Meaning and metaphor in John Donne's elegies

Freda Mahlstedt Jones

The University of Montana

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/2945
MEANING AND METAPHOR IN JOHN DONNE'S ELEGIES

By

Freda Jones

B.A. University of Montana, 1929

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1965

Approved by:

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

AUG 16 1965

Date
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART ONE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MATRIX OF WIT.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ELEGY.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PART TWO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ELEGIES: &quot;EVAPORATIONS&quot; OF WIT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CARICATURE AND SATIRE.</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 8, &quot;THE COMPARISON&quot;</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 13, &quot;JULIA&quot;</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 2, &quot;THE ANAGRAM&quot;</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 11, &quot;THE BRACELET&quot;</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. ILLICIT LOVE</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 1, &quot;JEALOSIE&quot;</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 4, &quot;THE PERFUME&quot;</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 7, &quot;NATURES LAY IDEOT&quot;</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 14, &quot;A TALE OF A CITIZEN AND HIS WIFE&quot;</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONSTANCY AND INCONSTANCY IN LOVE</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 3, &quot;CHANGE&quot;</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 15, &quot;EXPOSTULATION&quot;</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 17, &quot;VARIETY&quot;</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 10, &quot;THE DREAM&quot;</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. NEOPLATONIC LOVE</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 9, &quot;THE AUTUMNAL&quot;</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. IMPORTANCE OF BODY AND SPIRIT.</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 18, &quot;LOVES PROGRESS&quot;</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 19, &quot;TO HIS MISTRESS GOING TO BED&quot;</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 20, &quot;LOVES WARRE&quot;</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. VALEDICTION POEMS.</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 5, &quot;HIS PICTURE&quot;</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 6, &quot;OH, LET ME NOT SERVE SO&quot;</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 16, &quot;ON HIS MISTRESS&quot;</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEGIE 12, &quot;HIS PARTING FROM HER&quot;</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART THREE

| VIII. CONCLUSION: RECONSIDERATION OF DONNE'S "MONARCHY OF WIT" | 153 |

BIBLIOGRAPHY | 162 |
"Unceasing the genius of the poets pours forth, and recks not of the trammels of historic truth. . . . I have been undone by your credulity."

Ovid
PART ONE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

THE MATRIX OF WIT
The use of simple metaphor in poetry has been ever present and inescapable, perhaps since man first developed language and gave objects names. However, today, its nature and its use have received renewed emphasis. Moreover, it is not surface metaphor, but the metaphor of depth that interests modern students of literature. Since the object of this study is concerned with the use of metaphor and other figurative language in John Donne's Elegies, an explanation of what the writer means by metaphor seems necessary.

I shall deal primarily with surface and depth metaphor (to be defined later) and show that depth paradox accompanies depth metaphor. Furthermore, since Donne's metaphysical conceits involve both metaphor and paradox, it is necessary to understand the nature of the conceit in order to comprehend Donne's meaning. Donne, of course, is not the first thinker and writer to use metaphor or conceits.

Early Ionian philosophers, to express abstract metaphysical thought and to make themselves understood, resorted to concrete metaphors. And in their effort to express the ambiguity, the complexity, the flux, the discord yet the harmony, the jumble yet the balance in the universe and in existence, they reverted to paradox, antithesis, metaphor and simile to clarify and give emphasis to their meaning.
Heraclitus, ca. 500 B.C., for instance, resorted to metaphor to suggest the nature of the inexpressible. He employed it not for decoration but as a means of expressing subtle reality. In "Fragment 115" he writes, "The name of the bow is life, but its work is death." Here is a triple ambiguity. First, the meaning of the sentence is built upon the pun in the Greek word "bow," which, depending on how it is accented, can mean either a weapon or life. Second, the bow is life and the bow is death; here life and death, widely separated and tension-creating metaphors, are brought together. Third, life and death are both existential experiences; life can be looked upon as a natural progress toward death. Frequent as his use of metaphor is, however, Heraclitus does not say, "I am writing metaphorically." He naturally turns to its use when he is trying to express complex philosophical thoughts, perhaps as primitive man turned to metaphor to give things names.

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle also recognized the importance of metaphor and stated that they used it as a rhetorical principle of art. Aristotle explains that a true metaphor is a figure of four words joined by a strong verb: "The sun sows the light" means the same as "The sun

\[1\text{As quoted by Philip Wheelwright, \textit{Heraclitus} (Princeton, 1959), p. 90.}\]
scatters light the way a sower scatters seed."² It appears, then, that the earlier Greek philosophers used metaphor without mention of it as a rhetorical device, but that the major Greek philosophers, especially Plato, consciously made use of metaphor and the devices of rhetoric in the expression of their philosophies.

Metaphor involves opposing one term to another, and such a relationship may result in paradox. This kind of statement forces one to see that the opposing terms are not only related, but in some way identical. According to Philip Wheelwright, paradox and metaphor tend to involve each other whenever they are used in "depth," not as "surface." He defines a surface paradox as a "seeming contradiction" that can be argued away logically; a surface metaphor merely declares that "something is something else." On the other hand, depth metaphor and depth paradox usually occur together. Furthermore, they are essential and basic to the meaning of what is written.³ Thus, the relation between the vehicle (metaphor) and the tenor (trend of thought) is organic, not mechanical. Wheelwright maintains that if metaphor is used without paradox, it loses its metaphorical character and assumes the nature of a simile; and if paradox is used without metaphor, it is a mere witticism.

³Wheelwright, 94.
Stated differently, if a metaphor is symbolic rather than merely grammatical, it involves a paradox. On the other hand, a grammatical or superficial metaphor can be restated as a simile without loss of meaning. Moreover, surface metaphor is mainly simple comparison, whereas depth metaphor, which philosophers could use to characterize "fundamental reality," depends for clarity on far-reaching analogies. Now, since philosophers in their metaphysical questings, finally, do not know what Ultimate really is, suitable comparisons are hard to find, and so, they find that explanation of the Ultimate can be approached only through the use of attributes. Such attributes must be expressed metaphorically. Philosophers thus use highly disparate analogies which overreach themselves in meaning to become paradoxes.

Thus, in speaking of Divinity, one needs to use depth metaphor; for the insight or probing that is involved in description of the Divine cannot be confined to mere grammatical comparison, as in a simile. It follows that the ancient philosophers started with familiar situations which opened the way for transcendental possibilities of expression. In doing this, they used far-fetched metaphors which resulted in paradoxical statements. Inversely, depth paradox also involves metaphors which are superficial (grammatical) and may result in cleverness or wit; or it may occur in depth (meaning), which results in metaphysical
considerations. Depth metaphor does not rely, then, merely on the language used, but on its intrinsic ambiguity.

The native ambiguity creates a metaphysical or puzzling note which involves intellectual tension. This note of strain is characteristic of much of Donne's writing. He, like Heraclitus, resorts to far-reaching metaphors, which nevertheless are grounded in concrete reality, to make his meaning clear. Of course, in his elegies, Donne employs subject matter that is not strictly metaphysical, but is mere wit or current information. That is, he does not ask, "What is my relationship to God?" or "How will my soul reach heaven?" Even though he speaks of the union of souls, which infers a union with God, his concern with ontological issues in the Elegies is significantly attached to the physical. It is equally true that in his writing there is an effort to maintain a balance between two sets of values, or between two possible interpretations of the same situation. It is evident, furthermore, that he progresses by logical or pseudological steps, and that he uses far-fetched metaphors which during the Seventeenth Century became known as conceits. It is metaphor, aided by similes and allusions, which forms both the brief or the extended conceit. Sometimes the conceit is not an organic figure, as it is in Elegie 4, "The Perfume," Elegie 9, "The Autumnal" or Elegie 11, "The Bracelet"; it may be only an extended
description as the discovery image in Elegie 18, "Loves Progress," or the clothing image in Elegie 19, "To His Mistress Going to Bed." Sometimes it is a figure that only parallels the central thought as in Elegie 20, "Loves Warre." On the other hand it may be a series of images that telescope by logical progress, as was noted in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Whichever course, however, that the conceit follows, in Donne's practice it is marked by a discordia concors, a bringing together of dissimilar ideas. Samuel Johnson indicates this characteristic of Seventeenth Century wit in his life of Cowley:

"... wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of discordia concors: a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike ... The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons and allusions; their learning instructs and their subtlety [sic] surprises."  

Modern critics of John Donne are unanimous in the belief that most of his Elegies were written in the early 1590's and all of them by 1612, a period in which boys and young men were subjected to rigorous training in rhetoric. This classroom preparation included exercises in the use of comparisons, analogies and metaphor. Donne's practice,  

---

however, went far beyond the classroom to embrace a use of widely disparate imagery and a unique manipulation of words. Indeed, his practice is not considered the norm for metaphysical conceits.

In addition, his subject matter in the *Elegies* is primarily about himself, his mistress and love. Although Donne in his *Elegies* is less concerned with metaphysical problems than he is with human relationships, he does use both surface metaphor and depth metaphor, which can assume the nature of the conceit. The definition of issues that are raised in the *Elegies*, and the indication of allusions, similes and metaphors which support the themes of the poems will elucidate these statements.

Because Donne's *Elegies* are not widely known, except for perhaps "The Autumnal," it may be helpful to discuss first a more widely known poem of Donne's, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." For his method in this poem is not too different from that which he used earlier in the *Elegies*.

"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," perhaps the most famous of all the *Songs and Sonets*, is a serious fare-well poem which examines the spiritual bond between the

---

speaker and his loved one. The examination is made by a series of images that carry on the speaker's argument, all of which demonstrate an associative technique. The series of analogies, similes or metaphors all culminate in the famous conceit of the twin compasses.

In the first stanza, the speaker, by means of analogy to a mild death without fuss, indicates that the parting of the speaker from his beloved should be unobtrusive. This analogy is drawn into the second stanza and telescoped into a concrete image in the words "floods" and "tempests." These are the metaphors of ostentatious partings of the "layete" (i.e., laity), lovers who are ordinary in every respect. Should the speaker and his love make an emotional demonstration of their farewell by means of tears and sighs, they would be desecrating their love. They must say goodbye quietly to uphold its dignity. At this point the speaker implies that they are priests in a religion of love by using the words "prophaneation" and "Layete" (ll. 7-8). He then introduces two metaphors as analogies to the two kinds of love. The first, the earthquake, refers to the parting of sensual lovers. It represents the physical fear which most people feel in an earthquake. On the other hand, the speaker and his

---

beloved, the spiritual lovers, are related to metaphor based on the motion of the celestial spheres, especially that of the 9th Sphere, according to Ptolemaic cosmology. This "trepidation" seems far greater cosmologically than does an earthquake, but in reality it is harmless, because it represents only a mild change, such as really is the condition of these two separated lovers. Also there is a secondary analogy to the two kinds of lovers in the noise and rumble of the earthquake as compared to the silence of the astronomical change.

The speaker continues the comparison of the "sublunary lovers" whose love is built on the senses and cannot therefore accept absence from one another because they are separated from that which composes their love. On the other hand, the speaker and his loved one are linked mentally and hence spiritually in an allusion to the Platonic belief of the soul's location in the mind and the heart. They do not need the physical nearness of "eyes, lips, and hands," to reassure them of their love, for they are bound together spiritually. Therefore, their souls are one, and the speaker clarifies this statement by means of an analogy with the refinement of gold. Their unified soul is like ductile gold that can be stretched to almost any length. If their unified soul has such elasticity there will be no separation, merely an expansion.

The last three stanzas of "A Valediction: Forbidding
Mourning" are composed of a depth metaphor, the famous compass image, in which the spiritual lovers' souls are compared to the legs of the "twin compasses." It is a depth metaphor, in Philip Wheelwright's definition, in that it carries the burden of the thought of the poem. Or perhaps it could be said that it re-emphasizes the thought of the poem, for variations of the same thought have already been given by the images of death, earthquake, astronomical change, and malleable gold.

In the compass image, the speaker says that if the lovers' souls are two they are two, only as compasses are two, i.e., joined, yet with mobility given to one foot and stability to the other. In this image he indicates that the loved one's soul is the "fixt foot," while his soul is the moving foot which describes the circle, or makes the journey. Her soul remains stationary while his is making the circuit. The only inclination of movement on the part of her soul is a leaning, or a yearning toward his soul. The "fixt foot," or her soul, will be the holding quality that makes possible the circle which the wandering foot, his soul, performs. The circle, although a part of the compass image, is a telescoped metaphor of the compass figure. It is not only a symbol of perfection, but it also carries a paradoxical image of life, i.e., a circle has no end, for the end is the beginning, and the beginning is also the end. In the poem, the loved one's
soul, the "fixt foot," makes possible the circle, and makes him end "where he begunne." This thought presents another image within the circle, the movement of the free foot along the radius of the circle. Since the radius is the shortest distance from the outside of the circle to the center (the fixed foot), the lovers would never be very far apart. The circle, the cooperative result of the twin compasses, unifies all the analyses and images of the poem, for it exemplifies a tranquil state of regular movement around a fixed central point in which beginning and end are brought into orderly union.

In "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" the antithesis lies in the two standards of values which are contrasted in the lines:

'Twere prophanation of our joys
To tell the layete our love.

As indicated earlier, "prophanation" has worldly overtones. A demonstrative farewell would be a desecration of the religious love of the speaker and his beloved. For:

But we by a love, so much refin'd,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care lesse, eyes, lips and hands to misse.
(11. 17-20)

In both illustrations separation for the sensual lovers results in actual division, because their love feeds on the actual body, while separation for the spiritual lovers results in no division at all. Paradox enters at this
point, for absence does not affect spiritual love, in spite of the appearance of separation. The speaker illustrates this paradox in the gold analogy and the compass metaphor. There is, then, in the poem, surface paradox in the antithesis of the two standards of love, but there is also depth paradox in the seeming separation of the speaker and his loved one. The separation is only "seeming"; for since their souls are one, there can be no division.

The technique of the Elegies, then, is handled in a somewhat similar way. Conceits, although not as perfect or as logically developed as the compass conceit in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" appear also in the Elegies. They may be short conceits such as the royalty metaphor (ll. 19-24) in Elegie 9, "The Autumnal"; or they may be extended, such as the angel metaphor in Elegie 11, "The Bracelet"; or the geographical metaphors in Elegie 18, "Loves Progress" and in Elegie 19, "To His Mistress Going to Bed." These conceits, especially the extended ones, although not as concise as the compass image, do serve as unifying devices in the poems.
THE ELEGY
In ancient Greece the elegy was a type of poem written in elegiacs, i.e., a poem written in couplets, the first line being dactylic hexameter; the second, dactylic pentameter. The Greeks used this form for inscriptions on tombstones, but Ovid and Catullus, Latin poets of the Augustan age, adapted the elegy to a variety of subjects, one of which was love. In many seventeenth-century English elegies, there is a return to the funerary theme, but in his use of the elegy Donne as well as other contemporary poets popularized the Ovidian conception of love.

Donne's Elegies are metrically a loose imitation of the elegiac meter, as found in Ovid's elegies. Generally speaking, Donne writes rhyming iambic pentameter couplets, which vary from the smooth to the rhythmically rough. Almost everywhere, of course, he allows himself metrical latitude, as in Elegie 16, "On His Mistress":

With midnight startings, crying out, oh, oh
Nurse, O my love is slaine, I saw him goe
O'er the white alpes alone; I saw him I,
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, die.
Augure me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.

In these lines the rhyming couplet is retained, but it requires considerable forcing to locate a consistent iambic stress, even though in the Elegies Donne remains reasonably constant to the iambic pentameter measure.
One must agree with J. B. Leishman that Ovid could have been a model for some of Donne's Elegies. Ovid's three books of The Amores are written in the conventional form of the Alexandrian elegy. In the second elegy of Book I he likens love to war. Cupid, the God of Love, is the victorious general, and figures of chariots, captains, fetters, wounds, escorts, trains, fighting, victory and arrows are all used in the analogy of love to war. This is the mode of procedure that Donne uses in Elegie 20, "Loves Warre." Here the speaker's mistress is a "fayr free Citty," and he refers to "pikes, stabs," and bullets. And in the line, "Here lett mee parlee, batter, bleede, and dye," Donne uses battle imagery to develop the idea of love as war.

Other resemblances are apparent in Donne's first elegy, "Jealosie," in which Ovid's advice to his mistress in his fourth elegy is given:

When he shall have lain him down beside the table . . .

In Donne's "Jealosie," this phrase becomes:

Nor when he swolne, and pamper'd with great fare
Sits down, and snorts, cag'd in his basket chaire.

---


Still another parallel can be found between Ovid's sixth elegy, "The Porter to Open the Door":

'Tis Love that tells me how to
creep in softly in the midst of guards . . .
O man implacable; harder than iron is thy
heart . . . .

and Donne's Elegie 4, "The Perfume":

The grim eight-foot-high iron-bound
serving man,
That oft names God in oathes, and onely
then,
He that to barre the first gate, doth as
wide
As the great Rhodian Colossus stride . . . .

There are similar likenesses to individual elegies of Ovid in Donne's Elegie 7, "Nature's Lay Ideot;" Elegie 4, "The Perfume;" Elegie 12, "His Parting from Her;" and Elegie 15, "Expostulation"—enough to suggest that Donne relied on Ovid for many of his ideas. But although Donne follows Ovid's form quite faithfully, his tone is more harshly insolent. Furthermore, while Ovid's verse is ironic but friendly, Donne's can become cynical, harsh, and grossly satiric. Thus Donne's imitation is not a verbatim imitation. Donne shows more originality in his dramatic situations and a more colloquial approach in the bare economy and deft arrangement of his diction. He introduces more current, and therefore more realistic detail which he blends with his syllogistic arguments. Although harsher, Donne's

9Ibid., 13.
10Leishman, 63, 65, 67.
Elegies have, then, more depth than do Ovid's.

