wreath is possibly a signaling device to be used at the Last Judgment; if this surmise is correct then the two souls will be able to meet at the grave for a brief encounter before journeying to their eternal states. The wreath has a definite rather than an ambiguous meaning, which is not one to be taken cynically. The wreath seriously becomes a talisman.

Again similar to the ideas contained in "The Funeral," Donne remarks that there is the probability that the bones and the wreath will be thought relics and therefore venerated. However, in "The Funeral" the veneration deteriorated into idolatry because the origin of the relic was misunderstood and therefore properties were attributed to it which were inappropriate to the intentions of the love-token. To prevent this discrepancy, Donne states that if their remains should be removed in a time when religion is errant, they might be misconstrued for those of Mary Magdalen or even Christ himself. The choice of allusions and the tone of this second stanza relate more to religious criticism than to the thematic strand of the poem and to some extent weaken its structural organization. Donne takes the bulk of the stanzaic space in order to criticize an era of false clerical decisions, and the loosely veiled allusions are mainly to Catholic practices. It appears that here, as interspersed in other poems such as "The Will,"
he is criticizing the Catholic religion from which--if we can believe his biographers--he was simultaneously in revolt. If, then, he is mocking the Romanists, it is critically fitting that the sarcasm of choosing Mary Magdalen (the woman of dubious character who was eventually canonized) and Christ himself would indeed be a brutal if not blasphemous blow to the Papacy, especially to its practice of venerating relics. However, such criticism has little to do with the thematic message of the poem proper.

In order to forestall this religious folly on the part of the grave-openers, Donne adds that he "would have that age \[the age of false religion\] by this paper taught/ What miracles we harmless lovers wrought." Consequently, in order for the succeeding ages not to misinterpret his remains, he appends this poem to his grave so that he can clarify, then, the nature of his "miracles."

In the concluding stanza he interprets the nature of his love, and from his emphasis we can see that his mistress is indeed the exception, for he particularly stresses that their attraction was primarily not of the sexual kind--the only means of attraction that the women of the negative poems are capable of realizing. The "miracles" of these lovers--the word miracle connoting a phenomenon--is that they loved "faithfully"; by his denoting this behavior as a miracle we can surmise that it is something out of the ordinary. Constancy is not the prevailing state of lovers,
or so Donne has insisted in the negative poems. But more
than maintaining a yet unclarified fidelity, these lovers
also did not love physically—"Difference of sex we never
knew." However, as in many other poems embracing a Platonic
strain, such as "A Valediction: forbidding mourning,"
Donne is realistic and candid enough to admit that although
their love was not of the sensual, its exact nature is not
known to him. All he can relate is that this variety of
love is a satisfying one in that it fulfills him as a person,
rather than only satiating him as a man. But for further
definition, we can only surmise.

He affirms that their hands "ne'er touch'd the seals"
which Nature gave them. Included in this affirmation is
the comment that men (governed by some peculiar motive)
put restraints upon what is natural and by so doing they
injure it. The implication is that love is a natural
action, and because man has placed restrictions upon it
these strictures cause him to pursue love with unnatural
desire and undue emphasis. This is the same complaint
that Donne handled much less soberly in "Confined Love"
and "Farewell to Love." Even in this minor thematic in­
trusion, Donne reinforces one of his major theses, that
love, whether physical or intellectual, is a gift of Nature--
generally called "wise"--and if abuses arise with respect
to love (monogamy, legal and religious sanctions, for
instance) injuries to nature occur--adultery, fornication,
and the like.
However, Donne and his mistress have not abused any law; they have loved "well," and this is the miracle that they performed. And because their love is not subject to rigorous definition, Donne's final comment is an exclamation of grief stemming from the frustration that he cannot duly extol her merits since his ability to express himself is dependent upon language and no linguistic subtleties are adequate to define his passion. His poem cannot sufficiently describe his love or his mistress and so he refrains from attempting such descriptions. We learn only that he is unable to tell what a "miracle she was."

Almost Cavalier in phrasing, as well as being the nearest approximation to the sonnet form found in the collection, "The Token" continues to reveal Donne's realism, his intellectual impatience with the juvenile Petrarchan superficialities, and his emotional honesty. Until the concluding couplet, it is uncertain whether this token is to signify her fidelity or is to insure his. The poet requests his mistress to send him some token which will affirm her love; but, as he is an adult he wants none of the immature gestures which marked the emotional adolescence of the courtly Petrarchan lovers. Consequently, he admits that he wants no "ribband" which she would sentimentally weave with her own hands to be presented to him as if he were some "new-touch'd youth," for he implies that he has intellectually and emotionally outgrown such trivia. Nor does he want a
ring, a picture, or a bracelet—all emblematic of love in his negative poems. He wants only her verbal acknowledgment that she receives his love and believes him faithful. Here Donne is quite possibly making use of one of the courtly love conventions whereby the woman is implored to accept the homage of the suitor. His initial emphasis is that the woman believe in his own constancy, not that he should demand hers, and that he is not merely faithful to her but that he is faithful to her alone. Here then would be an example of the "chastity" attributed by Andreas to the courtly lover, the very "chastity" mocked in "The Indifferent." In any event, there is a maintenance of constancy with no corollary implications derogating the fidelity of women, their licentiousness, or their humanity; the emphasis is mainly on the woman's acknowledgment of his suit and subsequent belief in his fidelity.

Throughout the positive poems, Donne makes frequent entreaties to his mistress not to sorrow in his absence, whether this absence be due to a temporary journey or to a permanent dissociation in the form of physical death. In order to assuage the imminent grief of his beloved, he uniquely appeals to her logic rather than to her emotions, for in Donne's more introspective poems it is the intellect or the spiritual quality of love which gives it endurance. In the song "Sweetest Love I Do Not Go" Donne persuades his mistress not to take his parting from her
in unseemly fashion—much the same argument presented in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning." With a disconcerting appeal to the emotions, he begins his argument on the utmost literal level. He simply tells his mistress that he is not leaving because he has grown tired of her and wishes to seek a "fitter love." Thus, once this feminine alarm has been eased, he can proceed to more intellectual, and finally metaphysical arguments. The gradual emergence of dialectic is characteristic of Donne's approach in poems which deal with the theme of absence.

The poet tells her that since he must inevitably die it is best to prepare himself for this eventuality by experiencing the "feign'd" death, perhaps the mentally depressed state following sexual intercourse. It is also possible that he is alluding to several trips he must take which would produce the metaphoric death due to his absence. The second stanza—still dealing with a journey—compares the lover's "speedier journeys" with the diurnal passage of the sun. Donne says that since the sun has no desire nor mind as the poet has, and that since the poet possesses these "wings and spurs" (denoting incentive to complete his journey) how much faster he can travel in his microcosmic world than can the sun in its larger universe. Significantly, we see then that emotional incentives contribute to repairing the loss experienced in separation, and in this respect the man in his smaller world is superior to
the mechanical sun in its sphere.

The third stanza continues the melancholy ubi sunt reminiscence; he remarks upon how feeble is man's power so that even when good fortune occurs man is ineffectual to add another hour whereby to prolong this happy chance. Man's finiteness is most apparent and this inability to recall lost time also is indicative of his impaired intellect, for when evil times come he is unable to recognize their malignancy and foolishly tries to make the most of them; naturally, the evil triumphs over the deluded mortal. At this point Donne interjects one of his few philosophical comments and it is one which clearly reflects his awareness of the concept of mutability. The stanza not only describes a belief in man's impotence to alter an overwhelming destiny, but also pessimistically illustrates the pathetic limitations of man's mind whereby he can gull himself into thinking that he can make "bad chance" possibly serve to his advantage.

The next division abruptly returns to the present situation in which he utilizes the Renaissance belief in expulsion of the vital spirits through sighing, for he tells his mistress that when she sighs she is shortening his life. Donne is not yet describing the metaphysical conception of indivisible souls but this poem indicates an inclination in that intellectual direction. Semantically, the woman is the soul of Donne in that she is what keeps him vibrant, and
should she shorten her own life by her tears and sighs, he in turn will feel the repercussion. Thus, in effect, he tells her that by preserving herself she sustains him too, for she is what he lives for. Therefore, he reprimands her by saying that if she loves him she will not weep and thus destroy "the best" of him, meaning herself.

His final appeal transcends both the immediate application to her completely feminine self and surpasses the purely practical measures taken to preserve her life. He asks that during his absence she pretend that they are merely turned from one another, perhaps as they do in the sleep that follows sexual consummation. Donne apparently omits the prevalent conception that sleep itself was considered but an imitation of death, "Death's second self," a conception that would surely invalidate the positive attitude toward it which he urges upon his mistress. Finally, he cautions her that if her presentiments should be fulfilled and destiny prevent him from returning from this journey, she must pretend henceforth that they are but perpetually turned from one another in sleep. By so doing she will keep their love vital in her memory and if such a memory is maintained, they can never be parted. Again we see that a love which supersedes the purely physical has powers of endurance which last beyond the grave; the intellect (soul) with its powers of memory, of dreaming, or of imagination, can insure immortality to love even when
the vehicles of this love, the bodies, have become non-existent.

In the very brief "The Computation," the theme is once more of the departure and the ensuing death of the soul experienced through the absence of the lover from his beloved. Donne conventionally uses the hyperbolic recounting of time in order to emphasize the measureless love he has for his mistress; the tone is light, and the theme conventional. He simply speculates that if he should die (metaphorically) from his mistress's absence—and would then become immortal—since he is henceforth a ghost the exaggerated time spans will then be no hyperboles at all. For what is the measure of time to one who is timeless? Yet if the mistress should wonder at his gross extensions, he reminds her that ghosts cannot die, thus intimating that such limitless adoration is inevitable. Again Donne uses the exaggerated adoration in much the same way as Marvell does in "To His Coy Mistress," when the latter admitted that if it were possible he would court his beloved until the conversion of the Jews. However, although Donne lightly heaps praise upon his mistress, he does not—like Marvell—explicitly suggest his reasons for doing so. Hence, rather

than a poem of seduction such as that of Marvell, the hyperbolic use of time is directed instead to flatter the mistress for her having such an emotional grasp on the poet's heart.

"The Expiration" utilizes the Platonic concept wherein one is able to draw forth the soul of another by means of a kiss. And when the soul is drawn forth, the body is left spiritless, and consequently dies.

The poem itself is one of several placed under the genre of valediction--poems of farewell. Donne dissects the emotions of the lover dying through absence of his mistress; no motivation for this absence is revealed, only the psychological reflection of the poet's depth of feeling. However, because of misplaced emphasis on the actuality of such depth, the subject is perhaps suspect, mainly because Donne tangles the relatively simple theme by his metaphysical semantics, so that the conclusion of the poem draws greater attention to its structure than to its sense.

The initial conceit is that of the two lovers becoming ghosts, i.e., they expire after a "last lamenting kiss" which has wreaked mutual destruction in that each has drawn forth the soul of the other. In addition the poet deliberately stresses that this expiration was by mutual consent and was not forced upon either lover. The lovers themselves "benight" their "happiest day." Since they asked neither permission nor blessing of any one when they decided to love, they now ask no one to cause their deaths by forcing them to
separate. The lovers are, as in "The Sun Rising," self-sufficient; they reciprocate their thoughts and actions.

When Donne bids his mistress to absent herself, he intimates that the very utterance will possibly cause his death as well as hers. However, if his command to her is not enough to "ease" him in facing death, he requests that she bid him to absent himself also and thus the mutual deaths will be realized first in the very voicing of such a request and secondly by the carrying out of this desire. Donne merely plays upon the Petrarchan theme of a lover's absence being a death, but with the emphasis on clever tropes and syntactical juxtapositions, it becomes doubtful whether he is seriously making use of the courtly convention.

In "Witchcraft by a Picture," the poet is again preparing to depart from his mistress, but the conceit of the portrait, with its potential for cynicism, is used to affirm the lover's trust in his beloved. Conventionally, he begins by saying that he can see himself in the eyes of his beloved and that if she were inclined to do him evil such a possession of his image might indeed harm him, relying for credibility on the folk beliefs that pictures, fingernails, locks of hair, or any representation of a person could be used by witches in the occult sympathetic magic of their black arts. Accepting the efficacy of such magic, Donne is correct in being initially alarmed at relinquishing such a
perilous possession, especially into the hands of a woman.

But the second stanza prevents the poem from being yet one more negative approach to feminine fidelity and to love itself. For he says that when he departs her presence logically the picture will vanish from her eyes; thus, he alone contains the self-decisive means of destruction. In the conclusion, Donne inadvertently criticizes the Petrarchan emphasis on the eyes as mirrors of emotional truth. For when his picture is no longer reflected in the woman's eyes (because of his physical absence) her heart retains "one picture more." But she will not be able to practice witchcraft upon this image, subtly intimating that the eyes are not as pure an organ as is the heart; the heart is free of malice. Thus the poet feels secure in relinquishing this second image.

The tenuous thread which separates love from hate is, and has been, examined in literary as well as psychological studies—D.H. Lawrence and Sigmund Freud to name but a few. In "The Prohibition" Donne uses his typical argumentative structure to stress the salutary effects of this tension, how its balance can produce a status quo that emotionally stabilizes an individual. Donne asks that his mistress either simultaneously love and hate him or that she neither completely love nor hate him. If he is to remain spiritually and emotionally vital, this rapport must be maintained for if either passion gains ascendancy their love will be
destroyed by this imbalance. Donne's classicism reveals itself in this novel study of the Aristotelian mean.

As a pragmatist, in the first stanza he presents the case for having caution when loving him, for in their exchange of excessive happiness their lives are shortened, and if he dies from this excess of love (sexual passion) she, being frustrated, might also perish. Thus excess of love has a destructive property inextricable from its productive elements.

Conversely, in the second stanza he attempts to dissuade her from having inordinate hatred for him, again appealing primarily to the woman's well-being by taking care to flatter the female ego. Donne stresses the practicability of such caution by illustrating to his mistress what she personally stands to lose from these immoderations. Once he can manipulate her passions, his own well-being is assured. She must not hate him, because (Petrarchan-wise) he will die from her scorn and once dead her triumph will be short-lived. She will "lose the style of conqueror" if he perishes from her hate. Hence, if he is non-existent, he can no longer contribute to her enjoyment of victory.

In his concluding section, he notes that if she both loves and hates him, these passions will neutralize one another—"these extremes shall neither's office do." Thus the death from the extremes of love will be rendered ineffectual by the death from the excess of hatred. With the
tension between these two passions maintained, and their corresponding modes of death countermanding one another, the poet logically concludes that he can survive their relationship. If some element must "decay," however, he wishes it to be the extremes of passion because if both love and hate are absent, the poet is also secure in his longevity. When the poet is absolved from any profound entanglement he can continually exist as the stage upon which a moderate "victory" can be enacted rather than being but a brief "triumph" which would end the drama completely. In summary, she needs to experience both passions for him equally so that he can live (metaphorically as well as physically) on the strength of the efficacy of the enforced moderation promoted by the conflicting passions.