However, in spite of the great interest shown in our century in Donne's works, few critics have completely analyzed the Elegies. Their efforts are directed to the Songs and Sonets, the Anniversary poems and some of the religious poems. Thus Donne's Elegies remain relatively unknown, though Elegie 9, "The Autumnal," is regularly anthologized. Much of their value depends on how Donne uses imagery to develop and support his meaning. This imagery is composed of some classical and Biblical allusions and many topical references to current science, alchemy, travel, discovery, and a smattering of comment on the national economy and foreign relations of England and other countries. His knowledge of philosophy and religion is, of course, drawn upon for argumentative reasons in the elegies, and he sometimes includes reference to the Neoplatonic philosophy of the One and the Many. But perhaps his greatest claim to the present interest in his work is his use of the metaphysical conceit, which can be found in some of the Elegies. However, in these poems Donne uses them less adeptly than in the Songs and Sonets. In the following analyses of the Elegies it will be apparent that the devices of allusions, simile, metaphor and paradox, which are so prominent in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," are also characteristic of the Elegies.

I have chosen to discuss the elegies in an order
that is purely arbitrary, because there is no discoverable reason why the Elegies are arranged as they are in editions of Donne. Since the poems are apparently occasional in nature they defy an orderly arrangement. Classification by date is impossible because it is difficult to date any of them. All of them possess some kind of wit, and many of them, satire, while some of them foreshadow characteristics of poems in the Songs and Sonnets. Variable and undatable as the Elegies are, it is generally agreed that they represent, for the most part, early work, and that they do fall into general groups. This grouping suggests at least that Donne thought the elegy form was suitable for certain kinds of poetry, and for subjects that he was interested in. Therefore, it seems tenable to classify them according to subject matter.

Chapter II, "Caricature and Satire," includes Elegies 8, 13, 2 and 11. Elegie 8, "The Comparison," is an exaggerated contrast of two mistresses; Elegie 13, "Julia," is an overdone character sketch; and Elegie 2, "The Anagram," is an appearance sketch. All are broad caricature. These elegies are marked by satire and wit, while Elegie 11, "The Bracelet," is a veritable mass of wit, interspersed with satire.

Elegies 1, 4, 7, and 14 I group in Chapter III, "Illicit Love," because in all of them this subject is central. Elegie 1, "Jealosie;" Elegie 7, "Natures Lay
Ideot;" and Elegie 14, "A Tale of a Citizen and His Wife," concern the hoodwinking of the husband, while Elegie 4, "The Perfume," deals with the deception of the parents.

Elegies 3, 15, 17, and 10 I place in Chapter IV, "Constancy and Inconstancy in Love," because in these four poems either constancy or inconstancy, or variations of these themes are focal. In Elegie 3, "Change," the speaker presumes inconstancy is natural in woman, yet he maintains his right to constancy. Elegie 15, "Expostulation," involves the speaker's accusation of his mistress' inconstancy, a plea for reconciliation and a renewal of their love. In Elegie 17, "Variety," the speaker argues for promiscuity in love, but adds the hope that the future will bring him a constant love; while in Elegie 10, "The Dreame," the speaker appears to accept a life-long love in the combined dream image and real woman.

Elegie 9, "The Autumnal," is unique among the Elegies as a poem of Neoplatonic veneration of a middle-aged woman, and so I have placed it alone in Chapter V, "Neoplatonic Love."

Elegie 18, "Loves Progress;" Elegie 19, "To His Mistress;" and Elegie 20, "Loves Warre," all magnify the importance of the body and so are placed in Chapter VI, "Importance of Body and Spirit." However, Elegie 19, "To His Mistress," by means of an equation of Body and Spirit,
also introduces the importance of Spirit.

Elegie 5, "His Picture," dramatizes the farewell gift of a picture, which is symbolic of an eternal bond between the separated lovers. Elegie 6, "Oh, Let Me Not Serve So," is a type of valediction poem because the speaker renounces the relationship with his mistress owing to her infidelity. Elegie 16, "On His Mistress," is a tender farewell poem, in which the speaker urges his mistress to remain in England during his absence; while Elegie 12, "His Parting from Her," is a mournful farewell poem, in which the speaker's resignation eventually prevails. Therefore, Elegies 5, 6, 16 and 12, all of them valediction poems, form Chapter VII, "Valediction Poems."

Since the chapter arrangement is arbitrary, perhaps the reasons for ordering them in this manner also are arbitrary. Eventually, though, the reason for this ordering of the Elegies involves Donne's development as a poet. The first four chapters abound in exaggeration, satire and a libertine posture, while the poems in the last three chapters show Donne's growing interest in the perfect union of Body and Soul in the experience of love, a subject that is also prominent in the Songs and Sonets.
PART TWO

THE ELEGIES: "EVAPORATIONS" OF WIT
CHAPTER II

CARICATURE AND SATIRE
ELEGIE 8, "THE COMPARISON"

Elegie 8, "The Comparison," is a purposefully unlovely study of the physical dissimilitude of two women, one another man's mistress, and the other, the speaker's. In fact, the poem is organized rhetorically by means of a descriptive catalogue of these differences. That the speaker scarcely expects his readers to believe either the hyperbolic praise of his mistress or the distasteful condemnation of the other man's mistress becomes fairly obvious once one has reached the middle of the poem. It is breezily written, and Donne certainly is posing as a libertine young man, while satirizing the popular love poetry of the time.

The poem is simply organized by means of the enumeration of the physical qualities of each woman, the arrangement of which builds argumentatively to a climax. In fact, the divisions that the speaker considers—sweat drops on brow and breast; head; breast; arms and hands; skin; and the "best-loved part"—can be charted, with their descriptive terms placed beneath them. These physical qualities are frequently given by means of similes and images appropriate to each.

Customarily, a physical description of a woman, moving from head to foot, was a popular Petrarchan practice.
of the time. In this elegy the sweat drops of the speaker's mistress are compared by means of similes to roses distilled for perfume (a conventional image), to the perfume rubbed from the skins of musk-cats, to the odor of dawn air and to the dewdrops of early morning. These similes are rich in connotations of the art of the perfumer, who steamed rose petals to produce a perfumed moisture which formed in droplets on the petals; and in the apparent practice of irritating the skins of musk-cats, to produce musk, a base of perfume. The fourth comparison of the sweat drops is also given as a simile. They are "pearle coronets," mention of which places the speaker's mistress on the level of a queen:

And on her brow her skin such lustre sets,
They seem no sweat drops, but pearle coronets.

(11. 5-6)

The "pearles" of sweat on her forehead are like a queen's coronet.

The beads of sweat on the brow of the other man's mistress, on the other hand, are introduced by the metaphor "rank froth" in order to place her in a low category. By means of a series of similes, these sweat drops are likened to the matter from boils; to scum from parboiled boots and shoes, and human bones and flesh; to slime-covered stones that have lain too long in "Saffron'd tinne" (1. 13); and to warts and blisters. By means of allusion Donne also gives a violent image to the nine-month siege of Sanserra,
presumably a town in Italy in 1573. Sir Herbert Grierson, in his notes on the elegies, indicates that the besieged Protestants there endured "extreme privations" and famine.\textsuperscript{1} Donne intimates that they turned not only to eating the leather of their boots but also to cannibalism (ll. 11-12). This inclusion of an image of lawlessness lends the suggestion of moral evil to the other man's mistress, as a counterpart of her physical ugliness. Grierson explains that "vile lying stones" (l. 13) are not only filthy; "they are 'lying' inasmuch as they pretend to be what they are not, as the 'saffron'd tinne' pretends to be gold."\textsuperscript{2}

Next, the speaker compares the heads of the two mistresses. He attaches value to the "roundness" of his mistress' head, which here suggests perfection. Her head is round as a globe, a "fatal ball" and an apple. In the last two similes, the speaker suggests a divine value in his mistress. The first allusion is to the golden apple which the disgruntled goddess Discordia threw out to cause jealousy among the Greek goddesses, Hera, Aphrodite, and Athena--an action which resulted in the chain of events that led to the Trojan War. The second reference is to the apple of Eden, which for "ravishing thereof we die" (l. 18).

\textsuperscript{1}Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson, \textit{The Poems of John Donne} (Oxford, 1912), II, 74.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 75.
The head of the other man's mistress has the ugliness of unfinished art. Whereas the head of the speaker's mistress is analyzed in terms of the completed, the other's is analyzed in terms of the uncompleted. Her head is pictured as an unformed black statue, with eyes, nose and mouth not yet delineated; hence the allusion to Chaos, in which there is no separation of raw materials into elements. This image is followed by an allusion to Cynthia, the moon, here shown as flat and shadowed. This allusion implies that, by means of a reversal of the usual connotations we all apply to the moon, the ugly mistress is pancake-faced and has uncertain features.

The third division is the breast, which in his own mistress the speaker describes by means of two similes, both conventional and mythical. His mistress' breast is like Persephone's "white beauty-keeping chest" (l. 23). This phrase implies that her skin has the radiance and freshness of youth, and that in the whiteness of her beauty there is purity. Her skin is also like "Joves best fortunes urne" (l. 24), Aphran, which refers to the urn full of good fortune that stood beside the urn full of bad fortune in the palace of Zeus. The position of the two mythical urns is much like the juxtaposition of the two women. The breast of one is beautiful; the breast of the other is described by two repulsive similes: a worm-pocked tree trunk, hairy like a sealskin; and a grave, characterized by
dustiness outside, and by "stinke within."

The arms and hands are compared next. The arms of the speaker's mistress are like slender boughs; the hands, like the quivering leaves of the woodbine. These images are both conventional nature similes. The arms of the other man's mistress, described by means of exaggerated similes, are rough and thick like elm boughs. In addition, her skin is parched and scarred as though roughened by beatings, the punishment for madmen and sinners; it is also like the sun dried skin of men who have been drawn and quartered. Here Donne introduces an allusion to the current legal punishment of commoners convicted for treason. The fingers of the other man's mistress (still another division) are compared to a scraggly bunch of carrots. The last line of this insulting description is colored by simple adjectives with repellent connotations: "swolne" and "gouty" (l. 34).

The "best-loved part" of his own mistress the speaker compares to alchemical processes thought to be necessary in the formation of gold. This portion of the anatomy of the other man's mistress is described by means of violent similes: the mouth of a fired gun, hot metal poured into moulds and the scorched base of the volcano, Mount Etna. Implied in these similes is an antithesis between generative forces (the formation of gold) and destructive forces (the gun and violence).
At this point the speaker poses the question: because of the hateful image of the other man's mistress, are not his kisses vile? Here Donne particularizes their quality—"as a worm sucking an invenom'd sore"; and the other man's caresses are carried out as though he fears encountering a snake.

Donne poses a second question and describes it in the same manner as the first, again by means of simile. Is not the other man's indulgence in sexual love a kind of rending, like the rending of a plough in stony ground? Milton Rugoff, in his discussion of nature imagery in Donne, suggests that a woman is "stony ground" if she is someone else's. In contrast, the speaker and his mistress' kisses are as tender as those of turtle-doves; her love is compared to devotion of the holy sacraments; and the consummation of their love is like the art of a surgeon performing an operation.

Elegie 8 is built, then, upon the difference between physical ugliness and physical beauty, and the implied value antithesis of good and evil. The image of the ugly woman is set against the image of the beautiful one. This method serves both to emphasize the beauty of the beautiful and the ugliness of the ugly. And the lovely woman is made lovelier by being placed near the ugly woman. Through the

---

technique of subtle overstatement, Donne enhances the image of the beautiful mistress; while in parallel and gross overstatement, he paints the hideous picture of the other woman.

Donne uses favorable conventional images to describe the "good ideal," even while he is making light of current love poetry; "distilled roses," "dawn air," "pearle coronets," "Zeus," Mount Ida, the apple, "Persephone," the urn of good fortune, quivering hands like woodbine, "fire," "gold," "turtles." In his "bitter diminishings," which Miss Tuve, in her Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery believes are belittling terms, Donne is more colorful than in his complimentary images. In the unfavorable images he uses more disparate similes and metaphors and approaches wit as it was first defined by Wheelwright. The belittling images—"froth," "skumme," "warts," "wheales," "Chaos," "worm-eaten trunks," "grave," "worme," "snake"—not only outnumber the "good" images, but in them, seemingly, Donne displays his real interest.

As in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," there is in "The Comparison" the antithesis between the two kinds of lovers, but here Donne scarcely reaches paradox. Both sets of lovers are considered on a merely physical basis, with the only suggestion of spiritual love hinted at in the words "Priests" and "reverent sacrifice." If there is paradox, it exists only in the fact that both pairs are apparent
"lovers" or appear to be lovers. He reaches a peculiar unification in the resolution of the last two lines of "The Comparison." Abruptly he advises the other man, "Leave her," and then dismisses both the other man's mistress and his own comparisons as hateful to him. He has thus reserved the punch line for last. Since he has traversed the entire catalogue of praise and insult, he perversely ties up his argument by dismissal of one half of it.

Finally, in "The Comparison," underlying descriptions of physical appearance, beauty means goodness; ugliness, evil. In the relationship of the speaker and his mistress on the one hand, there is beauty, purity and elevation. Indeed, their love is called "devoutly nice." The speaker uses the word "Priests" to give a connotation to religion. In the other relationship there is pretense ("saffron'd time"), deceit ("stony ground"), lawlessness and moral evil ("worm," "snake"). By means of allusions and similes, Donne gives to himself and his mistress the status of royalty and divinity. By the same method, he gives the other man's mistress the position of a commoner, a madman, a sinner, a dead body without a soul. There is also a general implication here that water seeks its own level. That is, each man is showing his own quality or true nature by the company he keeps. Of course, because of the poem's half-farcical tone and its note of parody of
the conventional love poetry of the age, this serious inference is veiled. In this elegy Donne has written, then, a tour de force, and this was apparently his aim.
ELEGIE 13, "JULIA"

Elegie 13, "Julia," addressed to envy, is a description of a hateful woman, whom the speaker sarcastically calls "My Julia." He bitterly enumerates every vicious mental characteristic that is imaginable to portray her character. In this regard the elegy is similar to Elegie 8, "The Comparison." However, in "The Comparison" the ugly traits are stated as physical qualities, whereas in "Julia" the traits are mental ones. The entire elegy is an unalleviated tirade that oscillates between ordinary phrases and unusual metaphors and allusions.

Julia, the speaker states, is a "she Chymera, that hath eyes of fire" (1. 15). According to myth the Chimaera was a fire-breathing monster of Lycia, a country in Arcadia. Her head was a lion, her middle portion a goat, and her posterior portion a serpent. She existed to be a plague to men. In statues and in coins the Chimaera is generally represented as a lion with a goat's head in the middle of its back, and a tail ending in a snake's head. In antiquity it was a symbol of the volcanic nature of the Lycian soil. By means of this metaphor the speaker climaxes the character of Julia.

A second classical allusion, used metaphorically describes the mind of Julia. It is like Orcus:
But oh her minde, that Orcus, which includes Legions of mischiefs (ll. 23-24).

In Roman mythology Orcus denotes the underworld and is similar to the Greek Hades. Though the term Orcus was not commonly used, it was sometimes used by the Romans to signify death itself. According to Roman myth, Dis Pater, synonymous to the Greek Pluto, had a chapel and a subterranean altar. Sacrifice offered at this altar was the blood of black animals. Thus the two allusions to Chimaera and Orcus, are, in effect, metaphors used to clarify the character and the evil mind of Julia.

Donne's use of classical mythology here is not for ornamentation but for clarification of idea and theme. In the allusion to the Mantuan, Virgil, the speaker intimates that he lacks the ability of Virgil, the woman hater, to adequately picture Julia:

Lived Mantuan now againe,  
That foemall Mastix, to limme with his penne  
This she Chymera . . . . (ll. 13-15).

"Foemall" indicates a major star in a constellation, while "Mastix" alludes to the Greek term which means a critic who flays. In other words the speaker wishes that Virgil, foremost in this type of libel, were present to scourge Julia sufficiently.

Associated with the "Chymera" metaphor are descriptive similes. Julia is "tongued like the night-crow" (l. 17), a bird that cries harshly in the night and foretells bad fortune:
Whose ill boding cries
Give out for nothing but new injuries.

And her breath is

like to the juice in Tenarus
That blasts the springs, . . . (ll. 19-20).

"Tenarus" refers to the promontory of Taenarum in the Peloponnesus, where there were caverns that at one time were thought to be entrances to the lower world. These caverns contained waters of a sulphurous content which smelled characteristically bad, and which probably tasted worse.

Julia's inclinations, the speaker concludes, are a formless jumble of evil similar to the unassembled elements of Chaos:

These, like those Atoms swarming in the Sunne,
Throng in her bosom for creation. (ll. 29-30)

The poem, then, is a portrait of an evil woman who slanders, maliciously gossips, makes trouble and envies everyone. She is enveloped with a hate for society which manifests itself in her mischief-making, meanness, fault-finding and lies. Julia is mean in intention and evil in mind.

Elegie 13, "Julia," contains something like depth metaphor in the comparison of Orcus to the mind of Julia. The Mind as a Hell, however, is a commonplace figure in Christian thinking. Moreover, the speaker states by means of metaphor, that her mind is a teeming mass of evil, some of it potential, some partly formed, and some already
existent. Such stages of evil are all crowding to find expression in Julia. The ironical paradox is intimated in the closing couplet:

I blush to give her halfe her due; yet say,
No poysen's halfe so bad as Julia. (l. 31-32)

Since even Chaos and the Underworld is not evil enough to describe her, and poison is only half as evil as she, nothing exists with which to compare her. She is thus so evil that she is beyond description, and this is perhaps the point of the poem: an effort by Donne to describe what is indescribable and so to give ironic point to an age-old cliché.
Gransden describes Elegie 2, "The Anagram," as a minor insult by paradox, or conventional praise comically reversed. Leishman, too, relates it to the early paradoxes of sixteenth-century Italy, which eventually were translated into English as The Defense of Contraries. The topics defended are those commonly dispraised: ugliness, blindness, ignorance, folly, drunkenness, poverty.

Leishman compares "The Anagram" also to the poems of Berni and others, which were called capitoli. These carnival songs were marked by obscenity, buffoonery, double meanings and gross jokes, none of which was foreign to the literature of the time. Leishman also includes examples of the scholastic wit found in Tasso's Sopra La Bellezza:

> Let my mistress be ugly, with a large nose that casts a shadow to her chin; let her mouth be so capacious a vessel that the largest object may find room therein; let her teeth be few and her eyes placed by chance, her teeth of ebony and her eyes of silver, . . . I shall have no fear that she be loved by another, . . .