In several of Donne's more widely anthologized poems, such as "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," and "The Ecstasy," he dramatizes the belief that the secret of intense mutual attraction, an affection which is neither purely sensual nor wholly Platonic, is a mystery, and he uses the term "mystery" with allusion to the sacred. Donne's special lovers are able to experience this unity without being able to comprehend it; however, the majority of lovers do not encounter this unique harmony and often, because they are not effective, they are then referred to as the "laity," those mass devotees who are not secret sharers in the nascent mysteries of love.
This inability to express or to apply a term to the cohesive force of mutual love is examined in "Negative Love," wherein the poet admits that what he does not know ought to be termed a "nothing," and that to define this love is beyond his capabilities. We do learn that their love is neither strictly sensual nor is it all Platonic; he admits that they are fortunate insofar as they at least know what gives "fuel to their fire." But although a person can apply a term to a passion by calling it "sense" or to the purely intellectual by calling it "understanding," Donne cannot identify what it is he seeks the knowledge of, and thus has no clarifying and directive term; he has "nothing."

Yet he admits that even though his love may be "silly" (this loving and not comprehending the reason for it), it is braver than the love of the sensualist or of the Platonist who has the security of being able to love positively in that he can define the cause of his love. It takes more courage, he contends, to love negatively. Even though he cannot discover what forces motivate his love, despite this enigma he persists in his attachment.

The nearest he can come to describing the nature of his emotion is to eliminate what it is not; therefore, he needs to define his love with negatives. Because the sensual qualities admired by the "laity" are not to be equated with the specialness of his love, Donne says "no" to "All, which all love ["physical properties "]." He does not seek
the qualities sought by the masses; this would reduce his love to the commonplace. This attitude is expressly presented in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" when the poet cautions his mistress against weeping, because by conforming to the mediocre as ordinary women do at parting, she would profane the love between them.

He concludes the poem with a request that anyone who is better able than he to decipher the qualities of these lovers should make himself heard, since Donne and his mistress are obviously unable to define the basis for their attraction. However, until that epiphany is forthcoming, the poet will not remain perplexed; even though he cannot gain headway in achieving his goal; he cannot fail to achieve it because (as he semantically proves) he wants "nothing." Thus the essential meaning of "nothing," by becoming a positive term for describing what he seeks, resolves the linguistic paradox.

This sacrosanct quality of love is also explored in "Platonic Love," which, aside from its approach to sublime love, includes the courtly love conventions of sustaining secrecy with respect to a liaison and the care elicited for the female reputation. Donne evidently puts a rare premium on this ability to remain silent, for he praises this deed in terms of courage more highly than any of the heroics attributed to the Nine Worthies—all eminent figures from antiquity who were notable either for military valor,
or political contributions to civilizations, or moral fortitude.

Furthermore, he contends that once having mastered this unusual achievement, he would be foolish ever to reveal his secret, for even if he did expose the truth of his love it would not benefit anyone else since there is no woman comparable to his who could duplicate such a relationship. To elaborate upon this great praise of his lady, Donne uses the metaphor of the "specular stone," evidently a stone no longer existent; thus, to teach some apprentice how to quarry this stone would be absurdly impractical since the stone is no longer extant and the theory would be of little worth without the practice. Just as the knowledge of the stone without the possession of the stone itself is an intellectual dead-end, so the revelation of his love is also a futile gesture because the necessary accoutrements for its duplication are not to be found. Hence, other lovers who lack the rare material that Donne possesses would have to remain content to love their sweethearts without Donne's secret which is worthless to them.

We get additional insight into the unusual nature of the poet's attachment when he makes the comment that any man who is sensitive enough to discover the inner loveliness of a person will naturally care little for the outward appearances. Here we have the amatory handling of the Platonic desire of the Good. Once the Absolute Good is appre-
hended, all else pales beside it; man naturally seeks this highest good by virtue of the unconscious memory of pre-existence, a memory which prompts him to seek those blessed regions of his conception. So too with man's relation with women. Once a man has discovered the inner virtues of a woman, for him these attributes take precedence over the outward qualities; Donne employs a simplified approach to the Neo-Platonic ladder of love. The senses lead to a more profound appreciation of abstract beauty, a beauty rendered apparent by means of the catalytic action of a woman, with much the same progression as described by Pietro Bembo in the fourth book of The Courtier.

If both the study and the appreciation of inner loveliness essentially mold the special nature of this love, then those others--the laity--who deludedly prefer the sensual nature of women are duped into appreciating but the "oldest clothes" of the woman; they have failed to grasp an appreciation which the poet deems more satisfying than the superficial love based on physical appearances. The clothing of the soul takes precedence over the clothing of the body. It is possible that since Donne is working within the conventional framework of scholastic philosophy, he means to say that a major reason of the laity's inability to achieve this metaphysical goal is that the formative agents within them are elementally impaired so that they are physiologically and spiritually incapable of realizing
more than gross physical attachments. Because of the im-
balance of elements these masses are more mutable than
those individuals who are infrequently "canonized" for love
by being able to reach this superior plane of affection.

However, Donne does admit the possibility that someone
else in the future might also experience this type of love,
but he reluctantly admits that in the present he finds no
other who is capable of duplicating the condition. Because
"if" (as he has done) the reader is able to appreciate virtue
attired in woman--indicating by tone that this is an ex-
ceptional apprehension--and after this realization is sen-
sitive enough to indulge in a love far greater than that
of sensual commitment, to forget the "He and She"--then he
advises that the reader hide this love from "profane men."
Because the love of most men is sensual and hence superfi-
cial, as lovers of emotional trivia they will have no in-
sight into this deep affection; psychologically, then, if
this Platonic love is revealed, the mediocre would deride
it. What is not understood and is at the same time con-
trary to the practice of the majority will be mocked, and
this ignorant conformity would constitute a profanation of
the special qualities of this aesthetic love.

Therefore it is indeed a very brave thing that when
one possesses the extraordinary ability to be partner to
such an edifying union, and nearly bursts with elation, he does
not reveal such a personal and overwhelming joy. The final
emphasis is that although it is first of all extremely
valorous to keep such bliss from detection, it is an even
nobler deed to preserve this initial silence. This epitome
of love is not to be shared because it exceeds the limits
of multiple participation. Words can neither explain nor
sufficiently praise the emotion, and so silence is the true
means of not only protecting such a rare state but also of
praising it.

Donne's scholastic and Renaissance lore which embraces
ancient ideas concerning the unalterable qualities of the
firmament as contrasted with the mutable aspects of the
sublunar world, the vehicle of the microcosm-macrocosm
interrelationships, and the images of the charnel house
are heavily relied upon to stress the message of "A Fever."
The conceit wherein he contrasts his beloved's fever with
the possible decay of the world contains many of the meta-
phoric tools present in the poems commemorating the death
of Elizabeth Drury. The interrelationship between the
demise of a beautiful woman and the repercussions that this
illness has on the corresponding plane of the universe itself
is stressed. Such hyperbolic and conceit-ridden tribute is,
of course, characteristic of metaphysical poetry, and in
this poem Donne makes great use of such metaphysical attri-
butes.

Basically, the poem is an entreaty to his fever-ridden
mistress in which he begs her not to die, for if she does
she will symbolically instigate the death of the world. His subtle logic serves as a panacea for his anxiety by persuading himself that in theory she cannot die because "death consists in leaving this world behind"; the mistress cannot leave the world behind when she dies, for at her death the world will evaporate with her breath. To the poet, his little world, and the larger world in which this microcosm operates, are one and the same. Thus, he can at least sophistically assure himself of her eventual well-being.

He then equates her soul with the soul of the world itself; as in "The Sun Rising" she is all spheres to him and in her is contained in miniature all that the world possesses. Thus, if she should die, the world remains but a "ghost" of the beloved who has additionally gathered the essence of womanhood into the earth. This being so, all men then become "corrupt worms" in this metaphysical charnel house. Embodied in this poetic reference to a specific individual is the anticipation and fear of mutability and the decay of the world; the dissolution of a part (the woman) of this whole would indeed intimate that the whole itself is subject to subsequent termination.

---

2 Ibid., p. 29.
To press this point further, and to interject certain criticism vaguely contingent upon his thesis, Donne censures the pedantry of the scholastics who spend time debating the nature of the apocryphal fire which will destroy the world at the second coming—the Last Judgment. He suggests that this fever could well be the cause of that holocaust.

Nevertheless the poet receives some consolation and so convinces himself that the fever is short-lived, for he assumes as accurate the medieval medical convention that "corruption" feeds the fever; the poorly mixed humours of a person, producing an imbalance, seriously affect the physiological condition of the individual. And this adulterate mixture of elements causes corruption. Thus if corruption precipitates the fever, her fever will be brief because she possesses but minute corrupting qualities.

In the following section Donne employs astral images, those belonging either to the sublunar world which are thus transient and short-lived, or those which belong to the translunar sphere and are therefore unalterable and consistent in connotation. Her fever is first compared to meteors, which, according to the Aristotelian dogma, existed in the area below the moon. Thus, similar to a falling meteor—matter which cannot permanently sustain itself—her fever too will cease. However, her beauty and all "parts" which constitute the whole person are compared to the firmament in that they are unchangeable. His mistress, like her
celestial counterpart, is as superior to her disease as the skies are to meteors.

Finally the poet compares himself with her fever, admitting that like the fever he has the desire to possess her if but for a short duration; to be able to possess her (and here the word is connotative of physical possession since the fever is a corporeal adversary) if but for a short time is more precious to him than any other possession he can imagine.

Both the sensual appreciation and the appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of a woman are interwoven. We infer this from the fact that the fever possesses only her body; there is the added assurance that her spiritual qualities will transcend the disease and she will survive. The poet is able to desire physical possession of the mistress, yet at the same time is able to appreciate qualities other than her physical attraction. Donne illustrates a dual appreciation of a woman. And it is significant to the thesis of mutability that he chooses to relate his passion of love in terms of the charnel house and the sublunar world by way of contrast to the permanence of the heavens. The vehicles he uses to pronounce his metaphor are those specifically used to clarify the multiple disputes concerning the eventual decay of the world and its present state of inherent disintegration and near-chaos.

The images of "A Valediction: of my name, in the window" are less morbid than those of "A fever." Folklore
attributes witchcraft to certain uses of a portrait; mandrakes and other anthropomorphic objects suggest occult influences on the individual. Also the inscription of a name possesses certain arcane powers, or so it has been believed since antiquity. We need only glance at the records of ancient Egypt to note how often usurping Pharaohs took pains to eradicate the names of their predecessors as they appeared on steiae, burial ushtabis, or in the hidden sarcophagus itself, asserting the firm belief that such a defacing would make the Ka (lingering spirit and protecting force) or the Ba (immortal soul which dwelt in the afterlife) either uneasy or extinct. The attributing of certain animistic forces to the oral or literal voicing of a name was not peculiar to the Egyptians; Greeks and Romans alike were anxious to see that their burial markings and monuments would be preserved from desecration by vindictive Gens or feuding families— all subordinated to the protection of the immortal but vulnerable shade. The Hebrews refrained from even pronouncing the name of their Sinaitic god lest His wrath be incurred. Many primitives still associate the name of a person with the vitality of the spirit and when an errant member is brought to justice he is penalized by a refusal on the parts of his fellow tribesmen to speak his name, thus signifying that he is dead. Certain Oriental customs include the burning of birth certificates in order to make apparent the "spiritual" death of one who has been
banished from the community. In all cases the assumed
power of some undefined mana is manifest.

So Donne in one of his several poems dealing with
leave-taking, "A Valediction: of my name, in the window,"
incorporates this antique convention for his own purposes.
But no matter in what fashion he persuades his mistress to
bear his departure conscientiously, he attributes to his
name, etched upon a window pane, a certain supernatural
guardianship of the constancy of the mistress. Among these other qualities, the name also
is to act as his spiritual representative in his absence.

Donne early states that the engraving of his name is
an affirmation of his constancy; but more than that it
constitutes a kind of charm which is intended to insure her
fidelity to him. Despite the insinuation of his skepticism,
through the possible talismanic quality of the signature,
he is certain that this affection will be maintained even
though he has recourse to cabalistic incantation. To in-
tensify the quality of the charm, Donne not only deals with
the ancient belief in magical powers attributed to one's
name, but he uses a diamond with which to inscribe his name,
which, according to ancient lapidaries, possesses its own
supernatural powers. Its extreme durability, the appear-
ance of fire encased within its interior, the exotic coun-
tries in which the stones are mined all added to its
mysteriousness.
In the succeeding section in which he elaborates a metaphysical comparison, he avows that his name is in its own kind as durable as the stone which carved it, and if his mistress beholds this signature its value will be so escalated that it will rival that of the expensive stone. His next comparison stresses the permanence of his art, its ability to remain unchanged; the mistress can use his immutable signature as a pattern whereby to frame her own constancy, because the firmness of the handwriting will give direction to her love.

Once again Donne expresses the theme of a lover's absence constituting a death and makes subtle poetic use of it when he suggests to his mistress that if his comments on the efficacy of the name are too abstruse for her comprehension, she may equate his name upon the pane with a death's head engraved upon a ring, the *memento mori* often inscribed upon rings so that the macabre emblem will serve as a grim reminder of the transience of life. She may then equate his "ragged" handwriting with his anticipated "ruinous anatomy"—for in her absence he dies. Likewise, his signature stands as a symbol of the whole; poet-

---

ically the name becomes a metonymy for Donne the person and at this point the unique handling of an ancient and conventional belief (a name having certain animistic powers) is apparent.

In stanza five Donne becomes most complex and metaphysical in his allusions, in his scholastic lore, and in his conceits. We find an amalgamation of religious terminology, architectural jargon, and theological dogma. The two basic metaphors in this stanza include the image of a tripartite soul, which is divorced from the body, and is "Emparadis'd" in his beloved. She acts as the secular heaven for his "souls." His soul is vegetative because it possesses the quality of growth, his soul is intellectual because it has the capacity for understanding, and his soul is sensual in that it has the ability of sight. Therefore, just as his souls find happiness in her because only in her company is he able to let free these three qualities, so too just as his name constitutes the rafters of his home (the skeletal aspects of his penmanship evidently resemble bones) the coverings of the bones (the entire person) will return. And this reunion, with its allusions to the reunion of the body and the soul at the Last Judgment (at which time Donne's body will be reunited with his soul--the soul which is incorporated in his beloved) will be effected through the cohesive and lasting quality of his name etched upon her windowpane.
Of the several powers which are properties of this magical signature, one is that its influence will not wane; it will continue to exact a metaphysical hold upon her affections, even though she is reluctant to remain faithful. For when she hurls open the casement containing the special pane, in order to behold a rival lover, she will then be reminded that the name has life (because the pane quivers) and if she attempts to replace the poet's love, assuredly she will feel that she has thereby offended his "Genius." Here I interpret the term "Genius" to mean either his guardian angel in the Christian sense, or some protecting spirit (Ka, mana, Manitou, for instance) in the pagan sense.