This defense of ugliness, Leishman believes is the obvious pattern for Donne's matter in "The Anagram."

---


5 Leishman, 77. The French version of The Defense of Contraries was translated by Charles Estienne in 1593.

6 Quoted by Leishman, 81.
"The Anagram" is similar to Tasso's subject matter in the passage just quoted. Its formal argument finally reaches a conclusion that amounts to caricature, as in Elegie 8, "The Comparison" and Elegie 13, "Julia." Another characteristic of "The Anagram" is its "sheer wit," which caused Drummond to write, in referring to this elegy, that Donne "might easily be the best Epigrammatist we have found in English."\(^7\)

The speaker strikes at the core of this type of wit, which made much of little, in the words:

\begin{quote}
If we might put the letters but one way,
In the lean dearth of words, what could we say? (11. 17-18)
\end{quote}

This thought resembles the definition of the wit of the age given by Nashe in \textit{Lenten Stuffs} (1599):

\begin{quote}
This is a light friskin of my witte, like the prayse of iniustice, . . . wherein I follow the trace of the famousetest schollers of all ages, whom a wantonizing humour once in their lifetime hath possesst to play with straws, and turne mole-hills into mountains.

Every man can say Bee to a Battledore and write in prayse of Vertue, . . . thresh corne out of the full sheaves and fetch water out of the Thames; but out of dry stubble to make an after harvest, and a plantifull croppe without sowing, and wring juice out of flint, thats Pierce a Gods name, and the right tricks of a workman.\(^8\)

In Elegie 2, "The Anagram," Donne certainly wrings
\end{quote}

\(^7\)Quoted by Leishman, 53.

\(^8\)Ibid., 151.
"juice out of a flint." The speaker addresses another man, a situation which is unusual in the elegies. He even advises his friend, "Marry, and love thy Flavia" (l. 1). The word "marry" more than likely is the usual sly expletive often used to begin a sentence, but it is ambiguous enough to be an allusion to marriage. The speaker argues that Flavia has all the features common to great beauties, except that hers are out of proportion to each other and are emblems of ugliness:

For, though her eyes be small, her mouth is great,  
Though they be ivory, yet her teeth be jet,  
Though they be dimme, yet she is light enough,  
And though her harsh haire fall, her skin is rough;  
What though her cheeks be yellow, her hair's red,  
Give her thine, and she hath a mayden-head. (ll. 3-8)

This description is the reverse of that of the courtly beauty who would have large, bright-blue eyes, fine yellow or black hair, ivory teeth, red cheeks, smooth skin and purity. Thus the speaker depreciates, yet praises ironically, the characteristics of Flavia. For he insists that the possession, not the location, of the various features is the point of importance:

In buying things perfum'd, we ask: if there  
Be muske and amber in it, but not where. (ll. 13-14)

The title of the elegy offers a hint about the
woman's appearance. An anagram is a puzzle, and so is Flavia's appearance. She has all the required features of a woman, but they are in the wrong place or are unsuitable:

Though all her parts be not in the usual place
She 'hath yet an Anagram of a good face. (ll. 15-16)

By means of a reference to the "Gamut," a term which means the entire range, and hence the intricacy, of the musical scale, the speaker clarifies his earlier statement on wit (ll. 17-18). He continues that some musicians can make a "perfect song" of a series of notes, and that others, using the same notes, but patterning them differently, can undertake to make a song equally good (ll. 19-21).

Inasmuch as the speaker has disparaged Flavia's appearance earlier, he now defends her worth by means of an argument of utility:

For one nights revels, silke and gold we chuse,
But, in long journeys, cloth and leather use, (ll. 33-34)

He argues, then, that beauty lacks the utilitarian qualities in human relationships which are essential for long associations. Accordingly, the speaker throughout the poem supports, by means of apt analogies, the curious proposition that such an unattractive woman as Flavia may make a better mistress than a pretty one. Especially advantageous would be the peace of mind and freedom from jealousy of her lover, since no other man would want her.
His argument then turns to standards of values:

She's faire as any, if all be like her,
If none bee, than she's singular. (ll. 23-24)

Which is to say that if Flavia is not just like every other woman, she at least has the distinction of being unusual. Syllogistically and sophistically he argues that love is "wonder" and so, if Flavia can be considered wonderful, "why not lovely too" (ll. 25-26)? Ironically, he contrasts women to Angels. When women are like the good Angels, they are superlative; and Flavia, who is too ugly to be tempted to fall, will be good. When women are like the Angels who fell with Lucifer, they can be counted on to be unchaste. Following the fabric metaphor (ll. 33-34, already quoted), the speaker introduces a "land" metaphor, another clarifying example: "There is best land, where there is foulest way" (l. 36). Consequently, he intimates, an ugly woman would make a better mistress than a beautiful one, just as land that has been cleared of underbrush and trees possesses the best soil. An ugly mistress would also be a "sovereigne Plaister" to a jealous man, meaning that the ugly mistress will be a comfort, much as a plaster salves or soothes when applied to the body.

The peace of mind which an ugly mistress will bring to a man comes about because he will need no spies to guard her from rivals. Her ugliness is her safeguard from temptations to indulge in illicit love affairs. He mentions that
even a Marmosit (an ape), thought in the Renaissance to be lustful, would ignore her. Flavia's ugliness is also compared to the protective practices of "Belgiaes cities" in time of war. To keep their enemies at bay, they flood the neighboring countryside; the foulness thus produced is their protection. Flavia's "foul" appearance would be, then, most convenient, since her lover must often be absent.

The speaker uses a figure from the firmament to further emphasize Flavia's ugliness. Her face, like "clouds" that turn light to darkness, has the same kind of force which makes dark-skinned "Moors seem white" (ll. 55-56). Then he turns in a more satirical vein to the question of seeming and being. The smutty reference to "Stews," "Nunnery," "tympanie," "witches," "Dildoes," "Bedstaves," and "Velvet Glasse," and to the Joseph of Old Testament story (ll. 53-54), are all indicative of man's habit of making black seem white. On the other hand, though Flavia looks hideous, she may be better than she looks. The speaker reaches this happy conclusion in a curious manner. Even though she had lived in a brothel for seven years, a nunnery would accept her as an innocent; even though she were in childbirth, midwives would swear that she was experiencing only an abdominal distension or growth. Furthermore, even "Dildoes, Bedstaves, and her Velvet Glasse"

---

9Grierson, II, 66.
would show the same reluctance to touch her that Joseph displayed to Potiphar's wife. This allusion resolves the speaker's observations on truth and seeming truth, which he has developed by means of witty argument, hyperbolic allusions and the basic metaphor of Flavia's ugliness, the anagram.

The depth metaphor of the elegy is, according to Wheelwright's definition, Flavia's appearance, which is compared to a puzzle. Because all of her features are misplaced or reversed, she is like an anagram. The paradox, of necessity, lies within this metaphor. For although she appears "black" she may have many qualities that are "white." Although she looks like a freak, she may wear well. Because of her ugliness, her lover need not be jealous of her or fear rival suitors. Delving deeper, the speaker maintains that things are not always as they seem or are made to appear.
ELEGIE 11, "THE BRACELET"

According to Leishman, Elegie 11, "The Bracelet," is Donne's most "successful exercise in sheer wit."\(^{10}\) Signifying the acceptance of the elegy in Donne's own age, Drummond of Hawthornden reports Ben Jonson's opinion of "The Bracelet": "'his [Donne's] verses of the Lost Chain he hath by heart.'"\(^{11}\) Jonson, Drummond reported, considered this elegy one of Donne's "best pieces," for which he apparently regarded him "the first poet in the world in some things."\(^{12}\)

Here, again, as in Elegie 2, "The Anagram," Donne makes an effort to show in how many witty ways he can repeat or emphasize the same idea. In this case it is a play on the double meaning of "angel," the spirit and the Elizabethan coin. Ultimately the theme of the poem reveals itself to be the relation of usable gold to the misused knowledge of the fallen angels. By means of metaphors, similes and allusions within the argument, Donne develops, in double layers of meaning, the comparison of the "twelve righteous Angels" (1. 9) to the gold in the lost bracelet, which he sees in terms of gold coins. They are his heavenly-appointed guides, who are to be thrown into the furnace

\(^{10}\)Leishman, 84.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., 53.

\(^{12}\)Ibid.

44
and be melted down to replace the lost chain. Thus they will be punished for a sin they did not commit.

Actually, the maze of double meanings begins in the sub-title, "Upon the Losse of His Mistresses Chaine, For Which He Made Satisfaction." Apparently Donne fabricates this situation: The speaker gives his mistress a bracelet and in some manner loses it. He makes "satisfaction" for this loss by supplying twelve more "angels," Elizabethan coins, hence, the "bitter cost" (1. 8). Evidently it will require twelve such coins, melted down, to shape a new bracelet. This restitution the mistress demands, since he labels her a "dread judge" (1. 17).

The speaker, in simple statement, gives the situation in lines 1-8. He has lost his mistress's bracelet and regrets its loss not for silly sentimental or Petrarchan reasons--because it was gold like her hair, because it had embraced her arm, or because its links represented their linked love. Nor does he regret the bad luck of its loss. He regrets the loss solely because it is costing him more money.

In the speaker's complaint (ll. 9-22), however, with the introduction of the "twelve righteous Angels" (l. 9), ambiguity begins. For the "Angels" (spirits) in their early state of creation are still good. Heaven has appointed them his "guide" (l. 14) and his soul's "comfort" (l. 16). On another level, the "Angels" (coins) are also
good because they have not yet been debased by "vile soder" (l. 10), and then in a satirical tone the speaker states that hard money provides many things:

Angels, which heaven commanded to provide
All things to me, and be my faithful guide;
To gaine new friends, t' appease great enemies;
To comfort my soul, when I lie or rise . . . (ll. 13-16)

He then asks his mistress, the earthly judge, whether it is fair that these "angels" (coins) be considered responsible for his sin of losing the bracelet; and, relating them to the fallen angels, is it fair to them to be thrown into a furnace (hell) and be punished for his carelessness?

Characteristically, after he gives the situation, Donne introduces satire (ll. 23-42), in which the speaker alludes to bad foreign money and its influence. Were the money that he must relinquish for the new bracelet a debased foreign money he would be unconcerned, for it would be worthless any way, but he regrets spending good English money. Valueless "Crownes of France" (l. 23), chipped and debased, he would freely give. In the same spirit, neither would he care if the coins to be spent were "Spanish

---

13Grierson, II, 77. Grierson in his "Commentary" notes that although other countries debased their coins, and used copper money, England used no debased coins after 1559. After the Proclamation of 1561, forbidding foreign coins to be current in England, and after calling them into the mints, there was an influx of silver-plate and of Spanish gold coins and pistolets.
The "unfil'd pistolets," or quickly and crudely-made Spanish money he terms "unlick't beare-whelps," a metaphor referring to the mother bear's licking into natural shape new-born cubs. These badly formed Spanish coins, with more evil influence than guns, have made France, "ruined, ragged and decay'd" (l. 40), subjugated Scotland and ravaged Belgium.

And were the gold which the speaker will be forced to invest only the questionable gold produced by alchemists, he would not complain (ll. 43-48), for they too are "guilty of much hainous Sin" (l. 48).

The speaker returns to the subject of the lost "angels" (coins) only briefly (ll. 49-54). The lament here is his loss of the benefits of money: loss of ease, food, confidence and "lustyhead" (ll. 50-52). Furthermore, his mistress will not regard him highly if he has fewer coins:

For thou wilt love me less when they are gone . . . (l. 54)

The speaker then notes that the mistress' reaction to the lost bracelet (ll. 55-68), is like resorting to the common custom of sending a crier into the streets to shout the loss. This crier, personally unconcerned, will shout

---

14Ibid., 77. Grierson believes that this line is an allusion to Spanish bribery and the policy of securing paid agents in every country. Many members of James I's Court were in the pay of the Spanish crown. Raleigh blames Spain's "Indian Gold" for disturbing the nations of Europe, as it influenced councils and bought intelligence.
only to receive "one thred-bare groat" (l. 56) and not to retrieve the bracelet. Or the mistress may allow the speaker to visit a "conjurer," who with a magic formula or some such deceptive hocus-pocus will eventually say, "'twill ne'r be found" (l. 66). The fortune-teller, too, is a minor purloiner, for by giving dishonest information to "whores, theeves and murderers" (l. 62), he builds his fortune.

The analogy of gold to the fallen angels (ll. 69-74) expresses the depth metaphor and paradox of the poem:

Thou say'est (alas) the gold doth

still remain,
Though it be chang'd and put

into a chaine;
So in the first falne angels,

resteth still
Wisdom and knowledge; but 'tis
turn'd to ill;
As these should do good works;

and should provide
Necessities; but now must nurse

thy pride.

The mistress, agitating for another bracelet, argues that the initial worth of the gold remains, even if the coins are melted down and recast into a bracelet. The speaker, in turn, argues that such was the case of the "falne angels," who intrinsically had their original worth in "wisdome and knowledge," even though it was turned to evil purposes after their fall. The "falne angels" malevolently nurse their pride. And the mistress, he says, is much like the fallen angels, for she nurses her pride of adornment. The "falne angels" are also like the gold, which should be used for
good works and "provide necessities," but which instead is used for causes of wickedness. Thus, the meaning of the poem—"angels" (coin) analogized to the angels (spirits) driven from Heaven for their sin of pride—is borne by depth metaphor. The depth paradox provides the meaning: money is good (like the angels before their fall) when it is undebased (like English money) and when it is used for purposes of necessity, and even for impressing one's mistress. It is bad (like the fallen angels) when it is debased (like Spanish and French money), and when it is used for evil ends like bribery, espionage and the purchase of influence, as was the case in foreign use of Spanish money. Paradoxically, then, money is both good and bad, depending on its purpose, much like the fallen angels.

Then the speaker quips:

And they are still bad angels;
Mine are none;
For forme gives being, and their forme is gone: (ll. 75-76)

That is, the fallen angels, though bad "are." They still exist, whereas his angels (coin) are gone. He puns on both the spirit and the coin in lines 77-78:

Pitty these Angels, yet their dignities
Passe Vertues, Powers and Principalities.

The fallen Angels deserve pity, because initially they had natural knowledge and goodness. Because of this intrinsic virtue they are superior to Vertues, Powers and Principalities,
ranks in the hierarchy of Angels. Moreover, the lowest order of good Angels is superior to the highest order of Evil Spirits. Therefore, the "Angels" (spirit) though superior in "dignities," are debased, just as the foreign money is.

The speaker sophisticatedly analogizes the mistress (the temporal judge) and her decree to theology, or at least to its terms (11. 79-88). He salutes the power of the mistress, as God, in the sacrilegious parody, "Thy will be done" (1. 79)! And in the same tone he compares himself to Mary, with the loss of his coins compared to her loss of Jesus (11. 81-83). Here the coins become "martyrs" like Christ who was betrayed. Since the speaker will betray the coins to martyrdom, he relates himself to Judas. "Good Soules" (1. 83) refers both to Christ and to the coins as being life-giving; while "Good Angels" (1. 84) refers both to the spirit and the coins as the bringers of good news. The speaker equivocally closes this passage by stating that the coins should have belonged to,

One that would suffer hunger,  
nakedness,  
Yea death, ere he would make  
your number lesse (11. 87-88).

The words "suffer," "hunger," "nakednesse," "death" are generally associated with Christ, and martyrs or at least are common to religious terminology. Then the speaker

15Ibid., 79.
swiftly changing his argument flippantly hopes that he can keep his remaining coins.

Finally, the speaker places a curse on the finder of the lost bracelet (ll. 91-110). In lines 93-96 he appears to curse gold, or to analogize the thief to gold. That is, the thief should be "fetter'd, manacled, and hanged in chains" (l. 95), much as his melted-down coins will be. Then abruptly he forgets the relation to gold and curses the thief as a human being: he is to endure pain; become a spy to his own country, without success or pay; steal poison whose "fumes" will "rot his braille" (l. 100); be ruined by legal failures; be corrupted with venereal diseases; become impotent; endure all the evil that gold or the devil ever brought—sickness, poverty, poor travel conditions, love, marriage, and recognition of his sins at death.

In the last four jestful lines the speaker completely reverses his argument. He forgives the thief, calls him an honest man and advises repentance. Furthermore, since gold is considered a "restorative," a "cordial" by medical men, he jokingly tells the finder to "restore it" (l. 112), and to take the "cordial" to his heart. In this odd conclusion, as well as in the entire section on the curse, there is a decline in the darts of wit which mark the mass of the poem.

Larding the wit in the poem are veiled comparisons
of standards of values similar to Elegie 8, "The Comparison." Donne implies that money is good when it is used to procure necessities. It is evil when it buys evil influence or causes venality. He offers these examples in the allusions to French Crowns and Spanish money, which are used for espionage and bribery as in the cases of France, Scotland and Belgium. Another example is the doubtful gold produced by alchemists. He develops the picture of greed for gold in the mercenary interest of the mistress; in the crier, who for a "thred-bare groat" only mechanically performs his duties and in the Conjurer, who for love of gold pretends and lies to the gullible. Yet, even though Donne includes such satirical observations, the body of the elegy remains essentially a display of wit for its own sake, as if Donne were deliberately showing how clever he could be.
ELEGIE 1, "JEALOSIE"

J. B. Leishman points out that probably the situation in Elegie 1, "Jealosie," was suggested by a similar passage in the fourth elegy of Ovid's First Book. The original is smooth and courtly; Donne's elegy is crude and direct.¹

The tone of Elegie 1 is derisive cynicism. Sarcastically the speaker addresses the "fond woman," who is really a hypocrite. She complains of her husband's jealousy; she would like to be free of him; she wishes he would die. The speaker, nevertheless, reminds her that they should be grateful for his jealousy, for because of it they are warned to be more cautious. Consequently, they should no longer carry on their love-making in the husband's house, but do so in a place where they can scorn his "household policies," plots and spies. Lines 17-24 of Elegie 1 refer to the practice of secrecy enjoined on lovers by the courtly love code, and are, as well, reminiscent of Ovid's fourth elegy. Following this practice the married woman and her lover have in the past scorned the husband, and by means of riddles, touches, looks, kisses and the usurping of his bed, flagrantly deceived him.