Not only will his name remind her of his presence despite his physical absence, but should her maid receive a love letter from some repentent suitor (who, it is suggested earlier in the poem, has angered the mistress) and the woman think kindly of this communication, the poet's name will intrude itself upon the letter and replace the rival lover's signature. Also if the woman should persist in attempting an infidelity and tries to write to her new paramour, Donne's name will trespass into her subconscious mind and she will in fact write to him rather than to the other.

Having hypothetically designated the occult properties of his signature, Donne's tone then shifts from one of
mocking censure to one of sobriety, in which he realizes that "glass and lines," whatever their imagined or actual significance, are no way to insure "substantial love."

And the mistress is petitioned to forget his idle talk, the projections of the preceding stanzas, for such banter was forced by the immediacy of the moment; the lover is departing and such an absence from his beloved is fatal. Therefore, he clarifies his almost petty remarks by insisting that "dying men talk often so."

This farewell, although it induces an emotional death of the soul and has a potential for becoming one more of Jonne's invectives against the inconstancy of women, includes merely a conjectured event concerning the woman's fidelity and at the end of the poem this conjecture is discarded. The poet learns that whether his mistress can realize infidelity or whether she will remain faithful is rather beside the point of his thesis; spells, supernatural coercion, talismans, vows, and so forth ought not to be necessary to procure and prolong a worthwhile relationship. The intrinsic satisfaction of such a communication ought to be sufficient for its durability. It is clear that the Greek principles are in operation once more, only under the poetical disguise of courtly convention concerning absence; that is, an essence is immutable if the sum is constructed of parts equally distributed. Only the imbalance of parts, the elements erroneously mixed, causes corruption and mutability; that metaphysical tenet is also
operable in the sphere of love—the mutual sharing of like souls produces cohesion.

Aside from the emotional vacuum precipitated by spatial absence, absenteeism may also contribute to infidelity by providing the opportune situation in which indiscretion and vow-breaking can operate. But for the constant lover, absence serves a more positive purpose. It provides the means whereby love may be tested, and in "A Valediction: of the book" Donne implies that love is not sincere if it cannot survive a breach, and until it is forced to such a crisis it is not necessarily to be considered either special or virtuous. This attitude is quite similar to that of Milton, who in Areopagitica states that virtue does not warrant its name until it has been tested; such virtue is merely a blank entity, for logically how can one make certain of what is good unless this good manifests its ability to survive in the presence of its opposite. Love, like any other precious possession, in order to be raised to merit must be operable in the realm of the practical; it must be militant and vital. True love is dynamic, not static. And a true lover is not merely an emotional snob, puffing superiority of sensitivity.

Donne gradually builds his argument to this logical conclusion—that love is not love which alters with absence and that absence can be a positive force in defining love rather than the negative force it appears to be in
so many of the Petrarchan-oriented poems contemporary with his own. Similar to his other poems of farewell, the setting is one in which the lover must absent himself and offers in parting certain words of consolation to prevent the sorrow of his mistress from in any way detracting from the uniqueness of their attachment.

The framework for his metaphor is a collection of love letters written by the pair to each other. Yet prior to his revelation of the nature of the consolation that he will leave her, he tells her that the two of them may yet attempt to thwart the destiny which has irritated them by forcing this reluctant breach. Curiously enough, destiny is personified in the female gender, perhaps to be associated with the notorious figure of Fortune who was readily depicted as a female possessed by qualities of fickleness and who is currently mythologically and anthropologically interpreted as man's attempt to put order into a view of meaningless occurrences. The peculiar etiological function of Dame Fortuna was to clarify and give reason for the apparent injustices and senseless happenings readily observable on this sublunar planet. In this valediction, Donne's attitude toward Destiny is that she has in some way, and for obscure reasons, acted malignantly by forcing this separation of lovers. But Donne does not succumb to the melancholy humor precipitated by such unwarranted hostile actions. Rather, he plans to frustrate this inexorable division by locating means whereby
he can relegate it to the merely spatial. He opens his
colloquy by telling his mistress that he has thought of a
way to inhibit the dictates of Destiny; but, Jonne's plan
surpasses being a mere illustration of his projected state
during the interim of his mistress's absence. This as yet
undisclosed plan will also be made known to posterity.
There will be no Petrarchan secrecy concerning their rela-
tionship. He flatters her by telling her that the design
which he is about to unfold will give her more fame, honor,
and enviability than is heaped upon famous women of antiq-
uity—the women associated with such historical personages
as Pindar, Lucan, and Homer.

Having thus softened the anxiety of his beloved so that
she is receptively attentive to his scheme, he then reveals
it to her—simply that she will have their letters to peruse
and by means of her continuous exposure to their love mem-
ories their passion will be unceasingly vitalized. Furthermore, anyone who reads the book his mistress will inevitably compose from the collection of billet doux will not only find all the lore he needs to know for preserving a satisfying romantic relationship, but will also accumulate learning which will be applicable to any other phase of his life. In essence, this intimate sphere of their love constitutes a microcosm, which in turn reproduces in miniature the entirety of creation which subsequently remains sufficient for any of life's necessities. This envisioned book which defines the nature of their love in fact becomes a courtesy
book for all future lovers; hence, these amorous literati are instruments of the god of Love himself and thus serve to interpret his rules for the laity. In effect, their correspondence becomes the Holy Scripture of the religion of love and the poem concludes as a hyperbolic praise of constant love.

Because it receives the sanction of the god himself, the book will be immutable. It will be as "long liv'd as the elements"—as immortal as the sustaining form of the universe. In addition to possessing this metaphoric permanence, in this religion of love the lovers are superior to the clergy, for they serve to teach these divines how to perform their ministries. And—to extend further the analogy of the microcosm—since their "Universe" is a miniaturization of the created whole, "schools might learn sciences, spheres, music, ageless verse" from their example.

Their book of love both exemplifies and clarifies the Platonic elements for those who are proselytes of Platonism—those who endorse "abstract spiritual love." However, the volume is equally appealing to the sensual lover, although in this fourth stanza Donne's tone intimates that he approves of neither the purely sensual nor the entirely aesthetic appreciation of love. "Though mind be in the heaven, where love doth sit," he admits that beauty is merely a symbol of this heaven and being solely this is not to be equated with the heaven itself. He particularly
emphasizes the folly of misplaced passion and the foolish substitution of an ideal for what is obviously most real or, if not essentially real, then a fabrication of man's imagination and in that sense also unreal.

Nonetheless, the poem illustrates that there are other sides to a woman's nature than her desire and ability to remain constant. Donne repeatedly remonstrates that his love is exclusive; he does this in his diction in which he selects religious terms to designate the sacred quality of his love. However, he does not ignore his early thesis concerning feminine duality; in his exposition he explicitly makes clear that women possess the ability and inclination to promise more than they intend to fulfill, that women deliberately exact constancy from their lovers and then "forsake him who on them relies." It is possible that Donne is making additional criticism of the courtly love conventions wherein women are extremely demanding of constant affection on the part of their lovers, but do not maintain an equality of affection.

But Donne does not concentrate on this adverse criticism; instead, he elucidates his own mutually satisfying love, commenting that in their book (which he compares to the Bible itself) people may deduce what false love is by their illustrations of what constitutes true love. Conversely, if the positive qualities are not sufficient to enlighten them, the readers may then infer the negative
qualities of false love and still reap instruction.

This lengthy argument dealing with the solution to the problem and heartache of absence and the hypothetical qualities of their edition concludes with a comment more pertinent to the examination of love itself than to the metaphysical conceit of the volume of letters. In the final stanza he tells her to be content with the book and to know that while he is abroad he will in turn review his own memories and from them he too will gain a new perspective of their love; the positive aspects of this new perspective are illustrated by his simile—he who removes himself from the object contemplated and "that great heights takes," from this elevated vista can better appreciate "how great love is." Whereas the presence of lovers initiates the passion, absence tests how long the passion will endure. Thus, absence, according to the instructive measures emphasized in this poem, is a necessary adjunct to love; it is a healthy additive to maintaining a lasting relationship.

In Donne's "A Valediction: of weeping," the agony of separation is approached from still another viewpoint. Inherent in this unnecessarily intricate exploitation of metaphysical conceits is the conventional poetic belief that absence between lovers can constitute a death; however, the abundant tears that the lover sheds at departure become emblematic of a profound grief, perhaps suggesting
the moribund state often predetermined by such a leave-taking. Donne uses three central images to elaborate this death of the spirit, a theme none the less subordinate to the greater emphasis on analyzing the purpose and nature of weeping.

The first stanza explores the image of tears proper. Donne tells his mistress that when she is in his presence her image is reflected in the tears he sheds in anticipation of their separation, and by being so reflected (by her very presence) she gives value to his weeping. However, his tears, in that they are symbolic of their union, are also symbolic of their impending separation, during which the poet intimates that he will perish. For when his tears—containing her image—fall, symbolically they both desist by reason that this particular property of Donne (his tear) and this possession of the mistress (her image) are first of all divorced from the whole persons and, secondly, the falling movement drops them into hopeless oblivion. Thus, working within the framework of the microcosm, these tears become both illustrative and portentous of the greater death which the two lovers will suffer; the tears then become an unhappy omen.

Although the tear image generally permeates the second stanza, Donne introduces a more specific means of comparison whereby he cogently emphasizes the degree of his grief. He manipulates cartographical imagery in order to show that
a globe (a world), until it has been covered with the maps which will give definition to its unidentified spaces, remains "nothing." Until this unmarked "round ball" has been worked upon it does not achieve its potential for form. By analogy, each tear he sheds for his mistress is also a globe but by her impression (reflection) upon it it achieves its form by becoming a whole world. He then reiterates what he has said in the first stanza--that her presence gives merit and worth to his weeping.

In this second trope, the mistress assumes the role of the workman who labels the barren globe, subsequently giving meaning and purpose to the object; certain mythical overtones allude to the initial rapport between creator and created, only in this poem the master builder is female. However, although Jonne's tears may poetically become a microcosmic universe through the craftsmanship of his mistress she in turn simultaneously possesses the potential to destroy this world that she creates; the duality of the creator-woman is manifest. She is able to commit this destruction by bringing about an excess--specifically of her own grief as found in her tears which will mix with his and in so doing will not only mar the image which constituted this microcosmic world, but by inundating his tears she will wash away the "heaven" contained within this microcosm. Inevitably she will destroy herself because she is an inseparable part of this complicated world. Hence, Jonne fabricates an
intricate means simply to tell his beloved not to weep or she will destroy the psychological supports which the poet has tediously manufactured in order to sustain himself in her absence.

The concluding stanza employs the Petrarchan conventions of sighs and tears as being destructive accoutrements to passion in that they hasten the demise of the vital spirits. Donne advises his beloved to be wary of these excesses lest by mutual indulgence they should commit double suicide by hastening their own deaths. To extend this significant point, Donne emphasizes that both their souls have become interchangeable so that when one sighs he shortens the life of the other. Thus, Donne works within the limits of poetical tradition but he applies his unique handling to these conventions by means of an intricate manipulation of the metaphysical conceit in order to produce a novel expression. The question of whether the nature of the theme warrants this intricacy becomes a matter of personal deliberation.

Adding to his stockpile of poetic conventions, Donne incorporates the traditional dawn song as the genre for "The Good Morrow" as well as the Aristotelian dictum that whatever is not equally mixed is subject to mutability and subsequent decay. Another frequently handled idea is that the equality of the love of the lovers is such that their two souls may juxtapose each other so that they can sense no breach or alteration when one is separated from the other.
Initially the poem points to a former awareness on the part of the poet concerning the apprehension of sublime love, for he exclaims that until he and his mistress discovered this love he wandered from just what false illusions they had been led. He feels that until they had achieved this special relationship of theirs their prior affinity was sexually unsophisticated—"sucked on country pleasures." And not until they realized their current bliss were they "weaned" from their earlier deceptive pleasure, which by the connotations of his diction indicates that their previous relationship was a sexual one only. However, his present state is the achievement of "all pleasures fancies" and he joyously admits that what he earlier desired and "got" sexually was but a vulgar imitation of the reality he is now experiencing. Before he had but the misleading dream fantasy of true love, but now he has the apprehension of it.

Because they have achieved this superior state it is not unusual then that in the following stanzas he should bid good morrow to their "waking souls" as they have evidently brought to maturity the ecstatic bliss so graphically described in "The Ecstasy," and they rise from bed delighted with their newly perceived relationship. With the quickening of their souls—particularly the part of the total soul which is capable of intellectual perceptions—they instinctively find trust in one another, for they no longer watch
"one another out of fear." They experience this mutual trust because true love governs all other senses and ideas; thus, it is natural that this ubiquitous love should provide a microcosm for them, and their "little room" becomes an "everywhere." There is nothing novel about the sentiment that lovers are a world to themselves, that their passion for each other is sufficient. Their individual egos are merged into a single unit; so complete is their affinity for each other that they possess one universe composed of their composite egos. And as such they mirror each other's identity; his face appears in hers and hers is reflected in his. Donne appears to be using certain Eastern philosophies which stress the annihilation of self in order to achieve either a spiritual Nirvana or the apprehension of a cosmic truth, the latter a route described by the Alexandrian Plotinus in the latter part of his Enneads. If this is so, Donne is handling such a concept in much the same way that he incorporates Catholic doctrine or pagan tenets; that is, he subordinates the religious dogma to his own view of what constitutes a sacred and lasting love.

It is to be expected that owing to the equality of their love—and their comparison as a microcosm—this world of theirs experiences no alteration. Thus, their hemispheres lack "sharp North" or the "declining West" in which the sun sets; the declining sun and the Western allusion itself are connotative of death. Should these allusions prove unclear, Donne abruptly and precisely states
that "whatever dies, was not mix'd equally." Their love can neither fade nor terminate since it is mutual. Donne does more than merely stress the reciprocity of their love. The lovers are depicted as reflections of each other, so very similar that it is impossible to separate one from the other.

Although the love under scrutiny is again shown to be equal, in "The Anniversary" Donne stresses the fact that all things decay and mutability is but an inevitable state for all created objects. The fact that things aged was one factor to substantiate the Renaissance belief that the world was in a state of gradual decay from which no creature remained exempt. Donne illustrates the disconcerting fact that just as kings are subject to age and death, so are the less divinely appointed creatures such as "wits" and "beauties"; even the glories reaped from various honors are transitory. In fact, the sun itself ages and is a year older than it was when Donne and his beloved first beheld one another.

However, in order to intrude some brightness into his address, he admits that even though all of these things decay, their love will not. And he ingeniously proceeds to convince his mistress that despite their physical deterioration and the evident decay of the universe about them, their love is timeless motion itself.

Continuing his comparison of the state of his lovers to that of monarchs, he remains within the secular confines
rather than making use of the religious terminology he ordinarily handles in poems containing this theme of immortal love. In the second stanza he admits that physical death will claim them since their love does not exempt them from the laws of nature. However, in death only that mortal part of them—which includes sensual love—perishes, and the immortal soul which embodies the more lasting qualities of their love will then remove to Paradise. In this stanza they are compared to princes in that each perceives the spiritual royalty of the other; that is, each sees in the other certain princely virtues which he considers novel and praiseworthy. Because they contain these spiritually aristocratic virtues, at death the physical demise is brief and un lamented for the soul is then freed to achieve its Christian purpose—its removal to the realms of heaven. But since Donne is using the framework of the microcosm, Paradise relates to the personal and direct happiness of the individuals with respect to one another. Once more the poet is adapting the medieval, Platonic, philosophical milieu by illustrating the joy of the soul to be rid of its inhibiting flesh, that grosser part of the individual. The Platonic Intelligence and the Christian soul express a desire for union with the Absolute Good. Thus, when the bodies are surrendered to the grave, the spirits are freed; and here Donne attributes to the spirit qualities superior to those of the flesh.
However, once the lovers achieve eternal bliss, the connotations deal not only with the sacro-secular celebration of their eternal love but include the joys of heaven itself. And when in heaven, the couple are considered no longer Princes as they were on earth but are now elevated to kingship. As kings they are literally removed from the ordinary, but as immortal kings of love they are especially superior to earthly monarchs in that they can enjoy the mutual security of each other and can cease worry and anxiety about treachery. For, as perfect lovers, whose passions render all other cares grossly inferior to their joy, they then become the only ones who can do treason to each other since their mutual devotion is the sole allegiance which they hold. Thus, if they are mutually accountable only to themselves and if at the same time their mutual faith is unalterable, they consequently have no fears whatever. Hence, it is appropriate for the poet to assure his mistress that the celebration of the passage of one year portends no anxiety. If they continue to love "nobly" there is no reason why they should not continue to add years to their "reign," rather than to subtract years by a backward-oriented, negative outlook toward life and love.

The vehicle of the microcosm is again exploited in Donne's treatment of the conventional aubade. In "The Sun Rising" the lover, rather than heralding the handiwork of rosy-fingered Eos, cries out in indignation at being so in-
appropriately disturbed. Donne's setting is a familiar one—the bedroom. And the sun is encroaching upon the privacy of the couple. With characteristic, harshly colloquial diction, Donne bids the sun acknowledge and respect their solitude, to find other chores rather than waking them. The systematic and regular motion of the sun—its intrusive pedantry—is judged better suited to chiding late schoolboys. Donne makes it explicit that lovers are exempt from the motions of time because love itself recognizes no regularity; it is a spontaneous emotion and as such ought to be significantly free of restrictions such as hours, days, and months, which are but the "rags of time," torn pieces of the whole, but not its entirety. There is the familiar emphatic assertion that love is immutable and eternal and so exclusive that it ought to be placed above even the natural laws which time enforces.

The bedroom of the lovers is more closely associated with the tropological microcosm—and the lover with the omnipotency of the ruler of such a universe—when Donne censures the sun by saying that he is able to eclipse it by the flicker of an eyelid; hyperbolically, he is able to determine a solar eclipse with a wink, once more asserting the insignificance of the heavenly body with respect to the desires of lovers. Yet Donne will not venture to shut out this sunlight, for in so doing he would also eclipse the sight of his mistress whose own eyes (in inci-
dental Petrarchan fashion) possess the ability to outshine the sun. Figuratively, his mistress is converted into a sun suspended in Donne's small universe. But not only is she the sun; she is also inclusive of all of the Continental mines and spices of the East and West Indies. And as the absolute ruler of this small planet he is able to explore her body in order to discover its treasure and to enjoy the fragrance of her. Therefore, if she is his sun and his new found world (and there are only the two people to consider) he does in fact rule this world. She retains the passivity of the female while he becomes the aggressive explorer-ruler of her body.

However, in the final division, there is an inversion and their microcosm becomes the macrocosm. Actual rulers are reduced to imitating the reign of Donne and his beloved. The sun whose duty is to warm the universe, fulfills this function by warming the lovers; in the conventional microcosmic framework the sun, by warming the larger world of humanity, would correspondingly heat the smaller work of the individual. But Donne has juxtaposed the conventional comparison of universes, and his smaller sphere gains ascendancy while the larger becomes the mimetic. The bed of the lovers is transfigured into the geocentric core of their universe and the sun operates in the appointed sphere which is but the walls of the room itself. Unchanging love is glorified in that its potential for mutual satisfaction has
the power to upset the orthodox movement of the universe. Unalterable love can defy even time.

Throughout many of Donne's cynical poems he has stressed woman's inferiority to achieve a high-minded appreciation of love; her conception of romantic love has remained inferior to that of man. Nowhere is this so firmly emphasized as in the bitterly scornful "Love's Alchemy." In this dialectic, woman is naturally subordinate on account of her position in the hierarchy of being, and Donne additionally preys upon the medieval admonition of the inherent licentiousness of women. But in a poem antithetical to "Love's Alchemy," such as "Air and Angels," Donne does indeed point out the inferiority of woman's love to man's, but he does so in an understanding manner and shows that it is extremely probable that the woman's love is inferior because the object of her love warrants no greater appreciation than she bestows upon him. If this is truly Donne's intimation, then the total male view of love, mightily sustained in the negative poems, becomes less dogmatic and allows for certain deficiencies on the part of the man.

The conceit that Donne uses in this poem is that of a comparison of his love seeking self-expression with that of an angel seeking a form in order to communicate to inferior beings. Donne manifests his abundant scholastic knowledge, particularly his awareness of the function and composition of angels. Angel lore had filtered through to
the Renaissance through the borrowings of Aquinas and Dante from Jienysius the Areopagite, a Neo-Platonist of the fifth century.

In Christian theology, angels need to clothe themselves in less brilliant apparel than their beings possess in order not to so dazzle the eyes of finite man which would thereby render him unable to receive the message of these spirits, for the signal purpose of an angel is to act as divine courier, to be a heavenly intermediary between God and man. Hence, we are taught that the Archangel Michael was dispatched to banish Adam and Eve from their short-lived Eden; that Jacob's wrestling match with his angelic adversary would resolve in the designation of Israel as a people; that Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the blessed virgin mother of the Incarnate Word. Such beings were also considered as guardian spirits, a Christian interpretation of the functions of Plato's Intelligences—to rule and guide the spheres. Likewise, when assuming a form for communication the angels of necessity took on a gross disguise, for anything less than the purely ethereal invisibility was mere matter than angels were accustomed to bearing and marked a derogating change in their appearance. Even the brilliant robes described in Biblical recounts proved too much for man's viewing. To communicate with man,
angels demoted themselves to man's world rather than spiritualizing him to theirs.

Logically enough, Donne begins the poem by dealing with ideas, ideas not yet embodied into a form whereby they may be more pointedly appreciated. He states that he had loved the idea of the essence of sublime love before he encountered this perfection in his mistress; until he met her he had only felt an incomplete possession of this essence in several other women. This vague and formless essence can affect the consciousness of an individual and from him receive worship even though there is a lack of complete definition. Donne is concerned with man's psychological awareness of abstraction and the ability to apprehend these vague concepts with humility and respect even when they are not clearly defined to the individual. This emotional and intellectual faith encompasses the often undefined conceptions of ideal love. With respect to the poem, the poet is aware of this undefined quality and positively appreciates it before it takes a form and clarifies itself to him. He is able to recognize the presence of this "glorious nothing" when he comes into its presence.

The logic that Donne uses to find embodiment of this nebulous concept of romantic love leans heavily on the analogy that since his soul has taken a body and "else could nothing do," i.e., he would be impotent without it, so then his definition of love—which he considers to be an offspring
of the soul—ought to take on a body also. It is not
seemly that the parent-soul should be inferior (because it
wears the grosser flesh of a body) to the child—love.
Therefore, it is again logical that his love should assume
the form of the mistress he is addressing since she is so
intimately a part of the passion he feels. Thus his love
infuses the body of the woman and fixes itself most sen-
sually in her lips, eyes, and brow.

By the end of the first stanza Donne has shown what
measures he has taken to give form to his love; therefore,
if the woman's love is in any way inferior to his as a
man's, it is so because he has defined her love for her out
of his own inadequacy. Donne proceeds to explain this in
the intricate second stanza, in which their mutual love is
compared to a small craft attempting to persevere in un-
certain waters. It is in this division that Donne becomes
aware that the physical form he has given his love is more
than adequate means to express his passion, but the physical,
no matter how adequate, is inferior to the spiritual. He
illustrates this by saying that even her "hair for love to
work upon is much too much." In essence, Donne is main-
taining one of his major theses—that true love transcends
the physical. The quality of love is far superior to the
paltry vehicle of the flesh just as the angel is superior
in make-up to his sporadic wearing of earthly garb. The
vessel is unworthy of its contents—by the very natures of
the composition of the vessel and its contents—and like a ship freighted with unwieldy cargo, it will founder; the essence of love is too dynamic to be contained in its inferior container. If this is so, the poet wonders what more appropriate form he can find to sustain his love. Love cannot "inhere" in "nothing" nor can it inhabit things "extreme, and scattering bright," just as the angel can neither appear to man invisible nor in his glittering array. Donne maintains the comparison of his love's seeking embodiment by comparing it to an angel doing the same thing. And by the very fact that he uses angels as similes he gives an indication of the religious quality attached to love—the suggestion that love is ethereal and superior to the crass matter it must inhabit in order to lend self-expression.

Donne concludes with the reluctant admission that he is to some extent resigned to accept an inadequate expression of love. He philosophically affirms that if the heavenly hosts must assume mundane selves in order to perform their designated functions, then he—being inferior to angels—must suffer his own love to "assume" her love as the embodiment (vehicle) of his, once more suggesting the soul-to-soul relationship prominent in the positive poems. If each soul can become the "body" for the other's soul, then harmony is maintained. In effect, the loves of the two form one body and one soul. Or, in scholastic metaphor, his love
takes her love as its sphere, "just as the angel moves in and exerts control over a sphere." To be literal—and to include the sensuous—his love then utilizes her body and has control over it in order to conduct their relationship to the desired fruition. In this respect, the woman's inferiority is once more established in that the man has mastery over her. As angels direct the spheres, so he will guide her love.

But we see earlier that he has also explicitly made the woman a projection of his own ideals. She merely serves as the embodied sublimation of his vague concepts. Thus if the woman is inferior in love to the man, it is indeed because the object of her love is inherently flawed. In effect she is but a mirror of his own desires and as such can reflect only what is depicted to her. If Donne does wish to illustrate the fact that a woman's love is less pure than a man's, this fact is true in the overtly Platonic sense—that her love is but an imitation, a reproduction of an original and as such is removed one step from the original and is therefore adulterated.

The attempt to detect just what comprises the nature of impure love is a difficult one, especially when the

---

Redpath, p. 31.
student of this subject is emotionally involved with it. He may falsely attribute his thesis to elements apprehended solely by his own rash passions or if he is too cautious, he may, like the archetypal Prufrock, intellectualize his way to ineffectuality or into a misinterpretation of signal signs which are necessary to the resolving of the dilemma. In "Love's Growth" or "Spring," Donne initiates his poem with the familiar understanding that in the spring nature quickens and brings with it the fecundity that was nascent throughout the dormant months of winter. Drawing a comparison with physical nature, the poet concludes that his love must contain unequal parts which, under these circumstances, determine its inevitable change. He concludes this because he notices that in the spring his love becomes more abundant. Aside from the age-old acceptance of natural fertility engendered by springtime, Donne includes the romantic concept that spring is the season for love, which belief in turn relies heavily upon the Elizabethan awareness of the relationship between corresponding planes. His love, like physical nature—and because it is a part of the natural whole—experiences a growth during the months succeeding the vernal equinox.

When he discovers that his love is not the presumed quintessence of his being—the fifth essence which according to Paracelsus was the pure and incorruptible element of the natural body—the lover is not disillusioned. With
his characteristic logic, much of it embodying basic positions taken in the famous Goodman-Hakewill controversy concerning the actuality of the decay of the world, Donne concludes that although his love experiences a change (namely in its seasonal growth), this love does not necessarily preclude possession of pure love. Although there is seasonal variance, from this immediate annual change is produced a more encompassing repetitious pattern in which there is a definite regularity to these changes; so an ultimate stability, rather than an immediate loss of continuity, is detected. For the demands of clarity, Donne exemplifies this final and reassuring view by describing this crescent love in terms of the concentric circles that widen from the point of impact of a stone tossed into water. The ever-widening, yet still orbital, circles are produced from a single impact, an impact equated with his love. All of the spheres widen about his love and not only magnify it but continue it. Just as the Ptolemaic system illustrated revolving spheres which serve to complement the central earth—thereby soldering a complete universe—so too do these circles surround their core, that of the mutual love of the couple.

This argument is as follows: the poem opens with the poet's sudden awareness that his love is not as "pure" as he previously contended; by the nature of the succeeding comments we can safely conclude that "pure" here signifies
the condition of unalterability rather than that his love is either of the Platonic kind or that it has in some way become polluted by a devolving into inordinate lust. With recourse to metaphors concerned with nature, Donne first compares his love to the grass in that it has "vicissitude" and "season." Acknowledging that his love possesses seasons and is therefore changeable, he admits that in the winter he unconsciously lied to his beloved by telling her that his love was "infinite," i.e., that it was constant.

Evidently this avowal was erroneous, for the poet, now speaking in the springtime, comments that he is experiencing a growth of love and consequently since his love is obviously capable of growth it must not be as pure as he had assumed. Turning from the metaphor of cyclic change, he uses a reference to Paracelsian medicine--evidently to the fabulous Elixir--when he equates his love with a medicine that cures all sorrows; however, if the increase of love is even more curative than the love heretofore given, then it cannot be the quintessence of elements he believed it to be. Donne emphasizes the belief that to the initial four elements composing the individual is added the fifth but nameless element which Paracelsus defined as "being a certain matter which could be extracted from all natural bodies."