¹Leishman, 59.
The thought of the poem is developed by exposing the woman's ridiculous unhappiness over her husband's jealousy, which, in fact, is perfectly justified. The speaker states that if the husband were poisoned and dying, she'd be "jolly." Why, then, cry now, when his malady is, in effect, a blessing; for he is dying of jealousy. So far, logical argument, more than metaphor, symbol or paradox, is crucial to the speaker's point of view.

Nevertheless, the speaker uses much concrete detail to vivify meaning:

If swolne with poyson, hee lay in
'his last bed,
His body with a sere-barke covered, . . . .
(11. 3-4)

As Grierson informs us, the "sere-barke" is not cerecloth, which was used medically to ease bruises, but an encrusted skin condition which results from "poyson."2

The dying man's breathing is described by means of a musical simile:

Drawing his breath, as thick and short,
as can
The nimblest crocheting Musitian. (11. 4-5)

The term "crochet" is a variation of "crotchet," a quarter note in music. Such music would be played in quick time as measured by quarter notes. This figure suggests the image of a dying man, gasping in agony for breath. Moreover, as if to justify the couple's brash adultery, the

2Grierson, II, 64.
jealous husband is described as gluttonous in the extreme:

Nor when he swolne, and
pampered with great fare
Sits down, and snorts, caged
in his basket chaire. (11. 21-22)

In addition, the husband's house is figuratively "his
realme, his castle and his diocese" (1. 26)—his kingdom,
his palace and his pastoral charge. The love affair has
been carried on, then, not only in the face of the hus-
band's implicit secular, private and spiritual responsi-
bilities, but before his very eyes.

The implied analogy of treason in the home to
treason in the state is produced by means of the strident
tone and the use of jarring words and expressions: "swolne,
"loathsome Vomiting to spue his Soul out of one hell"
(11. 7-8), "howling," "feigned," "flout," "scoffing,
"deformities," "snorts," " usurpe," "revile," "scorne,
"seely plots." And even though the speaker does not rate
the husband highly, he claims ironically to sympathize with
him, for he is leaving his hell on earth only to gain
another (1. 8).

Finally, the speaker says that he and the deceiving
wife will enact their treason by continuing their deception
in another house, just as rebels to the king exile them-
selves in another country (11. 27-31). There they can ig-
nore the husband's policies (the king's dicta), his foolish
tactics to find them out, as well as his paid spies. By
equating the husband to the king, who is involved in "policies," "seely /timid/ plots" and "spies," the speaker gives the impression of political chicanery, tyranny, and espionage.

The closing couplet clinches the argument. They will behave as:

... the inhabitants of Thames right side
Do London's Major; or Germans, the Pope's pride. (ll. 33-35)

Their disregard of the husband will be as complete as the disregard shown in the Bankside of London, the location of theaters and brothels, to the affairs of the main portion of the growing city. Or they will coolly overlook the rules of the husband's "diocese" as completely as do the Germans who since Luther's revolt have scoffed at the Pope's claims.
ELEGIE 4, "THE PERFUME"

Leishman, in his brief study of Elegie 4, "The Perfume," draws attention to the desire "to surprise, to shock and to pretend acceptance of an immoral and cynical code." He also indicates that the elegy, although Anglicized, carries Ovidian echoes. The poem sets forth the secret affair of two lovers. In spite of a watchful father and mother, bribery and guards, the lovers are so discreet that they elude detection until they are "betrayed" by the scent of the perfume which the young man uses.

The thought of the elegy is brought to its resolution by metaphors, similes, topical references, personification and allusions. The basic metaphor is again found in the title, "The Perfume." Toward the end of the poem this metaphor is personified as a person, a betrayer, and somewhat obliquely as a court favorite: "Though you be much loved in the Princes hall" (1. 63). Furthermore, its nature is "traiterous" (1. 5). The numerous figures which follow further develop this metaphor. The first two-thirds of the poem is addressed to his mistress; the last third to the perfume. The mistress' father is likened to the judge who "catechiz'd" the speaker (1. 6), who is,

---

3Leishman, 63.
figuratively, the "thiefe at barre" (l. 3). And so he is presumed responsible for all her "suppos'd escapes escapades" (l. 2). And when the speaker alludes to the girl's body as her "beauties beautie" and "food of our love," he means that their love is nourished sensually. He also sees her as the "hope" of her father's "goods" (l. 11). Therefore, he is not only a sensual lover, but is a fortune-hunter.

The imagery descriptive of the father and the mother is less simile than it is synecdochic metaphor, or an entire body of implied metaphor. The speaker describes the father as:

```
   wont to search with glazed eyes,
     As though he came to kill a cockatrice . . .
```

(11. 7-8)

Grierson explains the lines in this manner:

Glazed eyes would be staring eyes. The Cockatrice or Basilisk killed by a glance of its eyes, so the eye of the man who comes to kill a cockatrice stares with terror lest he be killed himself. 4

Similar implied metaphor describes the "immortall mother,"

```
   which doth lye
     Still buried in her bed, yet will not dye. (ll. 13-14)
```

The mother is so ill that she is "buried" in her bed, and it appears that she will live forever. Worse yet, since she sleeps all day, she is awake when the girl comes in and

4 Grierson, II, 67.
is able to give her daughter a close physical examination. The little brothers are like "Faiery Sprights" indicating that they moved at night into the chamber.

The hyperbolic description of the guard follows:

The grim eight-foot-high iron-bound serving man,
That oft names God in oathes, and onely then,
He that to barre the first gate, doth as wide
As the great Rhodian Colossus stride,
Which, if in hell not other paines there were,
Makes me fear hell, because he must be there . . . . (ll. 31-36)

Grierson notes, regarding the "eight-foot-high" servant, that porters were chosen for their size and that probably this one was specially paid to spy on the lovers.\(^5\) The odd combination of hyphenated words in the line and the hyphenated words on the size and strength of the guard, could be a device to indicate the speaker's exaggerated fear. The speaker associates the guard, who swears and looks grim, with hell itself.

Within this descriptive passage is the simile of the Colossus of Rhodes, a 125-foot high bronze statue of Apollo in the harbor of Rhodes. Legend says that ships could pass between its legs. The analogy here, no doubt, is to the guard's standing grimly in the gateway, with his legs astride.

\(^{5}\)\textit{Ibid.}, 67.
The speaker from l. 53 on addresses the perfume. Describing the betrayal, he likens the father to a tyrant king, who smells gunpowder which has been placed to blow him up. This figure telescopes into a series of images. Attacking provincialism, the speaker sees the English "imprisoned" on their island, interested in nothing else but the breeding of cattle and dogs. In the allusion to the "pretious Unicorns" he infers more than one meaning. The unicorn was a sixteenth century coin, and so would be "pretious"—rare or costly. Possibly he alludes, however, to the unicorn as a fabulous, rare, white, one-horned animal used to symbolize virginity. Grierson's gloss suggests that great profit was made from unicorn's horns and that allusion to the unicorn implied something precious. Be that as it may, the hunting of the unicorn was a favorite subject for Renaissance tapestries. The speaker indicates that the English, who call the unicorns "strange monsters," are able to appreciate only what is commonplace, not what is unusual and therefore very valuable. At this point, the speaker addresses the perfume and personifies it as a foolhardy lover.

I taught my silkes, their whistling to forbear,
Even my opprest shoes, dumb and speechless were,
Onely, thou bitter sweet, whom I had laid
Next mee, mee traterously hast betrayd. (ll. 51-54)

---

6Ibid., 49.
These images give a sense of need for quiet, as though life depended upon it.

In his scorn the speaker next calls the perfume "base excrement of earth" (l. 57). This figure, in turn, becomes the source of four analogies:

By thee the seely Amorous sucks his death
By drawing in a leprous harlots breath;
By thee, the greatest staine to man's estate
Falls on us, to be called effeminate . . . .

(ll. 59-62)

The perfume is related to unclean dregs or refuse ("excrement"), to disease and immorality ("leprous harlots") and to manhood's shame ("to be called effeminate"). Allusion to the "Prince's Hall" suggests the court, where appearance is preferred to reality, while the allusion to gods and sacrificial altars wittily turns on the relationship of "fum'd" and "burnt" to "smell";

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

Here the speaker deduces that the burning of animal matter on the sacrificial altars emitted odorous vapors. The gods, he implies, were interested in the intent of the sacrifice, the obedience or honor implied in the burning, not in the putrid smell that accompanied it. The closing couplet states the decision of the speaker:

All my perfumes, I give most willingly
To 'embalme thy fathers corse . . . (ll. 71-72)
But, he says mock-seriously, "will he die?" (1. 72).

In this poem the depth metaphor, the perfume as symbol of the betrayer, involves the paradox implicit throughout. The perfume is sweet smelling, yet it is related to the "burnt" smell on the altars; and both are composed of the "base excrement of earth." It is "bitter sweet," yet its smell has the effect of gunpowder. The speaker muses that had the perfume smelled bad, the father might have thought it came from his own dirty feet or bad breath, yet he would think anything good that had no smell at all, merely because the perfume indicated that the unwelcome suitor was in the house. By the end of the poem, the speaker leaves one wondering whether the odor of the perfume (called "bitter sweet" in 1. 53) implies moral worth or its lack. The speaker eventually says that its original goodness fades in the court atmosphere:

If you were good, your good doth soone decay;
And you are rare; that takes the good away. (ll. 69-70)

We are left, however, in uncertainty for the speaker's attitude toward himself is ambiguous. This is to say that the paradox involved in the perfume metaphor becomes complex. The underhanded suitor is guilty of deceit, sensuality and mercenary intent ("Hope of his goods")--(1. 11). As the speaker, he shows disrespect, ill temper and impatience to the parents. Beside the implied sensuality,
he exemplifies cowardice or at least exaggerated fear (the "eight-foot-high . . . serving-man"). His "Behind the arras" relationship with the girl shows a lack of straightforwardness. He wears the perfume that is branded effeminate and that is associated with fops; and this product he, himself, associates with baseness, disease, harlotry, loathesomeness and effeminacy. Yet because the perfume is like a court favorite who is "loved in the Princes hall" (1. 63), the speaker implies, more or less, that he has a right to wear it. Furthermore, the perfume, carrying the qualities which he has denounced, he wears like the things "that seeme."

Inasmuch as the girl is involved in the deception as much as her suitor, she, too, is guilty of fraud. With him she is guilty of sensuality and intrigue ("close and secret as our soules" (ll. 11-12). Furthermore, the speaker implies in the mother's suspicion of her daughter's pregnancy that there is a past transgression of the daughter's morals in the courtship.

Even the parents are involved in deception and intrigue: the mother is suspicious of her daughter and craftily draws out the girl by relating her own past indiscretions; the father bribes the little brothers and hires the guard to spy on the lovers, and he, too, fears the worst.

Thus the speaker, who by wearing the perfume has taken on the "seeming" of the decadent court, is depraved
himself. Furthermore, he is not an example of anything admirable, of anything "rare" or "substantial." Yet the underlying suggestion is that of bitter condemnation of the speaker's private circle (the parents, the girl and himself), of the court, of his whole society and of his nation. The microcosm of the lovers is ugly, and the macrocosm of the larger world of the court is uglier. The speaker sees nothing substantial anywhere, and goodness is as rare as the unicorn. Why, then, should he be good, he implies, in the insouciant tone that characterizes the whole poem.
ELEGIE 7, "NATURE'S LAY IDEOT"

According to Leishman, Elegie 7, "Nature's Lay Ideot," was suggested by the fourth elegy in Ovid's First Book of The Amores. However, Ovid's theme is merely used by Donne as a springboard to produce something entirely different from the original. This poem about the art of love raises the question, is the "lay ideot" the mistress or the speaker? Since the mistress has proved herself such an apt student that the speaker comes out second best, Donne injects a note of doubt.

Throughout the poem the speaker addresses an imaginary mistress, whom he has educated in the "sophistic" (l. 2) of love. In this knowledge the student now outdoes the master (the speaker of the poem), who dislikes to see his simple-minded beloved—whom he has taught—neglect him for other men. His tone changes from reproach to sarcasm and finally to bitterness. Reprovingly he reminds her that he has taught her all that she knows: "I taught thee to love" (l. 1). He then refers to the courtly love etiquette that advised how to act or react in the matters of lovers' glances, sighs and tears:

Poole, thou did'st not understand
The mystique language of the eye nor hand:

7Leishman, 60-61
Nor could'st thou judge the difference
of the aire
Of sighes, and say, this lies, this
sounds despair . . . (ll. 3-6)

Here he indicates that the mistress has been socially and
amorously inept because she did not understand the secret
code between lovers. When he recalls her early ignorance
in the art of love, he turns sarcastic. Particularly he
notes that her former knowledge consisted of mincing agree-
ment, "I, if my friends agree" (l. 14), or of conversation
concerning her household and her husband:

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

Furthermore, she was shy and inarticulate:

And since, an houres discourse
could scarce have made
One answer in thee, and that
ill arraid
In broken proverbs, and torne
sentences. (ll. 17-19)

He argues that her husband had removed her from the social
world and had placed her in a position of seclusion.

Furthermore, her wifely duties do not make her the property
of her husband. Rather it is he, the speaker, because of
the work he has expended, who should possess her. In these
words he censures the husband:

Thou art not by so many
duties his,
That from the world's Common
having sever'd thee,
Inlaid thee, neither to be seene,
nor see,
As mine . . . . (ll. 20-23)
After he has "refined" her, the speaker continues, she is no longer a "lay ideot."

"Nature's Lay Ideot," therefore, is the depth metaphor of the elegy, as well as the epithet for the speaker's mistress. The entire poem is a development of this metaphor. The mistress was a natural-born simpleton. In the use of "lay" he indicates, in addition, that she is a layman, i.e., not an initiate in the "religion" of love. The metaphor is rather conventionally developed for the first twenty-five lines, whereupon he refers to the etiquette of courtly love and to the Renaissance symbolism of flowers: rosemary, remembrance; pansies, love; fennel, flattery and deceit; columbine, ingratitude; rue, sorrow or repentance; daisy, pretense; and violet, chastity and fidelity. Grier-son clarifies the meanings inherent in flower arrangements which are alluded to in the following lines:

I had not taught thee then the Alphabet
Of flowers, how they devisedly being set
And bound up, might with speechless
secrecie
Deliver errands mutely, and mutually (11. 9-12).

He explains that "posy" or flowers:

... is a contraction of poesy, the flowers
of a bouquet expressing by their arrangement
a sentiment like that engraved on a ring.\(^8\)

In this remark the speaker indicates that the mistress, before her training, was so ignorant of the niceties

\(^8\)Grierson, II, 72.
of courtly love-knowledge that she did not know how to arrange flowers to make a "posy," or express various sentiments by means of it.

The arguments that follow are insulting remarks to the effect that the mistress was inept before the speaker had educated her in the accepted social graces, i.e., in "love trickes" (l. 16). But now she utilizes these tricks to gain lovers. He argues that, since he made her what she is, she should now be his "blis-full Paradise" (l. 24). And the line,

I planted knowledge and lifes tree in thee, (l. 26)

metaphorically expresses that he was responsible for making her knowing and for robbing her of innocence.

The speaker's reference to framing and "enamelling plate" Grierson believes relates to the shaping of flat or hollow ware, and to the common practice of elaborately enamelling silver services.9 "Enamelling" could indicate, as well, that there was deceit or pretense involved. The expression, "drinke in Glass" (l. 27), could carry also the connotation of social pretense, since probably all except the court drank from mugs. However, no adequate gloss can be offered for this phrase.

In the closing couplet the speaker, in a resentful tone, questions:

9Grierson, II, 73.
Chafe wax for other seales? breake a
colts force
And leave him then, beeing made a
ready horse? (ll. 29-30)

Here he argues that he has done work for other men's ben-efit, that he has ground other men's axes. Just as in the
silver-plate allusion he was the shaper and the finisher
of the plate (or of the mistress), so he is now the menial
worker for others. The wax chafing recalls "A Merry Play,"
written by John Heywood, in which the cuckolded husband
chafes the wax to mend the pail, while his wife and her
paramour eat the meat pie and court. In the last line
above the mistress before her "education" was an untrained
colt, and he regrets losing her when she has become, through
his training, a usable "horse," a common pun in Donne's
English, meaning whore.

The fully-developed metaphor reveals, in this man-
er, the entire meaning of the elegy. The mistress appears
as the simple girl who is so well "trained" in the sophistry
of love that she becomes a high class strumpet, and eventu-
ally exceeds the speaker in his art. The speaker's cyni-
cism seems as much directed toward the conventional love
customs and the men who promote them as it is directed toward
the "lay ideots."

The paradox lies in the irony of situation: after
the speaker has expended great finesse in "finishing" the
mistress, she is lost to others apparently like him. Further-
more, the mistress, pictured as a simpleton, outdoes her
teacher. She has so well learned the lessons in the
sophistry of love that by the end of the poem the speaker
appears a "lay ideot" himself.
Telling a tale or recounting an incident is an unusual form for Donne, but this is the method used in Elegie 14, "A Tale of a Citizen and His Wife." It is a vulgar little story in which the speaker, a traveler, overtakes a citizen and his pretty wife who are "both riding on one horse." The traveler, who appears to be a courtier, judging by the topic of conversation he introduces, tries to engage the citizen in contemporary events. The citizen, a tradesman, is not interested in current events. He does, however, become voluble to the point of boredom on the subject of trade. All the while the citizen is railing on business conditions, the traveler and the wife are engaged in a silent flirtation. In time they reach an inn, whereupon the traveler invites them to refreshments, but the citizen refuses the invitation. The traveler, foiled in his plan of seduction, at least gains their address and an invitation. The point of the story is reached in the closing couplet:

He barely nam'd the street, promis'd the Wine,
But his kinde wife gave me the very Signe.

The traveler puns on "signe," which carries a double meaning: both the address of their house and also a tacit
invitation to a future indiscretion.