However, love is not the fifth element. Realistically, Donne does not ascribe to love the power to cure all ills. He is forced to admit by virtue of his own active intelligence and sensate capabilities that "love's not so pure, and abstract" as poets would have us assume. Thus he debunks one of the more favorite fictions of romantic poetry, that love is the vague mana that heals all wounds; here he inadvertently casts a jibe at the intense idealism of the Petrarchan sonneteers. Donne closes the first stanza by reluctantly admitting that love, like all else in the created universe, is composed of mutable elements and that on occasion it can be Platonic (purely intellectual) and on others it can be sensual. But at any rate, love, like the entire but varying world of which it is an inextricable part, can be modified.

Realizing this, the poet does not then hurl himself into abject melancholia. Remaining within the extremely intellectual framework of the poem, he achieves an affirmative note despite the awareness that love is not in actuality as the poets describe it. He is encouraged by his new speculations rather than pessimistically deterred.

Still intellectualizing, he admits that perhaps his love is no greater in the springtime but merely more obvious; the season but magnifies his love as the sun enlarges the stars at sunrise. Once more using images from nature, he compares his love to the newly opened blossoms
on a bough, saying that "gentle love deeds"—like the
delicate blooms on the limb—awaken from the "root" which
is love itself and "do bud out." In effect, the spring-
time does not alter his love but rather offers an expan-
sion or clearer perspective, similar to a magnifying glass's
amplification of a dust mote—expansion but not adulteration.

The spring also provides an appropriate setting wherein
love can be more fully satisfied; similar to the ever-broad-
ening circular ripples in the water, ensuing spring will
"add to love new heat." Spring alters love only in that it
stresses certain elements of it; spring becomes highly con-
notative of sensual vitality. Each spring reanimates the
winter's love, perhaps love grown static; thus spring,
rather than adversely modifying love by admitting change,
becomes the preserver of love and a necessary accession to
its durability. In addition to this, the final line pos-
tulates that spring also strengthens the love to such a
degree that the inevitable winter can not "abate" this
"increase."

Applying the Petrarchan accoutrements to love—sighs,
tears, oaths, and love letters—Donne emphasizes an addi-
tional aspect of love in "Love's Infiniteness," which ex-
presses the thesis that love ought not to be static. Rather
than the possession of immediate satiety of love, the poet
prefers a dynamic state of love; Donne intimates that love
is more attractive when the lover does not completely possess the mutual love of his mistress. In addition to this healthy element of tantalization, their passion has the ability to expand, and every endearment is heightened by this expansion.

However, this positive view is reached only through two negative views concerning his mistress's bestowal of her affections. In the first stanza, Donne addresses his mistress by telling her that if he does not that moment possess all of her affection then he is assured that he shall never have it all; he employs the notorious metaphysical wit by applying his own connotation to the phrase "never have it all." In the final stanza, we learn that there is indeed nothing saddening about this lack of fruition, for his "never" having "it all" means that he hopes that he will never contain all of her love, indicating that her affections will be ever-increasing. For should she initially have relinquished the totality of her love, he logically could receive no more, and since his own passion is a vigorous, vegetative emotion and thus constantly burgeoning, there would be produced an eventual inequality in their relationship. Her sufficiency would in time become inferior to his.

Again, in the first stanza, he tells her that he has spent on her his portion of the Petrarchan love-frills (sighs, letters, tears) and if these superficially outward
displays of affection have not won her, then he has no more to expend, and he has subsequently earned what portion of love his mistress has given him in that he could barter for no more. On the literal level, therefore, if he has not sufficiently "purchased" her love, he indeed does not have all of her love. Also, since he has spent the totality of his "treasures" he has no more with which to buy additional favors; he is emotionally bankrupt. By having this debit, he will never be able to possess more love even if she is capable of giving it. It is noteworthy that in this initial stanza, when Donne deals most succinctly with the conventional love displays, he uses diction connotative of the mercenary. His mistress is purchased by these courtly love devices which are ironically deemed "treasures." Such diction as "bargain," "spent," "purchase," and "treasure" seem to equate the artifacts of courtly love with the material; in Petrarchan narratives the lover attempts to maintain a "spiritual" love mainly when he has been denied the physical. Practicality and bourgeois codes stigmatize the Petrarchan lover. Ironically, Donne cannot purchase his mistress with these exhibitions of polite, though superficial and mercenary, sensibilities because he does not possess them in sufficient quantity.

In the second stanza, the diction changes only slightly; rather than the direct emphasis on purchasing, with intima-
tions that a product is bought when the price is met, Donne uses such terms as "stocks" and "outbid." These words connote that the esteem of the woman has risen somewhat in that she can be bought by bidding rather than an outlay of a fixed sum. Her merit rises as her purchase price becomes less fixed and she becomes a creature to be vied for.

Donne admits that perhaps at the time of purchase she did give him all of her affection in lieu of his dole of tears, but it is possible that since this time new love was created in her heart by men whose later horde of sighs and tears were more extravagant than those which bought her; thus, the woman is loath to give to Donne this additional love. Maintaining his expressly legalistic approach, Donne tells her that if this is the case—that her original measure of love has grown—this supplementary emotion is his also, for he bought the original "stack" and as owner of the principal it is quite appropriate, and indeed mandatory, that the interest ought to be his too. Donne, however, does not use the term "interest" but denotes this when he says that "whatever shall grow there, dead, I should have it all."

Thus having subtly convinced his mistress that he (1) shall never have her entire love and (2) that he should have it all, he proceeds to admit that (3) he would not have it all yet. It is in this concluding third stanza, then, that his logic becomes most subtle and he reveals
the explicit idea that love should remain increasing, for only in the movement of growth can one maintain emotional vitality. The immediate theme is but a variation of the thesis of "Love's Growth." Only, in this poem when he tells his mistress quite candidly that if he should gain her entire capacity for passion, this feeling of fulfillment would be short-lived. Fortunately she does not contain his complete capacity for loving either, for he states that his "love doth every day admit new growth." It alters but it alters for the better; therefore, to preserve a constancy in the face of change, he desires that her love continue to grow with his so that the expansions can be mutual. If they are equal in growing passion, the lovers continuously become one "another's All"; we can see that the central principle in this poem is Aristotelian rather than Platonic. Their love is continuously attempting to realize its potential, to achieve its form, and by the sheer dynamics of this potential, an abiding love is mutually generated.

If the metaphysical modus operandi is most obvious in such poems as "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," "Air and Angels," "Valediction: of my name in the window," or "Love's Alchemy," it is also prominent in "A Lecture Upon a Shadow," in which Donne utilizes the conceit of the diurnal motion of the sun as a vehicle to discuss certain progressive states of love. He parallels the course of his mounting love with the morning, noon, and afternoon solar positions.
Generally speaking, the conventions of equating emotional or physical changes with natural ones is well-known. Shakespeare described his age in terms of autumn, stressing that summer precedes the autumnal season at transition into winter—with its connotations of death. In "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" Emily Dickinson graphically illustrates the fleeting moments of her life in terms of natural scenery. From the poems of both these writers we can deduce the ephemera of human existence. In multiple lyrics, titles and contexts of innumerable novels, dramas and ballet, there is repeated from era to era the nostalgia and the lament for what is passing and for what has already gone. From the Hellenic choral odes to the medieval ubi sunt themes to the wistful and depressing melancholia typifying modern poetry, the themes are much the same.

In "A Lecture Upon a Shadow" Donne continues to add uniqueness to the conventional. He uses an appeal to the naked eye and to reason itself in order to convince his mistress that she must aid him in maintaining an intensity in love. If she does not sustain this peak, their love remains either infantile or it will wane—just as two kinds of shadows are produced by the east-west solar movements. Throughout the poem, the imperfect phases of love are equated with these shadows.

The setting is high noon, for the sun is directly above the heads of the couple; he reminds his beloved that
they have been walking three hours and he now wishes to pause and to admit to her what are possibly his thoughts as they occurred during this three-hour interval. He comments that in the early morning their shadows follow them—signifying that they were facing the sun—but now that the sun is directly overhead their shadows disappear and a certain clarity prevails. This lucidity is a new perception of their love. He remarks that at the onset of their liaison they had an "infant love"—equated with the early morning shadows—and that this "infant love" grew. Simultaneously with its maturation, it carried with it "disguises" and "shadows," the metaphoric delineation of their "cares" and perhaps their reservations. In this sense, Donne uses the word "shadows" in much the same way as Ibsen used the term "ghosts"—those vague misgivings, inherited mistrusts, all that is inhibiting to a mature and rational existence.

But it is not morning in the poem; the lovers are in the apogee of their union. There are no shadows before or after them; they are able to stand still and erect and be assertive of their love, for he avers that "love hath not attain'd the high'st degree" if it is inhibited by the thought of detection. This censure may be taken as one of the many criticisms of courtly love conventions in which the lovers vow secrecy of the union. Donne criticizes such unwarranted mystery as immature; this fear of detection is
equated with the "infant love" which was but the pubescent stage of an emotional involvement with which Donne is preeminently concerned.

However, the poem is not only a celebration of the lovers having achieved this noontime passion. The poem and its conceit of the sun also serve as a reminder that the sun does decline and when it does, it produces shadows once more, and these shadows are ever-lengthening ones by way of contrast to the shortening of shadows as the sun rises high in the heavens. Donne tells his mistress that unless they maintain a noon love, there will be a demise in that they "shall new shadows make the other way." He remarks that the "infant" shadows (conventions of protocol) were functional because they blinded others so that they could retain the secrecy of their union and thereby protect a new and tenderly sprouting affinity. Thus, the actions of the morning shadows were beneficial, if temporary, ones. However, the evening shadows are such that they detract rather than add to the relationship. Instead of misleading others, these shadows will blind the lovers. Because the shadows are in front of them, they can no longer see the sun and consequently have lost sight of the guiding warmth.

These failing shadows, then, come to signify a loss, a privation which is inevitable, for once a creation has achieved its perfection and thereby reached its fulfillment, if it cannot sustain this sufficiency there is no
ether recourse than an alteration for the worse--nothing is able to become more perfect. In effect, he tells her that unless they preserve their perfect love there is nothing else left for it but to fade. Donne uses the term "decay" with respect to this potentially declining emotion. He wishes his mistress not to be fooled by thinking that because the morning shadows were fleeting and yet led to something complete, the shadows of the evening will do the same. This is a fallacy of which she ought to be cautious.

His aphoristic conclusion is that love is either in the process of becoming or of being but once it has met its potential, it declines. There are perhaps two approaches to the ultimate message that Donne is suggesting. One interpretation by its very emphasis can be termed pessimistic. If Donne is literally remaining within the astronomical framework, then the decline of perfect love is unavoidable for the very fact that the setting sun is a predictable generalization. However, at other times Donne disregards the natural agencies of heavenly bodies by giving love superiority over them; he does this by the use of the microcosm. In "The Sun Rising" he defines the passion of the lovers as superior to the "pedantic" regimentation of the sun, and he overtly states that love "no season knows."

We find much the same preoccupation with the passage of time--particularly its element of fleetingness where lovers are concerned--in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" in which
the speaker affirms that if the lovers cannot make time
stand still, then they will make it run, thereby having
some ascendancy over it. I find this latter interpreta-
tion more applicable to this poem.

If many of the poems of Donne appear convention-
ridden yet not conventional, "The Dream" employs certain
typically Platonic ideas but the management of them is
unique in that the medieval dream structure is abandoned
and the specified Platonic ideas merely suggest what is
termed a psychic projection by modern clinical psycholo-
gists. Donne includes the Platonic equation of Beauty with
Truth but does so within the dramatic framework of a mist-
ress actually appearing as the continuation of the poet's
dream, or, in psychological terminology, she emerges as his
wish-fulfilling desires in order to consummate these sub-
conscious fancies. There is no allegory surrounding the
dream, although dream-allegories were still popular during
late Elizabethan England; likewise, dreams were also fam-
iliar dramatic techniques which often served as omens or
portents, thereby relating them to classical Greek stage
devices. But in Donne's poems, there is the note of real-
ism and naturalness. Being emotionally entangled it is not
unlikely that the poet should dream of his mistress nor,
if their union is the semi-mystical understanding shared
by his perfect lovers, should it appear improbable that
the mistress would appear as a flesh and blood incarnation
of his dream-image. Donne more than merely alludes to her ability to sense his thoughts, and by having this sensitivity she is elevated above the angels who with all of their disembodied powers are unable to read thoughts.

The poem greatly flatters the woman, but the flattery is not in the superficial vein of the courtly lovers—mere linguistic foppery. Donne adds an urgency to his compliments by his allusions to their sacred quality. And, similar to "A Lecture Upon a Shadow," he stresses that a love is not perfect if it admits such defects as a concern for secrecy or if it is marred by anxiety or "fear," "shame," or concern for "honour." The courtly love conventions are subtly censured when it becomes apparent that Donne prefers to illustrate the defects of such surface conventions in a more positive manner (by showing what true love is rather than what it is not) than he had shown in his negative poems where he resorts to satire which too often borders on the crude and the vulgar.

In the opening statement of "The Dream" he admits to his mistress that only in order to enjoy her actual presence would he abandon his "happy dream." But he hastens to admit that the dream was of the woman herself. Donne is apparently dealing very subtly with the distinctions between the ideal world which is the foundation of Platonic lore and the real world, which becomes a mere approximation of what will forever remain intangible. Once again there is the familiar
metaphysical juxtaposition; the dream becomes the imitation and the tangible woman becomes the ideal, for by his subordinating the dream of the woman to the woman herself he emphasizes that her physical presence is tantamount to his dream-world of ideas. However, he does not sever one world from another but comments that one is simply a continuation of this other. His dream is not broken—so he intellectualizes—because it was so vivid that the appearance of the woman forms but a briefly interrupted continuation of his thoughts.

Shortly after reassuring her that she did not disturb pleasant thoughts but instead greatly increased them, he tells her that she is truth—Plato's creative force. By doing so he attributes to her a divine quality and since she is divine it is then not difficult for her to sense his dreams (and she does); if the angels do not have such power, an omnipotent creator has. But such philosophical intellectualizing is short-lived. At the conclusion of the first stanza he suggests that they resume their actions where the dream curtailed them; he invites her to make love. His invitation to love is clarified in the second stanza when it becomes clear that shortly before waking he was experiencing the tumescence of passion, for he acknowledges that when she knew what he was dreaming—and she knew this through her extrasensory powers—and that the "excess of joy would wake" him, she chose that moment to come to him. If he did
not believe this, much less have dreamed any other dream, such actions would have become "profaneness." Thus Donne continues to stress the extraordinary nature of their passion. With perfect lovers anything short of being true to their characters becomes profane, for there is a kind of holiness in their relationship and their love becomes, by its very nature, superior to the reaches of ordinary men. Although Donne does not use the term "laity" in this particular poem, the intimation is that a love which is not similar to theirs is inferior in kind as the laity is inferior to the clergy, sainted, or to the creator himself; men possess a particle of divinity but in the hierarchy of being the creator is all-encompassing Plenitude itself.

In the concluding stanza Donne again has recourse to the conventional idea of a lover experiencing emotional death by the absence of his beloved. He realizes that though the woman has arrived and is remaining, albeit for a brief duration, she is very much the same person as she was in his dream. But he advances the fear that if she leaves he may perhaps doubt that she has come at all—unless he returns to his dreams in order to retain her presence. It is in this final stanza that the poet, although he insinuates a momentary doubt that his mistress has not truly appeared, comments on the nature of true love even though he realizes his own possible short-coming. True love ought not be fearful of absence; this is the theme most clearly
stated in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning." Nor should true love be concerned with reputation—a touchstone of courtly love convention. And in the finality of his predicament (doubting her permanent presence) he offers the solution that he can return to his dreams because in these dreams, which are vivid reminders of the mistress and are scarcely inseparable from her physical presence, he finds a redemptive measure to preserve him from the profanity of doubting the quality of his love, as well as doubting the presence of his mistress who embodies truth, beauty, and his personal love. Thus, by an interexchange between the real and the ideal worlds of his passion he will not experience the death which so often afflicts lovers whose "soul is sense."

The reconciliation of the concrete with the abstract was not very difficult to achieve in "The Dream," mainly because both areas were concerned with love in such a way that they were not diametrically opposed. However, in the highly lyrical and most flippant of the positive poems, "Break of Day," the speaker admits the impossibility of resolving love with business.

The speaker of the poem is a woman and the scene is dawn; but this particular aubade has a less romantic aura than the dawn songs of more familiar ken. Romeo may hail the brightening heavens, but the speaker of this poem merely comments on the inappropriateness of the setting to the behavior of her lover.
The first stanza reiterates themes popular with Donne, expressly that love neither acknowledges mundane routine nor should it be subjected to common habit. The very tone of the speaker indicates an impatience with an evidently bourgeois lover. She chides this lover by remarking that if the sun were able to speak it would have little enough to say if it only related the affair. There is the inherent intimation that the male is concerned with his reputation, for her various comments imply a nervous concern on the part of the lover to absent himself now that the cloak of night has been removed. It is the woman who censures with her logic. At the conclusion of the central stanza, she asserts that she would prefer that the tryst should not by interrupted by his leave-taking; she has given her heart and her honor and prefers to remain with her lover now that he possesses them.

However, her agitation takes a more biting turn in the final division, when she inquires whether "business is urging him to leave." A concern for one's job is deemed the "worst disease of love" and if the greatest plague to love then it is worse than a lover's removing himself for another woman. She tells him that love is no "business" for businessmen, for the concrete concern with the mercenary and the material has no place in the abstract world of love with its emphasis on both sensual and spiritual joy. There is a critical devaluation of the man of the working
class (in this poem the middle class) for she admits that the "poor" can admit love as well as the "false" and the "foul." Donne implies that there is a connection between the proletarian commercial values and the bedroom boor; the ordinariness of the "shopkeeper" carries over into the bedroom. Thus, the woman cynically states, the businessman abed is as much out of place as the married man attempting to woo outside of his own marital precincts. He is cautious, preoccupied, and harbors a sense of his own guilt. He is a lover incapable of appreciating emotions which suggest delights not found in the ledger books.

Similar to the method employed in "The Dream," Donne uses a deliberately negative approach to the codes and fulfillment of love in order to illustrate a positive approach. The woman's cynicism does not arise from a sense of inconstancy or become a diatribe against the male sex; it arises instead in her annoyance with one of the "laity" who has not achieved a plateau of mutual love whereby he might perhaps "profane" it. The pedestrian concerns of the businessman remain impediments to achieving perfect love; he and his characteristics become categorized amid the inhibiting conventions of courtly love. Both the man and these older conventions are too concerned with self-awareness, a prime detriment to Donne's exclusive goal of true love. Not until the lover is able metaphysically and metaphorically to exchange selves with his beloved is the union an enduring
one, and being enduring it then becomes immutable.

In so many of the negative poems, as well as in the positive ones, we have seen the emotional anguish enveloping a lover through his sweetheart's absence. But in no other of the Songs and Sonnets does Donne manifest such a passionate description of the bereft lover as he does in his difficult "Nocturnal." Unlike most of the other poems of this nature, the mistress is literally dead; therefore, there is no witty play upon the courtly convention of absence precipitating a death. Donne's mistress is in her grave, and by the very nature of the poet's diction and imagery, we can appreciate the uttermost depths of his grief. Donne probes the feelings of a man who has loved deeply both physically and spiritually, who has experienced a fullness of reciprocal love, and who must now exist surrounded by others in love who yet possess the ability to requite both their passions and their loneliness.

For his setting of this grimly commemorative piece, Donne chooses what was for him the shortest day of the year, appropriate to the sobriety of his poem because of its meager allowance of daylight.

As befits a poem of elegiac note, the images are of the graveyard; he stresses such words as "interr'd," "dead," and "epitaph." Because he is the prime actor in this solemn drama, the poet is chosen as the one best suited to serve as commentator. He admits that he serves as the epitaph for
the world of lifelessness he sees about him.

Although Donne often compresses several images into a stanza, the images of the first stanza are consistent rather than shifting. This consistency produces a pervading atmosphere of melancholic depression combined with a sense of utter resignation to what is considered to be the hopelessness of love. Not only is St. Lucy's day the shortest day, and therefore possesses fewer moments of daylight than any other day, but he emphasizes that the sun has already spent its warmth—connotative of a loss on a larger plane. He notes that the entire "sap" of the earth has sunk into the ground and that this "general balm" has been greedily consumed by a thirsty soil. By extension we may associate the "sap" with its equivalent in the plane of man. In nature the sap is the vitalizing agent for all vegetable life. In winter this sap is restrained from the fecund earth; thus, it may be stated metaphorically that the earth itself sucks the sap since the sap runs downward into the soil. Only in spring will the natural regeneration recur, thereby continuing the cyclic perpetuation of life. Literally, in this season "life is shrunk dead and interr'd," Donne capitalizes on this bleak scene and draws a comparison with himself by saying that all these images of death and sterility when compared to his state "seem to laugh." By analogy, then, the vital spirits or the "sap" of Donne have been buried within the earth of his body; however, for
him there will be no spring to release this vital substance. His sun—his beloved—will not be near enough to his orbit to warm his body and thus to thrill his vital spirits. In effect, he will experience a lifetime of St. Lucy's days.

After comparing himself with the bleakness of the day, he offers himself as a fit subject for study by other lovers; this is something Donne has encouraged in many poems; in some he is dissected in order for onlookers to benefit from the results of his autopsy. For these future lovers he acts as the microcosm of the bleakness of winter as well as the hollowing effects of lost love. Donne becomes "every dead thing," which is representative of the alchemical actions of love. By this additional statement, he has shifted from being merely the microcosm in that he now becomes the superior corresponding plane to nature; he will contain all of the dead things of nature.

Donne frequently uses Paracelsan allusions and terminology, and this particular poem utilizes the Theophrastian doctrines more than any other in the collection. In alchemy, the alchemist seeks what he calls the Elixir, a collection of the superlative essence found in each created entity—the quintessence. Correctly applied this quintessence can be a curative for all maladies. Secondly, the alchemist concerns himself with the ability to transmute one substance into another; he is able to alter the basic natures of sub-
stances. Third, Paracelsans held that corruption and decay promoted generation, that it is a biological and physical necessity that some things perish in order to promote newer and more potent life, an idea popular perhaps because of contemporary interest in Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*. However, in Donne's poem the alchemist (Love) is the cruel pixie god found in his cynical poems rather than a positive force. Love has played a sad game with his disciple because love "wrought new alchemy" upon the poet by making him the epitome of nothingness. Essentially Donne is saying that a bereft lover is the exaggerated compilation of all negatives. His lover is the nadir of no hope, no joy, no passion, not even indifference.

There is the suggestion of a divine betrayal when he admits that Love, acting the part of an alchemist, extracted from him a quintessence (a positive quality) from the nothingness of his "dull privations" (perhaps the ordinary feelings experienced from the absence of a beloved) and from "lean emptiness" (possibly the unsatisfied desires now that the mistress is dead). But the alchemist did not transmute these negatives into anything positive or emotionally sustaining; instead, Love intensified the poet's sense of loss by increasing his feelings of "absence," "darkness," and "death." An alternative reading to the second sentence in the second stanza is that Donne is referring to his having indulged feelings of superficial
melancholy before the mistress ever died; that is, he wished some deliverance from his earlier feelings of "dull privation" and "lean emptiness" experienced while his mistress was alive. But Love, in heeding the prayers of a lover who was at this prior time more akin to the Petrarchan weepers and sighers, wrought this new alchemy which ironically brought grief to the poet; he "ruin'd" the poet by having the mistress die but by so doing he promoted deeper passions on the part of the poet. Donne then is "re-begot" to suffer and to become the quintessence of nothing, as if Love were teaching him a bitter lesson in true absence and true grief. Viewing the poem in its entirety, I am inclined to accept this interpretation, an interpretation which shows the poet attempting not only to understand his new awareness of the meaning of grief but to impart his reluctantly gained wisdom on those lovers--in the "next Spring"--who are still capable of experiencing love. By Donne's simple equation of the lovers and springtime, he casts emphasis on physical pleasures, rejuvenation, fertility, and the multiple phallic associations with Spring.

The third stanza clarifies the nature of the poet's love by introducing certain humanizing characteristics of jealousy, grief, and passion. Donne comments that he is now the "grave of all that is nothing"; he is the repository of negatives, all due to the agency of love and its effects upon him. He describes how in the days of his passion he and his mistress wept, shared grief, and were a world to themselves. And when they showed "care" to others they inflicted mutual
Chaos; Donne constantly emphasizes the sharing nature of his love. Thus, he admits, that by her death he has become the epitome of nothingness. He doubts his manhood; he speculates that even beasts have a purpose and a goal; even plants and inanimate stones are capable of passion according to their kind. All living creatures, indeed all creations—according to the great chain of being—possess some positive quality. But Donne can find none in himself; hence, he seems to remove himself from the very hierarchy of existence. His one instant of hope is in realizing that even an ordinary nothing such as a shadow possesses a property in that it must have a body and a light in order to project its phantom self. But this hope is short-lived.

In conclusion, he is forced to admit that he is not even an "ordinary nothing" such as the shadow because his "Sun" no longer shines in his universe—his mistress is absent. Therefore, he advises lovers who are still capable of loving (i.e., who yet possess living sweethearts) to enjoy their summers as well as their springs. Here Donne uses the conventional carpe diem thesis but with an unusually sobering note; it is not virginity that is the property of youth, but life itself. There is the caution to beware the evanescence of life and to enjoy existence while it endures; Donne concludes by preparing himself to join his beloved whom he sanctifies by referring to the commemoration of her death as a vigil and as an eve, terms associated with religious feasts.

The theme of the unwholesome existence of a lover denied
his mistress because she is dead is reiterated in "The Dis­soution." The love union has been a mutual one and as such the emotions and constituents of the lovers are either li­terally or metaphorically interchangeable; because these com­ponents are interchangeable and equal, they are constant. But when death occurs and a half of the unity perishes, the existing portion also experiences a loss and is unable to function.

Donne begins the poem with the dramatically blunt and bald statement, "She's dead." This simple declaration is packed with understatement, connoting finality and grief. Immediately succeeding this flat assertion, we learn just what her being dead really signifies, for Donne continues to clarify his initial comment in a tone which, though less passionate than that of "A Nocturnal," is nonetheless a troubled one. Yet he is still able to intellectualize the situation and the inevitable consequences of it.

The first emphasis in the poem is on the mistress—her death—and on what has happened to her subsequent to her physical demise; she has experienced a dissolution of the body and the soul. The soul, being the purer part of the person, immortal and immutable, has fled; the grosser part, the body, has remained and because it is subject to decom­position it has been resolved into its four elements. From this point Donne relates the import of the death upon him­selt and what unhappiness he is forced to endure from such a breach—ironically because the union was such an extra-
ordinary one. The very uniqueness of the depth of their love makes his sadness all the more difficult to bear. Metaphysically, he asserts that their elements were interchangeable so that with the death of the mistress his body is left with a double portion of elements; this overabundance of these physical properties does not add greater nourishment to his own body but rather smothers it.

The mistress will actually destroy her lover by the release of her soul mainly because his soul is sure to follow hers as his body cannot survive without the existence of its counterpart—the woman. Although the poem initially bears resemblance to Donne's Platonic pieces, the accent in this work is primarily on the physical and, only subordinately, on the spiritual.

The spirit, by its absence, destroys the body; this is a conventional Christian concept, for the religious belief is that when the soul leaves the body physical death occurs. However, in the framework wherein the lover and his beloved share mutual aspects of one another, the removal of the soul from the body of one would serve to destroy the body of the other. Herein Donne juxtaposes the progression of the Christian conceptual details, for it is his body which first expires, thus freeing his soul. The action of the poem runs: the woman's soul leaves her body and consequently her body dies; because her body dies, its elements infuse themselves into those of the poet thereby causing inner corruption of his body (by excess of elements) which will in turn release his soul. Hence, by the conclusion of the poem, it is ap-
parent that both souls will be released and both bodies will be dissolved into their elements. A balance is maintained and the love remains immutable since it is continued in the afterlife. Consonant with the conceit-constrained metaphysical manner here, Donne uses an intricate approach to a conventional romantic idea—true love never dies.

The three remaining poems for discussion all contain one thing in common—the high-minded affinities of kindred souls. The lovers in these poems have clearly achieved a permanency of union far above mere physical indulgence, even though they themselves are unable to define this quality. They are aware that their love is refined above the greater sensual passions, yet it is not purely aesthetic. Also, the poems make use of religious terminology to define further the nature of this unique attachment. In effect, these final poems become a summary of all that is positive in the poetry of Donne, all that is meritorious about love.

In "The Canonization" the poet admits that although his love may be unfit legend for a tomb it will be an appropriate tale for poetry; that is, the nature of his love is more applicable to the living potential of other lovers than for the cold finality of the grave. Love is of the living and is apt material for poetry, as Donne so copiously illustrates in the multiple poems devoted to this sole subject.