The elegy is almost incredibly bare of metaphor or paradox. It is told conversationally and flippantly, with, however, satirical overtones. It contains numerous allusions to civic life: to "The Plaguy Bill" (l. 21), a posted list of those who had died of the plague; the Virginia plot (l. 23), or the plan to colonize in America; the "Custome Farmers" (l. 22), tenant farmers under obligation to render shares of the yearly crop to the owners whose grounds they worked; the "Brittaine Burse" (l. 25), the name of a then new investment brokerage exchange; new-built Algate (l. 27), the new prison; the More-field crosses (l. 27), the newly-built walks which were constructed over the marshy plots around London; "Bankerouts" (l. 28), or bankers; the poor economic state of merchants (l. 28); "my Lord of Essex dayes" (l. 40), the era of Elizabethan prosperity; and to "Ore-tenus" (l. 9), a legal term meaning to be held for questioning or arrest.

This remarkably different elegy of Donne's reveals at least his variety of interests. The reader is struck, as well, by the Chaucer-like manner of the poem, though it is Chaucer in Restoration dress. Baird Whitlock, in his study of early influences on Donne, notes that in the poet's second year at Oxford, when he was twelve years old, Spanish was one of his deepest interests. He knew
about the Spanish mystics and was reading:

. . . bawdy Chaucer-like stories of the Spaniard Juan Ruiz . . . . At this time he was also reading Ovid's loose-laced poetry.  

This elegy is a kind of Restoration rake poem, which treats a restoration comedy theme: the seduction of a citizen's wife by a court rake, as if there were no immorality involved. The citizen is either country gentry or in trade; his wife is young and eager to get away from her watchful, oldish husband—and she does. Now this kind of comedy was already appearing on the late Jacobean stage, in the works of dramatists like John Fletcher (see The Wild Goose Chase). What we have, then, is something satiric; something topical; something Ovidian; something scabrous, conveyed in the pun on "doing" (l. 34). Furthermore, it is a poem of verve that anticipates, as indicated, future works.

---

10 Baird Whitlock, "Donne's University Years," English Studies, XLIII (1962), 7. Note: The Juan Ruiz referred to was a fourteenth century Spanish archpriest who wrote The Book of Good Love, a collection of adventures told in picaresque manner and forming a satirical panorama of medieval society.
CHAPTER IV

CONSTANCY AND INCONSTANCY IN LOVE
ELEGIE 3, "CHANGE"

Rugoff writes about the first four lines of Elegie 3, "Change," that "vows and acts of love are described as faith and good works."¹ This analogy of love to religion is the springboard for a series of arguments through which the speaker advances the thought that in a woman change or inconstancy is natural and right. Even so, he fears his mistress' inconstancy, since women, then, are made for all men, just as the sea receives all rivers. Yet finally he accepts the philosophy of variety in love, although, ironically, he wishes to maintain his natural right to be constant to his mistress, and "to love not any one, nor every one" (1. 28).

The philosophy in "Change" resembles that in Elegie 17, "Variety."² In both there is a presentation of naturalistic beliefs: love is a physical relationship whose justification lies in natural law free from the restraints of society, which are only the result of society's opinion. The author thus demonstrates some knowledge of current naturalistic philosophy. Bredvold notes that:

¹Rugoff, 86.
²This theme is presented more rakishly in "Womans Constancy" in the Songs and Sonets.
... appeal to nature as a guide and norm is a substitute for the authority of society and its accepted code of morality.\(^3\)

He further observes that Elegie 3, "Change," reverses the theory of the Law of Nature which held that goodness was implicit in human nature. This attack against the tradition makes "Change" an audacious poem.

The speaker in "Change" is less concerned with wit than with analogical argument developed by means of metaphor, simile, and analogies. He begins by alleging that women are "like the Arts," the value of which lies in their availability to all seekers. Then, in an image drawn from hawking—suitors as fowlers, woman as the bird—the speaker projects the idea that the bird is available to any man with the ability to catch it. The analogy of women to sly "foxes" and lustful "goats" advances the naturalistic belief which conceives of man as an animal, free from society's moral restraints and governed solely by desire. Women are also "clogges," or weights attached to man, to hinder his freedom. In yet another metaphor, woman is like "plowland," from which the owner expects a greater harvest. In still another metaphor, in which woman is compared to the sea that receives all rivers, the speaker defends sexual freedom in women:

---

Though Danube into the sea must flow,
The sea receives the Rhine, Volga
and Po. (11. 19-20)

But in the lines that immediately follow he begins to reveal serious doubts about such unrestrained behavior:

By nature, which gave it, this liberty
Thou lovest, but Oh! canst thou love it and mee?
Likeness glueth love; and if that thou so doe,
To make us like and love, must I change too? (11. 18-21)

The speaker’s complaint is that he cannot live easily in such wild sexual freedom; and his worry is, nature permitting her to live in "a wild roguery" (l. 30), can she really love him? Since love is strengthened by likeness, will their love be constant or changing? He himself cannot accept indiscriminate freedom:

More than thy hate, I hate it, rather let me
Allow her change, than change as oft as shee,
And so not teach, but force my opinion
To love not anyone, nor everyone. (11. 22-25)

But the speaker is not himself a devotee of total constancy in love. By means of a final water image, the speaker argues that circumscribed or enforced love becomes stagnant, like standing water; while love with some freedom, circumscribed only by the "bankes" that enjoy the moving stream, remains fresh and clear. The "banke" represents men; the water, women. The sea, rivers, oceans are archetypal images of passion:
Waters stincke soone, if in one place
they bide
And in the vast sea are more putrified:
But when they kiss one banke, and
leaving this
Never look backe, but the next bank
do kiss,
Then are they purest; (11. 31-35)

The speaker is willing, however, to allow his mistress a
degree of variety or change because of the paradoxical
truth:

Change' is the nursery
Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity. (11. 35-36)

He is concerned, then, with the need for discrimination,
for the definition of limits. Thus the paradox lies in
the fact that there must be limits even in the freedom of
love. However, these limits must not be too rigidly de­
defined, for change is the foundation of happy and lasting
love. Yet we are left to wonder exactly what the speaker
really means by change. True, change in the sense of
music, joy and life, could mean organic developments. But
if "change is the nursery . . . of eternity," which Renea­
sance naturalism would seem to deny, then the change the
speaker desires will be a far cry from the sexual change,
typical of "all beasts" (l. 11). We may, of course, be
dealing here only with pseudo-paradox, which is not un­
known in poems arguing for Renaissance naturalism.
The fifteenth elegie, "The Expostulation," is constructed in four divisions: (1) The speaker's accusation of infidelity; (2) his own self-deprecation; (3) the curse placed on the third party who has caused the breach between the lovers; and (4) the plea for reconciliation. Leishman suggests and Grierson agrees that the Ovidian insertion resembles the second elegy of Ovid's Third Book, which describes the lovers at the circus, she intent on the races, he intent on her. In the English elegy the theatre is substituted for the circus. The elegy contains no basic metaphor which is used as a vehicle to carry out the author's theme. The logical direction of the poem is produced mainly by a series of arguments in each section. A tone of bitter paradox introduces the first argument, "And must she needs be false because she's faire" (1. 4). The speaker argues that Heaven at least sees her "perjuries" (1. 8), even if it smiles on them. He further questions if it is a trait of beauty, youth and perfection to lie. The accusations

---

4Leishman, 67. Note: Leishman doubts whether this poem is by Donne, and only suggests that it may be by Donne, or by an imitator of Donne and Jonson. The last line of this poem certainly smacks of the "plain style" of Jonson, hardly of Donne. Yet much else in the poem resembles Donne and hence the poem might as well be retained in the canon until there is indubitable proof that it should be rejected.
continue with the statements that women have no loyalty, for their promises are "writ in water" (l. 10) and "blown away with winde" (l. 11). Here the speaker uses the Petrarchan language of accents, sighs, oathes, tears and kisses "that seal'd the rest" (l. 18). His use of the legal reference "sealed" implies the strength of a formal promise, while the commercial figure in the following line carries the connotations of a written contract, "Did you draw bonds to forfet? signe to breake?" (l. 19). Therefore he accuses his mistress of utter faithlessness.

Worse yet, her attitude is ambiguous:

Or must we reade you quite from what you speake,
And finde the truth out the wrong way?
or must
Hee first desire you false, would wish you just? (11. 20-22)

The speaker's self-condemnation which follows at once, accepts the fact that he is "prophane" (l. 23), but he admits that he is jealous and so he reverses his entire first argument. The thought that she could not be untrue is analogized to the improbability of all nature's changing its course: the sun will no longer shine, the rivers will flow backward and the river Thames will freeze in June, before she could be inconstant (11. 27-32).

The third portion of the poem's structure involves the false confidant and the curse which the speaker places upon him. This friend is accused of twisting words and making the lovers appear false to each other. Thereupon
the speaker curses him: let him wander on the earth  
"wretched as Cain" (1. 40), who was guilty of killing his brother; let him be shunned by all and let him shun all;  
let him "deny God thrice," like Peter, who denied God,  
with remorse, however. Let the wolves tear out his heart; the swine, his bowels; the ravens, his tongue.  
And let his corpse be thrown to the "Kinges Dogges" (1. 52).  

The final division of the poem, the suggested reconciliation, contains a simile about "Painters":

. . . like Painters that do take  
Delight, not in the made work, but  
whiles they make . . . (ll. 57-58)

In this analogy of love to art, the speaker suggests that the progress of the work of art, the doing, and not the finished product, is the joy of the artist.  

By means of the Ovidian adaptation which follows (ll. 61-66) the speaker re-emphasizes that love like art gives the greatest pleasure in its formative stages. In attendance of "maskes and playes," the lovers find community of interests:

All which were such soft pastimes, as  
in these  
Love was as subtilly catch'd, as a  
disease;  
But being got it is a treasure sweet,  
Which to defend is harder than to get:  
And ought not be prophan'd on either part,  
For though 'tis got by chance, 'tis kept by art. (ll. 65-70)

Moreover, this portion gives more meaning to the lovers'
misunderstanding, since the speaker's belief is that though it is simple to fall in love, it requires art to maintain it (l. 70).

Much of the meaning of this elegy, one of the simplest of the group, appears to lie in the key word "prophane." In the first use of the word (l. 23) it means both "unholy" and also "not possessing knowledge." The second use of the word (l. 69) implies "to be made unsanctified or defiled"; for it is the lovers' lack of real knowledge of the true nature of their love that caused the original difficulty between them. It is apparent that the poem develops by means of argument rather than by metaphors. In fact, it is marked by its paucity of figurative language.
ELEGIE 17, "VARIETY"

One is led to suspect that Donne is writing Elegie 17, "Variety," with tongue in cheek. He suggests the core of the argument by the title. The speaker claims that he favors promiscuity in love, because change is natural not only in the world of nature, but also in man. More than this, moral fiat, which denies the natural law of plurality, "is hard and shall not have my voice" (l. 25). Nevertheless, the speaker promises, when he is older and wiser and has found perfection in one love, to give up promiscuous behavior.

He addresses no one in particular, and he gives example after example of pseudo-logical argument:

The heavens rejoice in motion, why
should I
Abjure my so much loved variety,
And not with many youth and love divide? . . .
(11. 1-3)

The sun . . .
Sheds flame into what else soever
doth seem bright . . . (11. 5-6)

Rivers the clearer and more pleasing are,
Where their fair spreading streams run
wide and farr;
And a dead lake that no strange bark
doth greet,
Corrupts itself and what doth live
in it . . . (11. 11-14)

How happy were our Syres in ancient time,
Who held plurality of loves no crime! . . .
(11. 38-39)
Here, within the conventional form of the elegy he offers unconventional and libertine thought.

According to Louis Bredvold, Donne was interested in his early years in the school of Skepticism and Naturalism which has been called the "Libertine tradition."

This influence for a while produced a "superficial philosophy of cynical sophistication for Donne's circle."

According to Bredvold:

The originality of his modern ideas is only apparent; the ideas . . . were the current thought of a definite Renaissance school . . . .

With this school Donne came in contact. With these libertine ideas he played, sometimes gaily, lightly, sometimes seriously, cynically. Probably his own nature was too deep, too idealistic to have been a worshipper of this doctrine.5

Therefore, Donne could be assuming here a deliberately outrageous pose merely for the fun of it and injecting a superficial philosophy of libertinism in order to titillate his own circle of readers. In the concluding lines of the poem, however, Donne reverses his stand, becomes completely conventional in thought and submissive in tone. And appearing almost oddly out of place within this context of rebellious ideas, because they are poetic and sentimental, are the images of brightness that appear unexpectedly throughout the elegy:

The sun that sitting in the chaire of light
Sheds flame into what else soever doth seem bright . . . (11. 5-6)

5Bredvold, "Naturalism," 501.
The last I saw in all extremest is faire,  
And holds me in the Sun-beames of her  
haire . . . (11. 26-27)

In his argument that change is a law of nature, the speaker recalls the conventional image of the whirling of the spheres of the Ptolemaic universe: "The heavens rejoice in motion" (1. 1). However, the second proof, the personified image of the sun sitting in a chair, is more far-fetched. Here, the sun is metaphorically a person, who infuses light into anything able to absorb it; moreover, it is restless and goes from one "Inn" to another (referring to the twelve signs of the Zodiac) to differentiate months and years from one another.

The speaker then advances his argument by means of the river image (11. 11-12). Both this and the lake image, which follows it, are metaphoric in nature. The river represents unhampered love, while the "dead lake" represents love restricted by lack of variety. The speaker argues the virtues of change, by stating also that he is interested in any kind of woman—blonde, dark, conversationally charming, high in rank, beautiful or unattractive. The same sentiment reoccurs in "The Indifferent" in the Songs and Sonets.

The speaker follows these personal arguments with historical references. The lines, "How happy were our Syres in ancient times" (1. 38), and "The golden laws of nature are repeald" (1. 48), both refer to some imagined period in
antiquity. In this paradisiacal state, mankind followed the laws of nature. He even alludes to the Persians who, he declares, still permit incestuous practices (ll. 42-43).

The traditional Cupid conceit (ll. 56-73) is then introduced by alluding to "opinion," or custome, as a monster. This monster has clipped Cupid's wings and taken his bow and arrow; he has taken the freedom of flight and the "daring" from love. The conceit continues:

Onely some few strong in themselves
and free
Retain the seeds of antient liberty. (ll. 62-63)

These few enthrone Cupid in their hearts, make him their king and follow his every command. According to Wheelwright's definition, the Cupid conceit qualifies as depth metaphor because it is the holstering thought of the poem: the monster, opinion, clips the wings of promiscuous love.

Wheelwright has stated that paradox accompanies depth metaphor. The paradox buried in the Cupid metaphor is that even if Cupid had kept his power to fly, such a state would only be temporary, since the speaker mentions that time brings "firmer age" and "judgement" and so takes away youth's alleged "liberties":

But time will in his course a point
discry
When I this loved service must deny,
For our allegiance temporary is,
With firmer age returns our liberties.
What time in years and judgement we repod'd,
Shall not so easily be to change disposed. (ll. 74-79)
Paradoxically, the prized freedom, the speaker reminds himself, is a freedom of only a few years of youth, and so is not a truly complete freedom. There is also a degree of paradox in the conventionality of the speaker's treatment of the argument as opposed to the boldness of the thought. Antithesis appears in the elegy in the simple comparisons of rivers to lakes, and in the variety of women that the speaker mentions who could interest him.

In the closing lines the speaker reaffirms the thought that his allegiance to "variety" is only temporary:

Nor to the art of severall eyes obeying;  
But beauty with truth worth securely weighing,  
Which being found assembled in some one,  
Whe'e'l love her ever, and love her alone (ll. 80-83)

He accepts the fact that when he is older and has more judgment he will settle down with some "one" who embodies "beauty and true worth." Evidently this "one" will have the virtues of the woman eulogized in Elegie 9, "The Autumnal." "Beauty" is beauty of both body and soul, and "true worth" represents the virtues in "beauty" beside the virtues of mind and character. In such perfection he will find the "one."
ELEGIE 10, "THE DREAME"

Elegie 10, "The Dreame," is a poem which is built on the traditional medieval-Renaissance dream-vision pattern of dreaming, waking, and then uttering a complaint to a beloved girl who is not present. However, in this elegy the expression of the speaker is less complaint than it is a statement of his philosophy. In his contrast of the "image" or dream of his beloved versus "she," the actual girl ("Image of her whom I love, more than she" (l. 17)), Donne presents a remarkably subtle argument.

This elegy is different from the others which have been analyzed because like some of the less hair-splitting poems in the Songs and Sonets, it is more lyrical. It is tender in tone and rather conventional in treatment. Further, the rhyme scheme is not that of the rhyming couplet of the other elegies. Except for the closing two lines it follows a common quatrain pattern (abab), etc.

The waking dreamer in the elegy asks the dream image of his beloved to leave. Moreover, since his heart through their love has grown too "great and good," he asks her to take it with her. He reasons that his feelings, or "heart," are too much for him to bear, just as honors are too much for weak people to carry, or just as violent sensory stimulants dull the sight (ll. 7-9).
Although the dreamer in the elegy uses the convention of the dream-vision as a springboard, he develops his theme by means of unconventional images, such as coins and kings. "Mee," or the speaker, is the loved one's "Medall." This metaphor, drawn from commerce, has a double meaning. Actually, the "medall" was either a coin or a metal disc worn as a charm and was intended to preserve the remembrance of an illustrious person. Figuretively, it has the meaning of an image or a likeness, usually of something superior. A notion existed also in the Renaissance that true lovers' pictures or images actually were present in each other's hearts. Therefore, the speaker uses the medal image to impress the reader that his love literally is true, and he uses this image figuratively to indicate a lasting superior love:

Image of her whom I love, more than she,
Whose faire impression in my faithful heart,
Makes me her medal, and makes her love mee (ll. 1-3).

The speaker, to further explain the "medall" metaphor, uses the simile:

... as Kings do coynes, to which their stamps impart
The value ... (ll. 4-5).

That is, the woman loves the speaker as kings do their coins--because their own pictures are stamped on the money. If kings love their coins for this egotistical reason, and if the woman loves the speaker merely because her image is
pictured in his heart, then self-love on the part of "kings" and the girl is implied. The veiled ambiguity of these lines allows latitude in reading. The speaker may mean that their love is mutual; or on the other hand, if he implies self-love in the woman, he could be satirizing a Petrarchan love notion.