But more poignant than being remembered in verse—one more romantic anecdote to fire immature dreams—the love of this poet and his mistress is so unique that they become
love's saints and because they are such intercessors between man and the deity love, they may be invoked; Donne provides this invocation at the conclusion of the poem. The "epitaph" becomes a prayer for the tongues of eager lovers desirous of memorable requitement.

The abrupt, colloquial opening is reminiscent of "The Sun Rising" in that the poet adopts an irritated, censurieus tone at an unwarranted interruption of his love-making. In "The Canonization" it is not the sun that is so chided by the poet but any interloper into the private confines of the important occupation of being in love. Again Donne stresses that love is a private pact, but he does not necessarily attempt to enforce this privacy for any bourgeois purposes such as the concern for one's reputation which we find in the courtly conventions. If Donne's lovers demand solitude they do so because of the unique nature and therefore unsharable quality of their love. Lovers need no other world than the microcosmic universe they have found in one another's arms and souls. Thus, Donne angrily admonishes the unidentified voyeur and demands that he be left alone and that this intruder should occupy himself with other matters.

As if in anticipation of some objection to his demand for autonomy in love, he asks "who's injur'd" by his love? And by hyperbelie hypotheses he shows that no ships are drowned by his sighs and his tears have caused no inundation. The world and its problems, large and small, continues despite the amorous adventures of the poet. The macrocosm operates
in spite of the microcosm. Nor is he adversely concerned with being called derogatory terms such as "fly," an insect associated not only with the evanescence of life but with an eager affinity for procreation. In connection with the associations of the "fly" Donne deals with the phallic imagery of candles, referring to both himself and to his mistress as "tapers" who at their "own cost die." Aside from being sex symbols, tapers literally extinguish themselves by means of the burning wick which melts the surrounding tallow; hence, the very function of the taper insures its destruction. Likewise, the lovers do die at their own "cost" in that they abbreviate their lives by their sexual play. But it is a choice mutually agreed upon.

However, Donne diverges from his frequent description of lovers perishing by the very passion that nourishes their affection when he introduces allusions which connote a resurrection, a rebirth; like the legendary Phoenix, these lovers will rise from ashes, ashes of their passion. From the immediate physical self-destruction emerges a more vital union. This new state is mysterious to them and they cannot adequately define it. All that they know is that prior to the love act they are possessed of their innately individual sexual characteristics; the man is the virile and aggressive "eagle" and the woman is equated with the feminine and passive "dove." However, in love-making these two sexes become merged in such a way that the lovers become as the Phoenix, which has no gender and is perhaps androgynous, and Phoenix-like they rise
renewed by their passion. But there has been a transformation. The differences of sexes, i.e., preoccupation with the sensual aspects of love, is not apparent and in their inchoate state they become "mysterious," a religious description used to refer to either one of the secrets of creation known only to the Creator or to the intensely spiritual experience of *ecstasy*, which is unutterable. A religious "mystery" is something so sacred and complex that the finite mind of man cannot fathom its meaning. The poet does not spend time futilely attempting to explain this occurrence. As the lover in "The Ecstasy," the poet admits that "it was not sex" that produced this final unity and incomprehensible sharing.

Because their love is mysterious they may be said to be canonized for love. Strictly speaking, in order for a person to be canonized, there are certain definite actions which this individual must have performed, namely some miracle or other supra-human act. The refined quality of their love designates that these are suitable subjects for such elevation; but the theology is secular and the deity is Eros or Aphrodite. As in other poems, Donne juxtaposes religious terminology with secular significance. Poems written about these lovers become "hymns" in Donne's theology. And his concluding stanza is a prayer to be uttered to the lovers in order to have this consecrated pair act as intermediaries between votary and god. The prayer is that subsequent to the possession of "reverend love," this special sensual
sanctity has made each the "hermitage" or the sanctuary of
the other which in turn formed for these lovers a microcosmic
state reflected in their mutual glances. The plea then is
that these lovers ought to ask the god of love to give to
supplicants a pattern of this affection so that all prospect-
ive lovers may have it to follow.

The privacy demanded at the beginning of the poem be-
comes ironic at its conclusion; where Donne has earlier de-
manded that no one share or intrude upon his love, in the
conclusion he finds himself and his mistress venerated and
sees that they have become a universal source of information.
Little secret can remain of their love; in fact, the revel-
atation of their secret is prayed for. The high-minded ideal
epitomized by the love that elevates itself above the sen-
sual and which thus becomes immutable is also a desirable
goal of those who do not have it and who perhaps will never
achieve it. In "The Canonization" Donne's laity pray to
receive this unique state but in "A Valediction: forbidding
mourning" we see that prayers are not always answered and
that the discovery of this "mysterious" kind of love is ex-
perienced by the select few for reasons they themselves are
helpless to explain.

In "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" Donne further
emphasizes not only the achievements of a perfect love but
also several of its characteristics. Negating the conven-
tional theme of absence, Donne shows that absence is a state
of the body, and that minds attuned to one another may ex-
perience a spatial breach of the purely physical but the higher faculties remain harmoniously consistent. Again he shows a subtle handling of the idea that the body is inferior to the soul and that one of its more finite, and hence mutable, characteristics is its sensual limitation. The immortal and immutable soul-mind is able to transcend the absence and thus sustain a transitory separation.

The setting for the poem is the departure of the lover and his admonition to his mistress to behave in a manner suitable to the nature of their love; thus, by his intellectual removal of her apprehensions we get an insight into not only the quality of their love but also into the essence of a love that Donne considers perfect. From the very first of his several comparisons, Donne stresses the equation of their love with positive values. He initially asks her to part from him as "virtuous men" part with their souls, that is, quietly and so soundlessly that the breach is barely detectable.

This silence of departure is further stressed in the second stanza by the word "melt," signifying an exceedingly tacit departure as well as his addition of the structure to "make no noise." He also desires that she dispense with the ordinary apparel of leave-taking--excessive weeping and gasping sighs. If she were to do these mundane things, he explains, they would become a "profanation" of the relationship because they would reveal to the "laity," the non-initiates, the existence of their love as well as place their love on a less elevated level. By using the word "profane" Donne
connotes the sacred quality of their love. Because the violation is contingent upon some revelation to the "laity," we may infer that Donne is not only referring to the sacred-sacred nature of this love but also to the mystery of it. The "laity," by being inferior to the lovers, are not worthy of such knowledge. Also implied in his taboo is the assertion that the woman ought not to resort to ordinary gestures and affectations of farewell, the mannerisms obviously attributable to the "laity" for the manifest reason that it is these mannerisms which they immediately recognize. It would be a degradation of their love to remove it to the ordinary.

The second comparison of their love is to the physical universe. The earthquake, a property of the sublunar earth, brings fears to men who deem it an evil portent. However, the "trepidation of the spheres," the regular oscillation of the translunar spheres, though far greater in vastness and awe than the mere movements of a gross earth, is "innocent." In effect, he is telling her that that which is earthly is subject to fear and anxiety and harm, but that which is superior to the earth is greater in power yet affords no harm or fearful tension.

In the fourth stanza, he further clarifies the astral comparison by alluding to counterparts in the realm of love; he has reduced the general to the particular, perhaps so that his mistress will be certain not to misinterpret him or perhaps he wishes to re-emphasize the distinctions between purely physical love and physical love which has grown to
Platonic proportions. Therefore, he says that "dull" (ordinary, prosaic) "sublunary" lovers whose only bond is that of physical attraction cannot withstand absence because this absence removes from the relationship the only thing which held it intact—sex. With the removal of the sexual partner there is no strengthening ingredient remaining in the relationship, and it dissolves. But Donne assures his mistress that their love, like the heavenly spheres, is refined to such a state that they can retain their affection in spite of the physical departure of one of them. They can do this because they are "Inter-assur'd of the mind."

Similar to "The Canonization" in which the lovers were ineffectual in explaining how they rise to a special plateau which supersedes the sexual, Donne is unable to define the mystery of their understood love. The lovers appear to find trust intuitively so that even the words Donne addresses to his mistress are actually superfluous and meant mainly to denote to the reader the nature of this rare affection. For if their love is as ethereal as Donne asserts, and they are indeed "inter-assur'd of the mind," there is no need to define to the woman what she already instinctively knows.

Be that as it may, Donne proceeds with his third comparison, that of the well-known conceit of the compasses. Mainly, in this conceit he makes more graphic the idea that they are, Platonically speaking, one soul shared by two bodies. He is the one departing and she remains the "fix'd foot," and analogous to the workings of the geometric com-
pass, when he moves, she "hearkens" or leans in his direction. No matter how far the mobile foot moves, the anchored foot is yet attached to it but allows free movement to its auxiliary member. The conceit, besides being an ingenious means to illustrate simultaneous detachment and attachment, also draws a circular figure. Because the figure of the circle is traditionally a symbol of unity and completeness, Donne further clarifies the nature of their mutual love; its circularity is indicative of its immutability because in this circle it is impossible to detect the point of its origin or the point of its cessation. Donne clearly states that through the efficacy of the fixed foot, which is able to maintain its fixity because of the dual strength of both members, he returns to the point of his departure and thus ends where he began.

In "The Canonization" the lovers are elevated to sacred reverence in the religion of love; they become love's saints. In "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" there is again the almost esoteric manipulation of religious imagery; but in "The Ecstasy," where Donne incorporates a broader image of a couple's being canonized for love, he most cogently associates a sacramental aura with secular love. It seems appropriate, then, to conclude the discussion of these positive poems with a work concerned with such a mysterious, sacred, and extremely rare occurrence as the ecstasy, that intense satisfaction of sustained union with the very essence of love itself—in Christian theology a union with Godhead.
during which certain eternal mysteries are intuitively apprehended. But it is a known fact that these epiphanies cannot be satisfactorily articulated for the enlightenment of the religiously plebian.

In the true religious ecstasy, the soul supposedly breaks free of its restraining form, the body, in order to achieve this communion. Here, in Christian dogma, we encounter the Platonic tenet that the soul is in constant conflict with its temporal shell and desires escape whereby it can return to the comfort and joy of the Good. At rare moments, prepared for by rigorous contemplation and prayer, the mystic supposedly can disunite his soul-mind from the senses and in this free state enter into arcane sacred knowledge which produces supreme rapture. The principle of this annihilation of self is at the base of many Oriental practices in which an individual also devotes time to the contemplation of sacred mysteries, and he forces his mind to subordinate the senses. In any event, whether Platonic, Christian, or neo-Buddhist, in ecstasy it is the intellect or the soul which is superior to the senses. The senses are but instruments to initiate this rare pattern of experience.

It is this annihilation of self in order to achieve truth higher than that gained from the senses which is the theme of "The Ecstasy," yet Jonne's lovers, in attaining this extra-corporeal state do so to gain an intenser knowledge of the mysteries of love rather than to enjoy the
traditional communion with divinity. Their bodies become mere hosts for their spirits which receive a deeper knowledge than any tactile reactions can confer.

The first quatrain early insinuates two themes which permeate the poem—the role of sensual elements and the interrelation of soul and body in order to insure mutual pleasure or growth. The initial comparison first associates the two lovers with a pillow upon a bed; the connotations are that the pillow completes the function of the bed, affords pleasure, and suggests serenity. Likewise a swelling bankside is compared to the bed and pillow in that it seems to thrust itself up deliberately to rest the "violet's reclining head." Such a "pregnant" bank is illustrative of anticipation and it is the anticipation of sexual union which envelops the expectant lovers. The violet is suggestive of the female passivity and fecundity in that the violet possesses a strong heritage of growth and reproduction. Thus, in the first four lines Jonne has given images suggestive of the boudoir, imminent sensuality, and of peace and serenity in that the elements of sleep are stressed.

Upon this metaphoric couch recline two lovers, recumbent with their hands tightly clasped by the moisture produced from the physical tension as well as the intellectual union they are experiencing. Their eyes are directed upon one another with a fixity so that they enjoy a mutual exchange of images transposed through their eyes, thereby avoiding the necessity for vocal expression. Their mutual
exchange is too personal for verbal articulation. This emphasis on the eyes as transmitters of intense inner communication is Platonic in origin and contributes to the overall Platonic tone of the poem. In the *Timaeus*, Plato tells us that "the pure fire which is within us," our spiritual component, is "made to flow through the eyes in a stream smooth and dense, compressing the whole eye and especially the centre part, so that it kept out everything of a coarser nature and allowed to pass only this pure element," man's higher affinities: also, he continues, "one body is formed by natural affinity in the line of vision." To Plato, sight is the source of man's greatest spiritual and intellectual benefit; it is the actual channel of the soul. Thus, when Donne says "Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread our eyes, upon one double string," he comes more directly within the Platonic sphere than in any other poem in this collection. The lovers, gazing intently on one another, allow a communication wave to transfer their thoughts to one another without the interference of mere words; the entire message of their emotion is contained within their extra-perceptive aura.


8 *Loc. cit.*
We know the lovers have not yet entered into a complete sexual union because the speaker himself tells us that merely to "intergraft our hands, as yet/ Was all the means to make us one," and simply to exchange telegraphic images through their eyes was the total of their "propagation." In this ecstasy, which cannot be that of physical consummation for it occurs before the sex act, the souls of the two lovers are, by virtue of the excellence of their love, freed from the bodies and hover between the two recumbent figures. The purpose of this extra-corporeal conversation is to negotiate the course of action that the lovers will follow when their souls return to reanimate the bodies; for it is apparent that when the souls are absent from the bodies, the bodies are as inert as "sepulchral statues."

The speaker, the lover who recounts this adventure in retrospect, then comments that if any other person knows the language of the soul (and we see that the soul has no language as such, but, like angelic superiors, has an instantaneous thought transference) and possesses an appreciation of the ethereal nature of love and could witness this scene at a distance, even this enlightened spectator might mistake what he would see. For the souls of the two lovers are so equal that even the most subtle viewer might mistake one soul for the other; however, this mistake can be beneficial, for the viewer might take with him a purer conception of love than the one he has.

The remainder of the poem is a literal commentary uttered by the lovers after experiencing this ecstasy during
which they were mute to analyze what was happening to them. We learn that the nature of the ecstatic experience, though it did not tell the lovers directly just what is the origin of their passion, shows that they have learned that it "was not sex" that initiated the relationship. The experience of the ecstasy a priori physical love has clarified that. They do admit that it was not until this mystical rapture that they realized that they had never known what made them love. They are now made aware that they had never really known what love is until this moment. Herein is the first truth gained from this mysterious communication. Love has equalized their souls, and we know from scholastic lore that an equalization of elements is one of the mainstays of unalterability among created objects. Their dual souls, their individual "mixtures" purified by love, become one and the intimation is that this greater soul, being composed of the two lesser ones, grows to proportions that signify endurance and continuity. To emphasize this, quatrain ten refers to the violet image mentioned in the first stanza; a single violet, though "poor," when transplanted redoubles and multiplies. So too does the single loving soul; when transplanted or exchanged with another's it too can double and multiply and this insure its posterity. These metaphors of multiplication and redoubling can be equated with the word "pregnant," also in the initial quatrain; they all signify growth and hardihood.