In the second quatrain, the speaker considers Reason and Fantasy in relation to the dream image and the woman. Pierre Legouis explains these as follows:

Reason is a capacity of a waking soul while fantasy is that of the sleeping soul.6

However, this brief interpretation does not completely explicate the lines:

When you are gone, and Reason
gone with you,
Then Fantasie is Queene and
Soule, and all;
She can present joyes meaner
than you do;
Convenient, and more proportionall. (ll. 9-12)

Optional meanings are possible. When one paraphrases 1.9 these question rise: Does Donne mean that when "you" (the dream) are gone and Reason has gone with "you" (the dream), then Fantasie is Queene and Soule of all my faculties? Or is "you" in 1.9 a direct address to the woman? If this is the case, then "she" in 1.11 means Fantasie, which is a plausible meaning. Moreover, "meaner" in 1.11 could represent the mean between extremes. Actually, then,

Fantasie would be superior to reality. It could also mean something like day-dreaming. It is possible that Donne, either accidentally, or for intended ambiguity, has caused a shift in pronoun reference, for "you" as implied in 1. 5 is used as the dream image, and "you" in 1. 9 is also the woman. In a similar shift, "she," 1. 1, is the actual woman, while "she," 1. 11, is Fantasie. Thus, reason or soul leaves with the actual woman, and fantasy or dream takes complete control. And although the dream of her is not as perfect as her actual presence it does have advantages (ll. 11-13). In fact, the speaker admits that fantasy might even be superior to reality, i.e., it is convenient, even if its quality is relative. Since joy is only illusion, if in his dreams he has her, the experience is equal to actually possessing her. Moreover, in the dream he is cut off from the senses. In the waking world he is bound to the senses which are the agitators of passion, and the passions in turn are the cause of pain.

After such enjoyment, sans senses, the speaker states that he will awake and will have no passionate actions to regret. Because he will have nothing to repent, he will write more thankful verses on love than he would be able to compose had he been with her in the flesh. For, if she had been actually present, his emotions would have been expended; while in the existing case he has the reserve emotion for poetry. However, he adds the line,
"But dearest heart, and dearer image stay" (ll. 21), and so the sensual lover returns with waking. He wants both the reality of the flesh imaged in "dearest heart," which is representative of the actual girl; and he wants the ideal in "dearer image," which is representative of the dream. With the shift of attitude, in which he invites both image and heart to stay, there is an inference that the whole person is to stay, i.e., the "heart" indicating actual emotions and the "image" indicating the ideal girl or ideal situation of the dream. In this apparent development of meaning, "heart" in the first stanza has been little more than the receptacle for the "faire impressions" of the beloved's image, whereas in the last stanza the "dearest heart" becomes a term of endearment for the speaker's actual beloved. Moreover, the "dearer image" retains the illusory appearance characteristic of the dream. Furthermore, the ideal similitude of the girl in the figure "dearer image" places it on a superior or preferred level than that of the "dearest heart." Thus the speaker wants both the ideal woman and the real woman. By doing so, he breaks the barrier between the two, and accepts them as complementary to each other.

In ll. 22-23 the speaker twice makes use of plays on words in "drame enough" and "passe too fast away." That is, "true joyes" are fleeting and illusory; though joy can be had conveniently, if briefly, in a dream. The
second expression, "passe too fast away," can mean that the dream is gone too soon, and also that death comes too soon in life. "Life's Taper," the light of life, is the final metaphor of the elegy, through which the speaker re-emphasizes that life with his loved one will be too short in any case.

The ambivalence in the total argument furnishes the paradox of this rather conventional elegy. Paradoxically, the dream world, the speaker maintains, is as full of "joyes" as in the waking world. Perhaps the dream world is better, for it does not result in the "paine" and the responsibilities which the waking senses cause. Paradoxically, too, is the fact that reason, which is a part of the waking world, should be a part of the pain and trouble of the "true" world, whereas fantasy, which is part of the sleeping world, "locks up sense," and in doing so, locks out troubles.

In the closing couplet the speaker prefers being distraught to madness with great emotions ("much heart") than being senseless without feeling ("ideott with none"). In this hair-splitting argument, the speaker puns on the meaning of "sense" (l. 7) and "heart" (l. 26) in its relation to the senses, as opposed to the implied meaning of "ideott" (senseless). Since the woman's actual love gives the speaker feeling, he prefers intensity of emotion to the dullness that typifies a non-feeling state.
CHAPTER V

NEOPLATONIC LOVE
Mrs. E. E. Duncan-Jones in her study of Elegie 9, "The Autumnal," mentions that very few writers of Donne's period wrote on autumnal beauty. She quotes a well-known belief of the time, that "of all fair things the autumn too is fair," and notes that many Renaissance poets wrote on this theme. She believes that Donne's source for his theme of autumnal beauty is from Plutarch, from which source he also could have drawn the allusion to the Lydian Plane-tree. Elsewhere in the poem, Donne seems to be indebted to a "supulchral epigram" on a Greek courtesan, who had retained her charm to a late age.¹

The theme, then, of this elegy is taken from well-known epigrams which were available in the Greek Anthology in Latin, French and Italian versions.² K. W. Gransden classifies it as one of the courtly occasional poems for patrons, in this case, Mrs. Herbert. Since it is addressed to a real woman, he considers it a verse-letter.³ The argument of the poem is that youthful beauty cannot compare to the mature beauty of the subject of the elegy, for

²Loc. cit.
³Gransden, 11.
in her all civilized qualities can be found—warmth, affection, mental acuity, spirituality, entertainment and satisfaction. Donne states that he prefers the serenity of such "beauty" to youthful beauty, for with the former he can bear to meet old age and death. Therefore, in this poem he is probably celebrating a Platonic relationship with an older woman, since he elevates the spiritual values of maturity over the physical advantages of youth.

After the opening couplet, in which Donne states his theme, he enters into a type of proof-making dialectic. He develops his argument by means of a dialectical comparison of youth to maturity, though the thought of the poem progresses on the whole by means of metaphor and paradox, rather than by plain statement. Donne is also being deliberately non-conventional, because actually he is complimenting Mrs. Herbert. Leishman notes that in Elegie 9, "The Autumnal," Donne treats "a serious subject with . . . fundamental unseriousness." And again, " . . . Mrs. Herbert . . . becomes, after a few lines, a mere topic for wit, a mere broomstick, . . . ."

These characteristics are apparent at the outset, for the title is metaphoric, "Autumnal" referring to a time of life. By use of metaphor, Donne analogizes various

---

4Ibid., 97.  
5Ibid., 99.
stages of life to the seasons of the year. Spring and summer represent early and late youth; autumn, full maturity; and winter, old age. To love youthful beauty amounts to being raped (l. 33) because, through the appeal to the senses, such beauty "forces" love. The "affection" of mature love, on the other hand, is "reverence." Paradoxically, youth is the "Golden Age," but only because it is a peak of physical perfection. But youth only appears to be golden, since it is, in fact, fleeting, while maturity actually is gold and is therefore more desirable because it is related to qualities fairly free from time's destroying power. Youth is the formative period of the earth, the "torrid and inflaming time"; maturity in this woman is the "tolerable Tropique clyme." Thus the metaphors mount toward the Cupid conceit (ll. 13-18). The woman's wrinkles are analogized to love's grave, i.e., to Cupid's grave, in which he sits "like an anchorit" (l. 16). The mature woman represents love so completely that when she dies, Cupid, who is playfully described as sitting in her wrinkles, will die also. Since this is the case, the wrinkles cannot be graves, Donne states, but a "tomb," or a memorial to both Cupid and the subject.

At this point the wrinkle-Cupid conceit telescopes into the royalty conceit (ll. 20-24). Though the god of Love is everywhere "in Progresse," nevertheless his "standing house," his royal castle, is the subject's mature
beauty. Here again paradox enters; for Love in youth is only a "sojourns" (l. 19) with "voluptuousnesse" (l. 22), while love in the mature woman suggests a high degree of permanence. Next Donne agrees that mature beauty is like evening, with all the associations of its calm enjoyments. In this woman's presence one can enjoy a king's "revels," or royal entertainment, and the judgment and learning of a king's "counsaile." In the forest image that follows (ll. 25-30), maturity is likened to the fully developed timber which stands above youth, the undeveloped underwood. Cupid is associated with both, and Donne by use of the simile "as wine in June" (l. 26) re-emphasizes the activities of the senses in youth. More metaphors follow: "ages glory" is "barrenesse" (l. 32) which Donne purports to find desirable. It is a quality of fifty years' acquiring.

But at this point he draws a distinction between autumunal beauty and old age. In the conceit of the "winter-faces" (l. 37) or extreme old age, Donne describes the aged skin as like an "unthrift's purse" or like a sack that covers the soul (l. 38). For instance, the mouth is only a hole, and the winter-faces are like death's heads or skulls, "For these not Ancient, but Antique be" (l. 44).

In conclusion Donne relates maturity to tombs, and youth to cradles; and he prefers maturity to youth. Therefore he begs "a journey down the hill" to death by loving
this mature woman: "I shall ebbe out with them, who homeward goe" (l. 50). From this array of metaphors, in a poem of fifty lines, one can judge how much Donne has relied on their use to carry out his theme. In fact, the use of the "autumn" metaphor in this elegy can be classified as depth metaphor as Wheelwright has defined it.

Certain allusions further enrich the metaphors that appear in "The Autumnal." Donne alludes to the "Golden Age" in order to equate his subject's youth to Paradise and the original human state, when man was exempt from shame. Or he could be referring to Hesiod's Golden Age in which man remained forever youthful and without sin. And the god of love, known as Cupid or Amor by the Romans, and as Eros by the Greeks, is alluded to in the primary conceit of the poem. He is the god who with his golden wings travels widely, and with his unerring arrows or torches conquers the hearts of men. He is also the personification of helpful friendship. To further illustrate the charm possible in middle age, Donne alludes to the story of the Lydian plane-tree, which appeared so wonderful to Xerxes that he ordered it be gilded with gold. And within the "winter-faces" conceit, Donne almost whimsically mentions the teeth lost during a life-time, which will cause trouble for souls in the re-assembly at the Resurrection.

---

6Rugoff, 101.
Surface paradox is present in the shades of meaning implicit in "shame," used twice (l. 5). Here "shame" suggests a possible Christian inhibition of sensual love or sex, as opposed to the lack of "shame" in a Platonic relationship. Love for this woman is "reverence" and is therefore exempt from shame. "Reverence" also carries spiritual overtones, so that it relates to the "grace" of autumnal beauty. Grierson in his "Commentary" states that he does not know Donne's meaning in the word "barrenness." From the poem's context, it appears that Donne ascribes to the word a double meaning. Its usual meaning of being unfruitful, which is pejorative, is here said to be a blessed condition. "Barrenness" can also mean here to be stripped of excesses, so that a state of serenity or even placidity exists. In any case, it remains a paradox, that maturity, with loss of youthful beauty can still be "glory" (l. 32) because it has reached a state of emotional calm.

Opinion varies concerning the tone of the poem. However, it does appear to be a tranquil, if far-fetched expression of respect and friendship in which Donne is trying to please his subject, Mrs. Herbert. There is no parody here, even though, as Leishman points out, Donne spends more time on seemingly extraneous wit than on his subject. Yet the closing lines do not strive for wit but

7Leishman, 99.
strike a pious Christian note which climaxes the reverent, if not obeisant, tone of the elegy:

Since such loves naturall lation is, may still
My love descend, and journey down the hill,
Not panting after growing beauties, so,
I shall ebbe out with them, who home-ward goe (ll. 47-50).
CHAPTER VI

IMPORTANCE OF BODY AND SPIRIT
ELEGIE 18, "LOVES PROGRESS"

Elegie 18, "Loves Progress," possibly was passed around within Donne's coterie somewhat like a rakishly witty joke. The poem is pure sophistry and perhaps was meant to be read as such. The speaker contends that sexual union is the purpose and end of love. To support his arguments in favor of this belief, he describes the lover's advances from the woman's head, or from the feet toward the desired goal, or "Centrique part" (1. 36). What we have here, too, is a parody of the conventional Petrarchan description of the woman from the hair downward. Leo Spitzer explains this accepted form:

The medieval rhetorician Matheiu de Vendôme . . . teaches his pupils how beauty . . . should be described by enumerating the excellencies of the different bodily parts, always observing the regular order downward from head or hair to legs and feet . . . and such precepts continue to be observed in Renaissance descriptions of beautiful ladies.1

Donne parodies this technique in this witty demonstration of a conventional form. In the progress, his speaker dissect district into a woman's body in terms of an ocean voyage; and he argues the theme through the use of a series of metaphors that vary in length from short conceits to the extended

conceit, the ocean voyage. Within these conceits he introduces a variety of allusions of exploration to clarify or emphasize his meaning.

Rugoff in his study of the imagery of this poem, suggests that the writer felt a kinship with the explorers of the New World and with the "Galileo's venturing into space;" the routes to the East served as symbols "of all that is precious and desirable."² It is in this sense that "India" is used.

And Sailing towards her India
in that way (l. 65)

However, before the speaker launches on the geographical conceit, he considers the nature of love.

Love, the speaker says, is a "bear-whelp born" (l. 4), a metaphor which grows into a five-line conceit. Here he is referring to the current theory that bear cubs were born lumps, which were licked into characteristic shape by the mother.³ Through this image he says that love has an essentially carnal shape, as if we "o're lick" it, it will become a monster. Sophistically he states that love cannot be made into anything more than physical. Through the analogy, "faced like a man" (l. 8), he contends that since love is animalistic, it cannot be forced into a form agreeable to reason and spirituality.

²Rugoff, 140.
³Ibid., 210.
Here, as in Elegie 17, "Variety," the author assumes the influences of Renaissance naturalism. Continuing his description of the carnal nature of love he states:

Perfection is in unitie; prefer
One woman first and then
one thing in her. (ll. 9-10)

The blasé tone of the poem indicates that the unity that is meant is a physical unity, further verified in the statement of the purpose of love. He states this purpose by means of the gold image. Here he recalls the properties of gold, its "ductilness," "application," "wholesomeness" and "ingenuitie" (ll. 12-13). He doubts if women have these qualities but they do have the quality of "use" in common with gold. He considers gold as a commodity which can be used commercially, and applies the word "use" to woman as if she were only a sexual commodity.

Next, Donne argues that women really lack virtue, in the speaker's allusion to "barren angels" (l. 23). The speaker, in his comparison of himself to angels, refuses to be like them, for they are all spirit and no flesh, and enjoy only a sex-less love. He prefers a woman whose essential womanliness is her sex. To advance his libertine claim that love is lust, he introduces the Cupid metaphor. Here Cupid is not a beautiful boy, but "an infernal god"
(l. 29) who lives underground. These Satanic implications of Cupid invite the images: "sacrificing Coles" (l. 31), "Pits," "holes" (l. 32) and "till" (l. 34), which in the Renaissance had sexual suggestions. In the elegy there is the suggestion that Cupid's riches are "underground" with Pluto, as in Elegie 19, "Loves Progress," in which the wealth of the Indies is buried treasure ("my myne" /l. 29/).

These allusions to physical love are introductory to the geographical conceit which extends for thirty lines, and which audaciously analogizes the features of a woman's body to the voyage of exploration to "India." The speaker suggests that facial beauty is merely a lure, a trap; hair is analogized to "springs, snares, fetters and manacles" (l. 42). The route of the ocean voyage is given in a procession of metaphors: forests, the mistress' hair; rough and smooth seas, the brow; meridian, the nose; suns, the eyes; hemisphere, the cheek; "fortunate islands," the lips; creeks, the mouth; pearls, the teeth; promontory, the chin; Sestos and Abydos, the breasts; boundless sea, the diaphragm.

---

Note: In the Demeter myth, Pluto, fearing that Volcanoes in Sicily would let light into Hades, came from the lower world to investigate. Venus was angered, as it reminded her that she and her son Cupid, through their power to produce love, could rule all of the gods except Pluto. Furthermore, she feared that Persephone would remain a virgin. Thereupon she sent Cupid to shoot an arrow into Pluto's heart. As soon as the arrow pierced Pluto's heart he saw Persephone and carried her underground. In this way love was taken to the underworld.
and abdomen; islands, body moles; "Atlantic navell," the navel; and "India, the "Centrique part." The point is that Donne is not carrying out the Petrarchan description conventionally, but is manipulating it outrageously. The metaphor, however, transports the sense of discovery and adventure. As in Elegie 9, "The Autumnal," the title is metaphoric. "The Progress" refers to a royal journey, in this case a sea voyage, taken in search of the desirable wealth of the Indies.

Explanatory images which appear within this conceit are the map or cartography allusions to the meridian lines (l. 47), and the hemispheres (l. 49). The Canary Islands were once known as the "fortunate islands," but in this case the speaker says they are heavenly ("ambrosial" --11. 50-52). The allusion to the Sirens (l. 55), refers to the maidens described by Homer in Book XII of the Odyssey, as sitting on the shore of the island, surrounded by the bones of men who had been lured to their death by the Sirens' songs. Reference to the "Delphic Oracles" (l. 56) recalls the wise seers who lived in the city of Delphi, which was called the navel of the world by the Greeks. In addition, the mention of Hellespont, Sestos and Abydos brings to mind the story of the lovers, Hero and Leander.

The speaker introduces the last section of the elegy somewhat in the spirit of a sardonic joke. The "Art"
he refers to appears to be an esoteric doctrine of love-making, as he suggests a reverse route that may be taken. He begins with the foot which is the bottom of the body. The "foot" has a relationship, he indifferently says, both to the Devil and the sought-for goal. Louthan in his study of Donne informs us that in the Renaissance "foot" was a gross word, and that "these two parts of the body are least subject to disguise and change." The speaker alludes to the Devil, who cannot change his emblem, his symbol of lust, which is the cloven foot. The reverse route or the "empty way" then, is given in a conceit which is based upon the word foot, with its various implications. The speaker develops this metaphor with references to "Kings" and the "Papal foot." Satirically he directs gibes toward the custom of kings' kissing of the Papal foot and also toward Petrarchan love customs. With oblique wit he then unifies the two metaphoric routes in the figure of the "two purses." In regard to this route, he says, it is a matter of decision:

They then, which to the lower tribute owe,
That way which that Exchequer looks, must go.

(11. 93-94)

Use of the metaphor "Exchequer" implies a relationship both to purse and to decision. "Exchequer" is a legal term which

---

refers both to the government office which has to do with the collection of revenue, and also to the legal group, who, sitting at a checkered table received, in the Renaissance, the royal "tribute" and also made decisions of justice. The word "clyster," a Renaissance term meaning enema, reminds us that medical men of that period pondered the question of possible bodily nutrition by this means. The speaker speciously reasons, then, that in his opinion, the conventional route--from the head downward--in the ocean voyage is as far-fetched as the medical theory mentioned in the last two lines.

"Loves Progress" is an elegy that is difficult to follow, for it is composed of three sections. The first, the argument for sexual love, is composed of the images, allusions, and metaphors grown to conceits, which make up the speaker's argument. The second, the "India" route, is composed of the extended geographical conceit, which is built up of metaphors and allusions. The third, the reverse route, is also composed of the usual figures, none of them geographical. This rhetorical method is much like that used to define physical love itself, i.e., by its nature, its purpose and its course. However deliberately audacious Donne's aim is in the poem, as his speaker's argument changes, so does his tone. The savage imagery of the first portion: bear, monster, Cupid allied with Pluto, gives the diabolical tone; the voyage of exploration offers
the tone of adventurous expectancy; while in the final section, even though the images are treated analytically, yet hyperbolically, the satirical treatment lends a harsh tone. This note creeps into the first part as well.

Surface paradox is apparent in the treatment of sensual subject matter by means of an analytical presentation, i.e., parts of the nude body are considered and listed prosaically and in order. Depth paradox as well appears in the long conceit. If depth metaphor is present, one must expect, as Wheelwright contends, that depth paradox is also present. The deeper meaning or paradox in the journey toward the desired goal is that hindrances are present (forests, ambushes, shipwreck) as well as bliss in the free adventure. Furthermore, in the earlier connotations concerned with the nature of love, the speaker describes it as both savage (bear-whelp) and satanic (Pluto). The geographical metaphor sparkles with discoveries and the spirit of adventure. Thus in this experience there lies, ironically and paradoxically, the savage, the demoniac and the wondrous. And although the speaker recognizes that this kind of love has conflicting elements of savagery, diabolism, lust and wonder, he brags about his preference to it. Through irony, he turns aside from the practices of "Civilitie . . . refined" found in state diplomacy and Petrarchanism, and gives his opinion of them in the tavern joke of the "transplanted" kiss.
Again, as in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," there appears a union of lovers; however, in this case, it is a union of physical love. And it must be remembered that Donne's practice here is a frivolous use of the concept of the One and the Many. This elegy may be considered a poem of pretentious recklessness developed by means of sophistical argument. The lines

Nor is the soul more worthy,  
or more fit,  
For love, than this, as infinite  
as it is, (ll. 37-38)

in which the body is classified as infinite, is a purposefully extreme idea. Donne is being deliberately outrageous in arguing that unity exists only in sexual union, and is seeing how witty and entertaining he can be for his appreciative circle of followers.
ELEGIE 19, "TO HIS MISTRESS GOING TO BED"

The nineteenth Elegie, "To His Mistress Going to Bed," as Leishman indicates, may have been suggested by the fifth elegy in Ovid's Amores. Gransden, as well, writes that Elegie 19 describes exactly what the title indicates. That is, the speaker, talking to his mistress, itemizes her clothing piece by piece as she removes it, while he conjectures on "the far fairer world" it encompasses. This method of introduction is similar to that of the "geographical" conceit in "Loves Progress," in which the parts of a woman's body are itemized. However, there is more than this to the poem. It describes, by means of two layers of meaning, the lovers' journey to physical consummation through an analogy drawn from navigation and geographical discovery (a conceit common to several of the Songs and Sonets); and by means of depth metaphor, a comparison of the lovers' progress to a Christian's journey to enlightenment.

In the introductory section (ll. 1-24) the speaker impudently "undresses" the mistress and indicates his anticipation. The central section of the poem presents the

---

6 Leishman, 76.
7 Gransden, 95.
conceit of discovery (11. 25-32) while the closing portion considers the "bodies unclothed"--"souls unbodied" analogy and their conceit.

The Ovidian introduction gives the argument by means of plays on words, and metaphors and similes. The speaker in 1. 2 employs the use of "labour" in the sense of physical exertion versus emotional exertion. The word also could be a pun on childbirth. In the same manner he manipulates words to produce a double meaning in the reference to the "happy busk" (1. 11), with the inference of two meanings in "still" (1. 12). Likewise in the allusion to "heavenly Angels" as compared to an "evil sprite" or bad angel, he plays with words to illustrate the effect of either angel. Similar ambiguity invests a double meaning in the "Coronet" and the displaced coronet (1. 15). "Heaven's zone" is both a belt, and is also analogous to the "milky way." This simile is followed by a second one in which the "gown going off" is compared to hills stealing shadows from the "Flowery meads." The "harmonious chyme" of 1. 9 is metaphor which indicates bedtime and could also refer to the rapport, or the melody of assent, inherent in the situation.

The bed-temple conceit which follows introduces the allusions to heaven and angels. These allusions are in turn introductory to the analogies to sacred rites, which are emphasized in the third section. Within the conceit the
speaker employs a simile, "Mahomet's Paradise," to suggest what union with the woman will be like. This simile also has two layers of meaning. The inference is that Mohammed, the Islamic prophet, possessed a large harem and so had many "discoveries." In addition, it is an allusion to the houris who delight good Mohammedans in eternity. The speaker says that his mistress brings such a "heaven."

The second part of the elegy (11. 25-32) is an elaboration of the "discovery" conceit. Rugoff mentions that in 1609 Donne sought a government post as secretary for the Virginia colony and, on Gosse's authority, claims that he was a stockholder of the Virginia Plantation Company. Rugoff also states that Donne esteemed Columbus. Therefore, images stimulated by the discovery of America and the search for a shorter passage to the east by way of Northwest North America are prominent in his poetry of this period. It is the American discovery image which Donne uses in this part of the elegy. In the image of the subjugation of a new land, appear the figures of the "roving hands" as exploring ships. The metaphoric verb "license" refers to the formal permission granted by ruling monarchs to take possession of a new land. This figure, along with its sexual implications, is followed by the cluster of metaphoric images of value, "America," "my new-found land," "my

---

8 Rugoff, 138.
kingdome," "my myne of precious stones," "my Emperie."
All of these metaphors "are" the mistress and refer to
what the explorer (the speaker) finds and to his royal
permit, which will enable him to discover, conquer, rule
and exploit his new land. The ideas of subjugation could
invoke connotations of new-found kingdoms and riches.
"Seal" (1. 32) furthers the legal implications. Furthermore, its sexual ambiguities known at that time would
give concrete realism to the meaning of the conceit. Such
metaphoric figures symbolize the spirit of power and pos-
session, much like the spirit noted in the geographical
conceit of "Loves Progress."

Part three (11. 33-46) is introduced by an apos-
trophe to nakedness, the third major conceit of the elegy.
The speaker returns to the "Heaven" conceit and emphasizes
it through further analysis. He states his premise, "As
souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be, To taste whole
joyes" (11. 34-35). Clay Hunt suggests that these allu-
sions to spiritual love and to the Beatific Vision in
their relation to physical sex were intended for ridicule
of Platonic love. Moreover, they are conventional not only
in Christian mysticism, but also in Renaissance Platonism.
They suggest, too, the Platonic progression up the Stair
of Love. Hunt reasons:

Since those [Platonists] who regarded love as
essentially an impulse of the soul thought of
the body as mere evanescent "clothing" for the
eternal reality of spirit, the Mystic Ecstasy might be thought of as an experience in which the soul divested itself of its temporal clothes and went naked to immediate contact with God.  

This theory assumes that if the soul can know true joys only when it is free of the body (naked), so the body can know real joy only when it is unclothed. The metaphoric meaning of "unclothed" (naked soul) in these lines links the idea of religious ecstasy to the idea of the mistress' undressing and so is basic to the meaning.

Concerning the current debate on Body and Soul, Clay Hunt writes that it was the Ovidian and the Platonic influences which furnished the traditions in Elizabethan love poetry. Writers favoring the Ovidian influence argued for love unhampered by reason, while those preferring Platonic influence reasoned that the body was merely a covering for the soul and that the rational lover rose above sensuality. If the rational lover were perfect, he went beyond the spiritual union with the soul of woman to a union with the soul of God. The basic ideas of both conflicting influences are compressed in 1. 34.

The "gems," then, that the speaker refers to are not only ornaments but are also, metaphorically, the woman's body, because Platonic thought held that the body was

---


10 Ibid., 18.
merely "worn" by the soul as a cover. This reference is associated with the figure which follows, that of "Atalanta's balls" (1. 36). Here the figure is used as though Atalanta, the fleet-footed virgin, throws the golden balls. It may be remembered that in the Boetian version of the myth, it is Hippomenes, through the help of Aphrodite, who throws them to distract Atalanta. This he does, so that he may win the race, since Atalanta requires that he who wins her must defeat her. Be that as it may, in the elegy, the allusion has a strong relationship to the body as clothing of the soul, which is used to distract "fools" through their senses. The sensual lovers' "earthly" soul then "covets theirs, not them" (1. 38), "theirs" referring to bodies, and "them" referring to souls.

Another analogy to the Body-Soul concept is that of pictures, or beautifully covered books. According to Hunt's analysis of these references, "fools" are attracted to the bodies of women ("theirs") instead of being rationally directed to their souls ("them"). Pursuing the Platonic doctrine, he reasons that the purpose of women's bodies is similar to the church's purpose of using pictures to instill faith into "laymen"—through the sense of sight. Similarly, the uneducated could get inspiration from the beautiful covers of sacred books, even though they could not read the messages within them. In like manner, God has put a woman's soul in a beautiful body. This He
has done so that "laymen," also through their senses, may be led beyond the physical to the discovery of soul.\textsuperscript{11}

In the elegy, the speaker states that women are "mystick books." Through depth metaphor Donne says that the essence of women (their souls, imaged as unclothed bodies) is not only the study that leads to God; but that they are the study, the sanctified rites and the revelation, all of which are implied in the word "mystic." Women in this state he relates to God in their power to grant grace. This gift of revelation will be given only to "wee," the superior, spiritual lovers. The "imputed grace," or the gift of illumination from God, he analogized to woman's assent. "Revealed," in its double layer of meaning, relates both to physical and also to spiritual revelation. Therefore, the speaker urges, so that this condition of grace may come to him, the woman to "reveal" herself in her natural state, in fact, "as liberally, as to a midwife" (1. 44).

Moreover, in the line, "Whom their imputed grace will dignifie" (1. 42), Donne suggests the analogy of the "ecstasy" of physical experience with the ecstasy of spiritual experience. This conclusion can be drawn from the theological tenet that "grace" comes only because it is freely given ("imputed") by God. Then, after apparently turning philosophic beliefs and Christian theories...
topsy-turvy, Donne returns, in the postscript (ll. 47-48) to the swaggering gaiety of the introductory Ovidian invitation. Here, the bantering tone jolts one to the realization that the speaker's "meditation" in the final conceit is not serious.

Perhaps the wrenching dissimilarity of metaphorical figures in the "clothing" conceit is one of the clearest examples in Donne's Elegies of depth metaphor and the type of paradox associated with it. And, too, it is possibly the best illustration of how depth metaphor works. In the "discovery" conceit, paradox is present in the line, "To enter in these bonds, is to be free" (l. 31). On the level of the discovery of a new land, and of the license given to the explorer by the monarch, the speaker uses the "bond" as a legal term. According to this meaning, "bond" is a document, under seal, which binds one to an obligation. In such a sense, the speaker argues that he is legally bound. On the metaphorical level "bond" is used also in its sense of being confined. Here the paradox lies in the notion that even though confined, the speaker is sexually free--as suggested in the earlier meaning of license (l. 25).

The extended "clothing" conceit (ll. 33-46) is weighted with paradox. Initially it is introduced as a serious study; and suddenly, at the close, it is excused as a jest. Thus, paradoxically what has been made to look
like blasphemy is not blasphemy after all. Still another paradox on this level may remain half hidden: that Donne may have been more serious than he cared to admit at that time. His balanced study of the relation of Body and Soul in love relationships appears repeatedly in the Songs and Sonets. Furthermore, his "profane" references in religious poems and his religious references in "profane" poems testify to the fact that he believed there was a substantial reconcilable relationship between the two.

Metaphoric arguments concerning the question are balanced throughout the closing lines. Here the speaker is debating logical opposites; but by the time he is through with the discussion, he is saying that Body is like Soul, or flesh is like spirit. On the surface, the similarity seems absurd, but there is an underlying truth in the paradox. For in physical and spiritual experience, the basic essentials are complete surrender and self-giving.

Hints as to the degree of seriousness with which Elegie 19 is to be taken are given through the tone of the speaker. In the first portion (11. 1-24) he speaks with salacious flippancy. Herein he combines naturalistic and Ovidian tones. The second portion (11. 25-32) carries notes of rapture or ecstasy, while the third portion (11. 33-46) creates a serious or meditative mood. The closing couplet (11. 47-48) returns to the swaggering tone of the first portion of the poem. Judging from these shifts in tone,
Elegie 19 emerges as the happiest and yet one of the most serious of the twenty elegies.

It is noticeable, though, that the speaker, in the closing couplets of the elegy, abruptly reverses himself and returns to the Ovidian approach. However much he may imply, "I am spoofing Platonic thought," nevertheless, more than in any of the elegies, he demonstrates serious use of the philosophy of the One and the Many and is exploiting it in terms of mystic experience. As Elmer O'Brien remarks about Plotinus's concept of the soul,

> The soul is many things, linked to the realm of sense by what is lowest in us, linked to the intelligible realm by what is highest. For each of us is an intelligible cosmos. By what is intellectual, we are permanently in the higher realm; by our lower part, we are prisoners of the sense.12

In this statement Plotinus indicates that the Many, typified by heavy reliance on the senses, is the material body of the soul. It is possible that writers would relate this portion of the soul to man's instincts. On the other hand, Plotinus relates the One to the intellectual and spiritual faculties.

Patently, the One in the "discovery" conceit of Elegie 19 is the woman, the precious find. She continues to be so in the "clothing" conceit, in her capacity to bestow grace. Within this merely seemingly heretical suggestion there are further implications. The fusion of Body and

---

Soul suggests that the "wee" (l. 41), or the enlightened lovers, comprise in their union the One. No doubt the author is merely toying here with the philosophical concept of the One and the Many, but its later recurrence in poems like "The Extasie" in the Songs and Sonets could indicate that this early playful use received more serious attention later.
Grierson quotes directly from Ovid's ninth of the First Book of Amores to show affinities to Donne's Elegie 20, "Loves Warre," "Militat omnis amans, et habet sua castra Cupido."^^ Leishman concurs that Ovid's ninth could be a source of the elegy and adds that there are also resemblances to the tenth and twelfth of the Second Book of Amores.^^ Although Donne borrow* the idea of love as war from Ovid, he adds his peculiar comparisons and analogies to give the poem his own stamp of wit.

The elegy, in its thought and imagery, is the only one of the twenty which is related to battle. It is addressed by a matter-of-fact speaker to an indefinite mistress. In the opening couplet there is an indication that their relations are marred by quarrels because of her freedom with other men. The subject of disagreement gives the opportunity for him to discuss the nature of war and its discomforts.

The basic metaphor of the poem is the mistress as the "fayr free Citty" (1. 4) which is open to siege. Donne has his speaker say that Flanders, France, Ireland and England are at war over scruples, whereas the woman as a

^^Grierson, II, 90.
^^Leishman, 74.
free city is not scrupulous. About twenty-five lines of the poem simply represent a background of war, a labored bypath that really gets Donne nowhere, since his comparisons are not being precisely analogical to "love's warre." France, in its civil and religious strife, its "lunatique giddiness" (1.9), has never warmed to England:

Yet she relyes upon our Angells well,  
Which nere returne . . . (ll. 11-12)

These "Angels" do not return to England, any more than the fallen Angels return to Heaven. Grierson explains that the line, "yea and our God of late," points to the period of Henry's conversion and the peace between France and Spain in 1598.15 However, this explanation is debatable.

In the allusion to Flanders, the speaker quibbles:

In Flanders, who can tell  
Whether the master presse, or men rebell  
Only we know, that which all Ideots say,  
They beare most blows which come to part the fray (ll. 5-8)

Here he questions the rebellion in Belgium--is it the fault of the Spanish leaders, or is it recalcitrancy on the part of the Belgians? He adds that it is always the intervening peacemakers who receive the blows.

The speaker in the Elegy likens Ireland's condition to an "ague" which is characterized by intermittent shivering followed by quiet:

15Grierson, II, 90.
Sick Ireland is with a strange war possest
Like to an Ague; now raging, now at rest;
Which time will cure; yet it must doe her
  good
If she were purg'd, and her head vayne
  let blood. (11. 13-16)

The "strange warrs" he refers to are evidently the three rebellions undertaken by the Irish Catholics in protest against the Penal laws during the reign of Elizabeth I. These laws excluded them from civil life. Further cause of Irish unrest was dissatisfaction with Poyning's Law, which put all power into the hands of the English parliament. Social unrest was aggravated by the extreme poverty of all classes; in fact, the Irish people at this time underwent more suffering than did the serfs of Eastern Europe. These rebellions were finally crushed by English soldiers turned loose to pillage the country.

The speaker, in the use of the word "purge," implies that the leaders of such restless insurrections should be eliminated.

Nor is England exempt from criticism; for she, the speaker continues, is motivated by mercenary greed to carry out the expeditions of exploration. Grierson explains that the line beginning, "and Midas joyes," refers probably to Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition in 1595 to discover the wealth of Manca, the legendary city of El Dorado, presumably located by Raleigh in Guiana in 1595.16

16Grierson, II, 61.
Rugoff, too, notes that exploration of the western hemisphere reached its apogee in the Elizabethan-Jacobean age. He observes that the stories of Hakluyt, Purchas and Raleigh about uncharted seas became almost epical. Since Donne knew Raleigh from the Essex expeditions, his knowledge of the explorations would possibly be fairly exact. The reference to Midas, of course, concerns the myth involving Midas' request that everything he touch would turn to gold. Dionysus granted the request; but when the greedy Phrygian king found that even his food and drink were changed at his touch, he prayed the god to take away the fatal gift. This figure of physical hunger, then, introduces the image of discomfort from heat in a warm climate, the "hott parching clime" (1. 19).