Donne proceeds to define further the nature of the
feeling evidenced by his lovers; they agree that when two separate loves merge into a third single one, this "abler soul"--this super-soul--has the capacity to control defects found in its less strong components. Thus, from union comes strength. It is important to remember that both lovers speak in unison, indicating still further that they have completely subjugated themselves each to the other and consequently think alike and, thinking alike, it is not strange that they should speak identically, too. These two lovers, who are now this "new soul," possess the extraordinary knowledge of a superior soul and it is at this new union that they admit that they "know of what we are compos'd, and made" and they know, too, that as one soul "no change can invade" them. They are immutable because they are pure spirits and the pure spirit is not subject to natural laws of decay and death.

However, immediately after arriving at the point at which they admit that they are at their purest, being refined spirits, they wonder about the purpose and the properties of their bodies. It is here that Donne illustrates his primary thesis concerning love, that it is the acceptance of the body as well as the soul and an understanding of the functions of each which constitute a lasting mutual affection. For the enlightened lovers pointedly state that they are the "intel­ligences" and the bodies are the "spheres." Donne even uses the Platonic terminology to clarify this relationship, whereas the bodies are but the spheres to be guided by the intelligent souls, yet one is essential to the other. The
purpose of the Intelligences, according to Plato, is to guide their assigned spheres; therefore, the purpose of a sphere is to obey the dictates of its superior part. Metaphorically, Donne is announcing that there is a mutual interdependence of the body and the soul; such an attitude precludes the medieval debate of the body and soul in order to illustrate ascendancy and expendability. Again, Donne is shunning the false Platonism of unrequited love; aesthetic love divorced from the sexual is non-love.

The lovers readily admit, and they make this admission after the revelatory ecstasy, "we owe them _bodies_ thanks." They have this debt primarily because lust (body) yielded to the reason (soul) and was guided by this intelligence. Physical desire is not "dross" as the antiseptically aesthetic would have it. Physical desire is admittedly inferior to reason but only as an "alloy" is inferior to a pure metal; an alloy is but a careful adulteration which does not substantially change a metal by rendering it less durable. It is not "dross"--the refuse of metal.

The lovers admit that one soul has the ability to communicate with another but the soul requires the agency of the body in order to accomplish this. The body has certain properties which the soul does not and these properties complement the soul. And since Donne is dealing with love and the result of love--physical consummation--it is understandable that intellectual communication does need the aid of the body. The lovers first had a sensual attachment to
one another--their cemented hands--and from this sensual origin came the opportunity for the meeting of their souls. Thus the body functions as an instrument of the soul. Likewise a deeper spiritual exchange will be reciprocated by means of more intense sexual satisfaction. It is after the souls "negotiate" that they repair to their respective bodies and the bodies complete the courtship process. It is from passion, and the passionate release of the vital spirits--"as like souls as can be"--plus the interaction with the soul that the "subtle knot, which makes us man"--the tension of the body and the soul--is sustained.

Therefore, the lovers conclude, even "pure lovers" souls descend to affections which the other part of man, his body, can apprehend; unless this is possible "a great Prince in prison lies." This Prince is the capacity or ability to love fully; because this potential is so important to forming a total individual, it is attributed regality and power.

The conclusion reached by these enlightened lovers is that love's mysteries indeed "grow in souls" but this growth is abortive if it has no means of making itself known. This knowledge, no matter how uplifting, will serve no recognizable purpose if it is not reduced to practice. Thus, like the ideas of great men, love needs a means of expression; the body becomes its book.

Donne most clearly denounces the Petrarchan acceptance of unrequited love by showing that purely spiritual love is
frustrated by its very function. The man who loves but mentally does not love wholly and because he does not love in his entirety, he does not essentially love at all.

However, when love has achieved this immutable state through its fusion into a greater soul, it will not become less pure by once more repairing to the bodies. Here Jonne diverges from the prevalent ideas that the grosser elements of the body serve to corrupt the soul; he is least Augustinian in his final lines in which the lovers, speaking as one, comment that when they have returned to their bodies, anyone who sees them "shall see small change." In this thematic summation, Jonne shows that there does exist an unalterability in the realm of love and that the inferiority of the body, though existing, can not alter what is perfectly blended.
CHAPTER IV
Conclusion

Although Donne--throughout the inclusive scope of his writings--manifests a deep awareness of the theme of mutability, in the Songs and Sonnets he chooses the subtle handling of love with which to illustrate, in microcosmic proportions, his intellectual rebuttal to what he believes to be pervasive on a larger scale. In his sermons, his point of view concerning the temporality of existence is more pronounced; nevertheless, from a scrutiny of these early lyrics we can detect an awareness of and solution to this emotional and intellectual quandary.

His perception of mutability is peculiar to the era rather than unique with him. And although his poems contain elements of the drama and the lyric, these were but literary genres of his age. And the theme of love--be it Ovidian, Marian, or personally within the confines of the poet's heart--is the mainstay of Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry. Thus, Donne is neither novel in his perceptions concerning decay nor is he an innovator in the vehicles used for the dissemination of his attitudes. What he does offer, however, is a unique approach to this negative theme of decay. He uses love--ordinarily a positive entity--to illustrate the negating effects of mutability. But the poems do not become a tour de force to emphasize an overwhelming morbidity and defeatism. By a careful analysis of these poems we can detect a groping for stability no matter how carefully Donne attempts
to mask his inherent melancholy and skepticism with flippancy, scholastic circumlocutions, and metaphysical "wit."

Love, then, proves the vehicle for his cathartic treatment of mutability. The inconstant elements of love emphasize not only the changeableness and fortuitous caprice of the emotion itself, but also of the people struggling with this emotion. To emphasize further the significance of this instability of love, we must bear in mind the prevalent Elizabethan concept of corresponding planes, according to which all spheres of creation (and all properties of these spheres) share a certain relationship toward one another in the hierarchy of being. Hence, instability on one level is but symptomatic or portentous of instability on one or more of the corresponding planes. Thus Donne's treatment of love becomes more thematically profound than mere semantic dalliance with reluctant coquettes.

In conjunction with its ability to reflect or parallel analogous situations on corresponding planes, love—like the cosmos and terrestrial Nature—has duality. This duality is sensed principally in the divisions of the *Songs and Sonnets* into negative poems and positive poems. It is equally apparent not only in the tension between constant and inconstant love but is evidenced also in the interaction between the body and the soul. However, from the immediate discrepancy of emotions in the negative poems, in the positive poems there is achieved a unity which implies solidity and permanence—particularly emphasized in "A Valediction: Forbidding
mourning," The Canonization," and "The Ecstasy."

This duality is also evidenced in the images of love itself. Although the love qualities of both poetic divisions are pagan rather than Christian, it is the erotic nature of love (Eros) that dominates the negative poems. In "Love's Usury," "Love's Deity," and "Love's Exchange" it is Eros who provokes the cynical point of view; his indifference, vanity, and gross sensuality lead to themes of melancholy and disillusion. However, in Donne's Platonic poems Eros has been metamorphosed so that he is akin to the Platonic conception of Absolute Good, which is also synonymous with wisdom. In these positive poems love and a comprehension of this love are virtually equated even if the knowledge is reached by intuitive means rather than by scientific empiricism. It is the nature of the ethereal love concept that occupies the heart of the Songs and Sonets. And, together the conflicting points of view in both sections merge to form a single assertion—diversity exists but does so within an order greater than itself.

The ability to reconcile this duality in order to sustain emotional solidarity carries over to his choice of images. Aside from the conventional images of the charnel house—the grave, corpses, bones, autopsies—Donne draws upon various branches of science for his tropes; these metaphysical conceits in turn manifest a duality which Donne resolves in his often intricate dialectic. In "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," he uses the images of the compasses, figures from
the science which Donne claims "calls all in doubt." However, in the poem the compasses serve to remove doubt by acting as devices to illustrate perfection and wholeness. Thus instruments of a palpably iconoclastic science are manipulated to voice positive beliefs. Likewise, in "A Valediction: of weeping" Donne again uses an image of scientific import--the globe--in order to denote a positive position. Such unique conceits have aided in weaving the tag "metaphysical" but there appears to be far too plausible a relation between the images and the themes to warrant their being considered predominantly "witty" or clever tropes with which to dandify anti-poetry.

Where conflicting connotations of an image are so eased to produce thematic harmony, Donne also juxtaposes connotations of images to meet the requirements of his thesis; but this is no simple semantic word-play. In his study of the constancy of love, when he parallels this constancy with high-minded love, it is not only unique and clever but mandatory and appropriate that he uses religious terminology. For in effect he is equating the constancy of ethereal love with the constancy of the Absolute Good, and in doing this the language of the sacred is proper rather than ornamental.

Throughout the poems there is also the relation between love and death, whether this death be that of absence, of sexual excess, or literal expiration. Although the two states appear to offset one another thematically, there is a correlation between them; despite the differing functions of
each, together they form the wholeness of human life. It is love theoretically which formed us, both in the eyes of the Creator—if we be orthodox—or in the hearts of our parents—if we be romantic. Thus love, whether in the pagan turmoil of a Greek tragedy or in our contemporary world, is traditionally associated with cohesion and creation. Conversely, death is the process whereby life is terminated, and in religious belief it becomes the catalytic agent to insure the separation of the body from its immortal energy—the soul.

Again this duality of parts, derivative of the love-death interrelationship, is apparent in yet another context. To the Donne of the positive poems this dichotomy of body and soul takes on deep significance. It is in these poems that he makes prominent use of the conceptual framework of the great chain of being whereby man can achieve his near-angelic state. And he does this through a death of the self. The ego, in Donne's poems, is strongly integrated with the sensory perceptions of the body and seeks physical gratification. When the lover loses self-consciousness his spirit soars into communion with its Platonic Good, a state shared simultaneously with that of his beloved.

Hence, the positive poems, as well as their negative counterparts, contain themes germane to the collection as a whole. If the woman in the negative poems is but the prototype of the fickle seducer of men—soulless and shallow—Donne explores the more affirmative side of her character in these positive poems. In the early pieces he chooses a
character delineation which is medieval and Calvinistic; in the later poems he selects character traits emphasized by the Neo-Platonists. These later poems are thus chronologically more modern than their predecessors, for they incorporate contemporary ideas which are often at subtle variance from those preached by the medieval church fathers. And it is this new Platonism which elevates the position of woman whereby she functions as a means to achieve a bliss far more spiritually sustaining than that of transitory physical satisfaction. She becomes an equal participant in love, and when this occurs something more is gained in the love union than brief satiety; her soul is emphasized, and in a poem such as "The Ecstasy" the peak of satisfaction is achieved before any condescension to sex.

To what solution to the overwhelming sense of flux and decay has Jonne progressed in these positive poems? It is no solution in praise of the ascetic, a solution so often encountered as a foil to the purely sensual life. In these later poems there is no monkish praise of abstract love devoid of the senses. For to indulge in this would be merely to emphasize another manner of division when it is indivisibility that is sought. Jonne does not become the false Platonist concerned only with a vague abstract appreciation of women and love. This fact he expressly makes clear in such poems as "Community," "The Will," "The Blossom," and "Love's Alchemy," in which he states that a love which is all mental is incomplete and spiritually hollow, as much so as a love
which is entirely sensual. It is the union of body and soul which gives permanence and endurance to love, but not simply because the soul needs the body as its physical coordinator. The main emphasis in these Platonic poems is that through this union of the body and the soul the individuals share a knowledge of the true meaning of love, and it is this knowledge, this absolute truth, that will not perish. Nowhere is Donne so unrealistic as to assert that ecstatic love will keep his lovers literally eternal. It is the wisdom that they have achieved that will maintain permanence, and this wisdom is achieved only by mutual interrelation of all of man's faculties. Thus in these poems, and others suggestive of this supreme phase of love, it is implied that the permanence will maintain itself through the lesson illustrated by these lovers. In effect, they become for posterity the "pattern" or the "book" of perfect love, much as the paintings on Keats' urn are also concepts of permanence.

Donne's lovers become works of art and it is the idea of their love that succeeds them. They will pass into dust but the idea of their love remains eternal. Donne deals with the ideal world by placing it superior to the material--the very foundation of Platonic philosophy. He has illustrated how the material world leads to re-entry into the ideal world as well as how the material world is a necessary progression to the achievement of the ideal just as, on a smaller scale, the senses are indeed necessary adjuncts to an appreciation of the spiritual. For of what practical use is a "naked thinking heart"? It is unnecessary to discuss
Jonne as being pragmatic in his love ventures, for he is constantly intellectualizing a path through what is workable and what is not, to what provides him the immediate answers to his queries and to what motions and ideas are irrevelant to his designs.

In summary, then, Jonne does indeed come full circle in his study of one facet of the individual--love--but he has shown that love cannot be separated from the remainder of man's qualities. He examines the sensual side of man and finds it wanting. He tests the purely Platonic and deems it absurd. But when he examines the subtle interworking of both, he discovers a truth which ameliorates his melancholy sense of change. He discovers that from the immediate view of change around him there exists a constancy within change. And herein he finds satisfaction.

Finally, it is apparent that Jonne forms a relationship between the theme of love and the theme of mutability; he gradually proceeds from the negativism of an "everlasting no" in the negative poems to a resolution of this outlook by means of a deeper penetration into the mystery of love, a study which reveals to him that there exists a unity formed of diversity, that there is a constancy greater than change, that the whole, although greater than any of its parts, is also the sum of its parts--basically the identical argument suggested by Hakewill in his reply to Goodman during the notorious debate about mutability and the inherent decay of the world.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hughes, Merritt Y. "The Lineage of 'The Extasie,'" *MLR*, XXVII (1932), 1-5.

__________. "Some of Donne's 'Ecstasies,'" *PMLA*, LXXV (1960), 509-519.


Sharp, Robert L. *From Donne to Dryden: The Revolt Against Metaphysical Poetry*. Chapel Hill, 1940.


VITA

Barbara Kehoe Maynard was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1935. She attended St. Dominic elementary school and St. Mary's Dominican High School. In 1957 she received her B.A. in journalism from Louisiana State University, and in 1959 she received her B.A. in English. She is married to Reid Maynard, also a literature teacher, and is presently a Lecturer in English at Sacramento State College in Sacramento, California.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate:  Barbara Ann Maynard

Major Field:  English

Title of Thesis:  The Songs and Sonnets of John Donne: An Essay on Mutability

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

January 27, 1967