The speaker in his reference to "ship" produces a dismal view of ocean travel:

Nor mew me in a Ship, is to enthrall
Mee in a prison, that were like to fall . . . (11. 21-22)

The thought is that ship travel means great loss of personal freedom: "Long voyages are long consumptions" (1. 25), and are extended processes of decay and destruction. Furthermore, they "are carts for executions" (1. 26), i.e., they are the vehicles with which to carry large groups to mass deaths. The speaker also likens being "mewed" in a

---

17 Rugoff, 137.
ship to being confined in a "cloyster" or monastery. Thus, by these means he compares the besieged "fayr free citty," the mistress, and warring countries. But the speaker infers that the war in each country has some kind of purpose, even though it may be questionable: the trouble in Belgium is rebellion; the truce between France and Spain points to religious difference; the rebellions in Ireland are carried on for liberty; England's expeditions against Spain appear to be for gold. The free city, however, has no such avowed purpose. She "maiat thyselfe [herself] allow to any one" (11. 4-5), yet she has no purpose in this freedom, or "warre."

For the remaining eighteen lines the speaker builds an argument which culminates in a suggested purpose for the free city, which is "to make men" (1. 46). Apparently Donne fails in his analogy of the free city to love, for the woman would no longer be a free city if she restricted herself to him. Should she remain true in love to him, necessarily she would no longer be free to other men. He builds his argument by means of a series of verbs, "parlee, batter, bleede, and dye" (1. 30); and by nouns, "thrusts, pikes, stabs, yea bullets" (1. 38). Such terms help build his analogy of "Loves warre" to regular warfare. As Rugoff notes, "Love acts as a core for a cluster of images" from the single source of war.18

18 Rugoff, 156.
The speaker also uses paradoxical couplets:

Other men war that they their rest 
 may gayne;
But wee will rest that wee may fight 
 agayne (11. 33-34).

And to develop his final paradox the speaker plays constantly on words. Single words or pairs of words carry a double meaning through which love is paralleled to war. All of the short, vigorous verbs and nouns noted above, as well as "warr," "travaile," "make," and "service," suggest multiple meanings.

The surface paradoxes build to the final paradox in the metaphor, love as war. This metaphor is not of great depth. However, according to Wheelwright's definition, it appears to have enough scope to qualify as such. The paradox, as it is expressed in the elegy, lies in the truth that the one kind of war kills, while the other kind produces men. The first portion of the poem is concerned with the general nature of the killing war, while the last eighteen lines are concerned mainly with the productive "war."

The speaker develops the image of real war by a series of minor paradoxes. In the opening couplet he states:

Till I have peace with thee, warr 
 other Men, 
 And when I have peace, can I leave thee 
 then? (11. 1-2)

When he and his mistress lack peace, he is disposed to do
without her; but when they are not at "warre" he cannot leave her. Each ensuing couplet carries a similar antithetical or paradoxical thought.

But the speaker suddenly shifts his argument in lines 27-28

Is't not all one to flye
Into an other World, as t'is to dye?

The double meaning now rests on "dye" with connotations of literal death as in ocean travel or regular warfare, and of sexual ecstasy. He maintains that the outcome is immaterial whether he flies to the new world by means of a long ocean voyage or is sexually consumed. The remaining arguments are less paradoxical than antithetical statements, with love's war equated, by means of battle terms, to killing warfare. In a rollicking tone he concludes that killing wars are destructive ("swaggering hell," or "executions") as compared to "loves warre" which is generative ("glorious service" for posterity).
CHAPTER II

VALEDICTION POEMS
ELEGIE 5, "HIS PICTURE"

Elegie 5, "His Picture," is a valediction poem in which the speaker gives his loved one his picture as a parting gift. The good-bye is dignified and tender. Furthermore, the parting presupposes that the speaker is going to war and that he may be gone for several years. When he returns they may both be "shadows," and he will perhaps be emaciated, prematurely grey and powder-stained. This imaginative, somewhat melodramatic preview of himself as a returned soldier, suggests a contrast between the young man of the picture and what he will grow into. It further permits the analogy of childish love to "growne" love.

His picture is, metaphorically, his youthful appearance. In much the same manner as the "image" or "medall" in Elegie 10, "The Dreame," the picture is used to suggest that lovers' images or actual pictures are present in each other's hearts during absence:

   Here take my Picture; though I bid farewell,
   Thine, in my heart, where my soule dwells, shall dwell. (11. 1-2)

As the speaker presents the actual picture to his loved one, he promises her that should he die, the image will become more like him than he is at present. For when they are both shadows of their present state, his picture will be all the
reality left of him. Moreover, the picture will be tangible evidence of the handsome man he is, rather than the scratched, tanned and unshaven boor he may be when he returns from the war. Grierson notes the use of "bold synecdoche" in the lines:

My head with cares rash  
Sodaine stormes, being o'spread. (ll. 7-8)

That is, the speaker's premature greyness is inferred in the figure, "care's rash sodaine stormes," as though fallen snow had whitened the hair.¹

The "picture" metaphor gives an easily perceived time dimension to the poem. In the present the picture is a representation of the speaker as he is. In the future, with its hard facts of separation and war, the picture will be the interchanged image of lasting love between them. And when at his return people argue that she is a fool to love a wornout, weather-beaten man, she will say:

Doe his hurt* reach me? doth my worth decay?  
Or doe they reach his judging mind, that hee  
Should now love lesse, what he did love to see? (ll. 14-16)

In other words, now that he has matured will he see her less physically beautiful, "what hee did love to see?" (l. 16). The loved one will explain to the "rival fooles" the real quality of their love:

¹Grierson, II, 69.
That which in him was faire and delicate,  
Was but the milke, which in loves childish  
state  
Did nurse it: who now is grown strong  
enough  
To feed on that, which to disud'd tastes  
seemes tough. (11. 17-20)

In these lines, love, metaphorically, is personified as a being, who in infancy requires milk (physical beauty), but who, upon maturity, can digest the unaccustomed food of a tough diet. The metaphor, then, has its foundations in the Platonic belief that beauty, comprehended through the senses, is the initial and proper beginning of love. In their love's beginning, physical beauty was milk, the proper food. However, their love will have become more spiritualized, more mature, and no longer will be dependent upon physical beauty or the senses.

The picture, then, is the depth metaphor of the poem, and the resulting paradox rises from it. In the first place, the lovers are not really separated even though they are apart. There will be a bond between them always. And the speaker's actual appearance, when returned from war, as contrasted to his fairness when he was young, will be symbolic of the couple's mature love. War, trouble, time, and separation will have a beneficent value here, for paradoxically, the suffering they bring will refine the love of the speaker and his beloved.
ELEGIE 6, "OH, LET MEE NOT SERVE SO"

Although Elegie 6, "Oh, Let Mee Not Serve So," is a type of valediction poem, it pictures a permanent breach between the speaker and his beloved because of misplaced and misused affection. In this regard, it differs from the usual Renaissance poems of parting, which conventionally look toward a future reunion. The speaker tells his mistress, by means of a series of images and analogies, that because of her infidelity, he is renouncing their relationship.

The first analogy is built on a "court" metaphor, in which the speaker refuses to love as though by court favor:

    Oh, let me not serve so, as those men
    Serve
    Whom honours smoakes at once fatten
    And sterve;
    Poorly enrich't with great mens words
    Or lookes . . . (11. 1-3)

In his picture of himself as a courtier who is dependent upon those in power, he likens his mistress to the ruler who is able to give "favors" or reduce him to penury. Neither does he wish to be like the subservient flatterers who serve in domains which give only titular importance to their king, but which do not increase his tribute nor his power. The speaker offers services which pay their own way, i.e., which are worth something, as an honest court
favorite should. Or, shifting the metaphor slightly, he wishes to be her "Favorite in Ordinary," i.e., her chief favorite—or no favorite at all.

By means of a neo-Platonic reference, the cliché of the lovers' souls existing in each other's bodies, the speaker introduces the metaphor of his beloved as his "Purgatory" (1. 13). In this image he implies perhaps his own need of purging or cleansing for the suffering she has produced in him. Nevertheless, at one time her "heart seem'd wax, and steel her constancie" (1. 14)

The rest of the elegy is composed of traditional, but carefully worked out analogies: the mistress is compared to a whirlpool, a candle, the devil and a stream. In the whirlpool figure, the mistress is the whirlpool, and the speaker is the "careless flower" which is sucked into it and destroyed (ll. 15-17). She is also the "taper" which "amorously twinkling," lures him, "the giddie flie" (1. 18), to death. He, the foolish fly, receives burned wings from the flame of the mistress. The light of the candle luring the lecherous fly is a common Petrarchan image of love. Donne uses the same images in "The Canonization" in the Songs and Sonets. Furthermore, she is the "devill" who pays little attention to those, like the speaker in this instance, who are already in his power.

The analogy of the stream develops into an extended conceit over the course of thirteen lines. The speaker
the channel, is "wedded" to the mistress, the "flouting" stream. The stream, beginning from the spring, starts calmly and melodiously, probably because it is "doubtful." But after a time of harmony, the stream "chides" "and bends her browes," as if irritated by slight difficulties. And her "gnawing" kisses may open side channels. When this happens:

She rusheth violently, and doth divorce
Her from her native, and her long-kept course. (ll. 29-30)

Once free, the stream derides or reviles the channel which then loses its purpose without her and "henceforth is drie" (l. 33).

Depicting the parting as irrevocable, like death, the speaker now adds another dimension. Inasmuch as his mind has become "dull'd with paine" (l. 37), he has become disdainful, in fact, almost hateful toward the beloved. He sees her at a future time with "Death in thy cheekes, and darkness in thine eye" (l. 40). Clay Hunt overreads this line, finding in it an attitude of "tense asceticism which undergirds this conjunction of love and death, more so than the motif of carpe diem." He sees it as the "sudden shudder at the ugliness of corrupt flesh, the medieval note of the dance of death."² However, in context, it appears that the speaker merely predicts bitterly that he

²Hunt, 142.
will fall out of love with his mistress.

He emphasizes the finality of the parting by means of the "death" image and an allusion to recusancy. He will be a rebel, like those Englishmen who refused, because they were Roman Catholics, to take the oath of allegiance to the English government of Elizabeth I. He states:

I will renounce thy dalliance: when
I
Am the Recusant, in that resolute state,
What hurts it mee to be' excommunicate?
(ll. 44-47)

The point is that he sees no harm in being excommunicated by her, since she is false to the religion of love—as he is not.

Elegie 6, "Oh, Let Mee Not Serve So," contains no depth metaphor and hence no paradox. A tone of unquiet resignation pervades the elegy, a tone bereft of Donne's usual intense cynicism in the Elegies. In fact, the stream image (ll. 19-33) is almost conventionally poetic and is possibly responsible for the subdued quality of the poem.
ELEGIE 16, "ON HIS MISTRESS"

Elegie 16, "On His Mistress," is a valedictory poem in which Donne assumes the speaker must go on a journey and be away from his beloved for a long while. The speaker, as the lover, admonishes his beloved to remain in England while he is absent on the Continent, and voices the theme that she should not disguise herself as a page and accompany him. K. W. Gransden suggests that it is possible that Anne More, Donne's wife, and her father Sir George are the inspiration for the poem, and that she wished to disguise herself as a boy in order to go to the Continent with Donne. The reference to "faigned Page," since Donne followed the convention of Elizabethan drama, could be an allusion to Shakespeare's Portia, or other women disguised as men in Elizabethan drama. Or as Sir Herbert Grierson suggests in his "Commentary" on the Elegies, it may have been suggested by the jaunt to Europe taken in 1605 by Sir Robert Dudley, accompanied by Elizabeth Southwell disguised as a page. Since Dudley had served with Donne in the Cadiz and Islands' expeditions, they would have been acquainted.

\[\text{Gransden}, 98. \text{ Note: Many critics of Donne would argue this point.}\]

\[\text{Grierson, II, 87.}\]
The technique of accumulated verbs or nouns found in some of the other elegies, such as Elegie 8, "The Comparison," and Elegie 20, "Loves Warre," is present in this one, but is partially submerged. However, worry and nightmare are implicit in the lines possibly to be spoken by the beloved:

I saw him I,
Assailed, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall and die. (ll. 53-54)

This aggregation of seven strong verbs gives a series of actions, which the reader can understand in an instant. Furthermore, it is an example of an occasional technique found in some of the other elegies. Much of the argument is developed by conventional phrases and clauses. Donne shows a balanced use of "by," the preposition which introduced the first three lines, and which is used three times within the first eight lines.

In spite of these jarring rhetorical devices the poem initially is more musical than the other elegies, opening with the calm and serious lines:

By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threatened me,
I calmly beg: But by thy father's wrath,
By all paines, which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee, and all the oathes which I
And thou have sworn to seale
joynt constancy,
Here I unsweare, and oversweare
them thus,
Thou shalt not love by wayes
so dangerous. (ll. 1-12)

In spite of the slow tempo of 1. 1 there is a paradoxical thrust in the words "strange" and "fatall." Here, the word "strange" means wonderful and mysterious, while "fatall" means destructive or destined for an ominous end. Set closely together, the meanings, wonderful and destructive, both referring to one experience, provide a haunting paradox. Similar antithesis exists in the basic argument of the poem—truth as opposed to pretense—"true" and "faign'd" (ll. 14). There are no figures in 11. 1-12; but in the words "calmly beg" (l. 7), the speaker continues in a quiet vein. "Conjure," "temper," "kinde," "dreame" maintain the calm tone. Yet by the repeated use of "O" and in the accumulation of arguments, the tone intensifies as the speaker resorts to the pleading vein. In fact, 1. 12 strikes a protective note, infrequent in Donne's Elegies.

The poem deals with the conventional topic of absence or separation, similar to that of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." However, Donne gives the topic here an entirely different treatment. This poem is organized somewhat discursively for it begins and ends quietly and intensively, while the middle section is packed with topical detail. It is as though Donne dedicates the first and
the last twelve lines of the poem to creating a tone of farewell; while in the central portion, he builds his theme by means of accumulated allusions, similes and metaphors. The references to the Frenchmen: "changeable Camelions," "spittles of disease," "shops of fashion," "loves fuellers" and "rightest company of players" upon the world's stage (ll. 33-36); and the phrase, "England is onely a worthy Gallerie" (l. 44), qualify as surface metaphors. However, the poem contains no extended conceit, nor does it contain depth metaphor.

Donne develops the theme of the folly of pretense primarily by means of the figures to prove that to assume a role she cannot really play, his beloved actually might harm him rather than help him. By being with him she will cause more trouble than by remaining steadfastly loyal, even if parted from him.

Doniphan Louthan maintains that the lines,

Feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one in th' other be, (ll. 25-26)

refer to a Petrarchan notion that absent lovers exchange identities. The speaker dismisses this idea as mere fiction and undercuts his Petrarchan flattery of his mistress by recognizing the idea as only "flattery." When he jokingly says, "Dissemble nothing" (l. 27), he projects a double meaning--either: hide nothing, or pretend nothing. In the

^5^ Louthan, 55.
serious vein he says she is not to be false either in outward (clothing) or inward (mind) appurtenances. "Bee not strange to thyself onely" (ll. 28-29) holds both serious and humorous intent. Seriously, the speaker admonishes her to be true to herself. Humorously, he reminds her that should she go in disguise, she still would be gulling only herself, since everyone else would know she is a woman any way. The speaker states that truth cannot be disguised. Apes are apes and moons are moons no matter how much they are changed, just as a disguised woman remains a woman.

The similes and metaphors pertaining to Boreas, to the Dutch, French, Italians, and to "Lots faire guests" summon associations of drunkenness, rape, homosexuality and incest, all of them dark images that are allied to evil (ll. 27-43). The speaker implies that this is the kind of evil his mistress would be exposed to should she carry out the pretense of traveling with him as his page.

The allusion to Boreas (l. 21) is introduced in the speaker's argument that his mistress stay in England. Here Donne not only emphasizes the danger of sea travel, but by means of the celebrated rudeness of the classical god of the north wind he also defines the amatory reputation of different nationalities in continental Europe. In fact, the implied story of Boreas and his rape of the nymph Orithyia, whose sons were winged warriors who fought against the Harpies, is one of the speaker's arguments to prove how
foolish it is to undergo unnecessary dangers.

Critics disagree on the lines:

Richly cloathed Apes, are call'd Apes and as soon
Ecclips'd as bright we call the Moone the Moone.

(11. 31-32)

Some think they refer to over-dressed men, and others to the practice of dressing apes, newly brought from the tropics, for performances. It could mean just what it says, that dressed-up apes can still be recognized as apes, just as the eclipsed moon is still the moon.

The speaker, moreover, in his prejudicial argument for his mistress to stay in England, offers comparison and contrast among nationalities. The Frenchmen are "changeable Camelions," a nature metaphor referring to the chameleon, a lizard-like animal whose skin color changes according to its mood, or to his surrounding conditions. Hence, he says, the Frenchmen are unreliable and are also "spittles of disease," probably venereal. In its now obsolete meaning, "spittle" (spital) is either a hospital or a foul den, so that this metaphor gives the image of the Frenchmen as being disease ridden because they haunt foul dens. They are "shops of fashion" or overdressed fops. In addition they are "loves fuellers." Doniphian Louthan states that this phrase means that the Frenchmen are life's fuellers or undue increasers of the birthrate. In still another

---

6Ibid., 56.
metaphor, they are called "the rightest company of Players." They are play-actors, or pleasure seekers, "who will quickly know thee, and no lesse, alas!" Grierson refers to another wording of the same line when he indicates Donne's occasional poor taste. The early lines read, "will quickly knowe [recognize] thee, and knowes [know carnally] thee, alas!"

To the homosexually inclined Italians, it will make no difference if the mistress is recognized as a girl, or if she is seen as a page. They will rush after her with such "hideous rage as Lots faire guests were vext" (11. 40-41). She would also be pleasing to the Dutch who are merely referred to as drunken, in the adjectives "spungy hydrop­tique." She will be spared such contacts if she stays in England.

The speaker's argument for his mistress not to accompany him is thus built by a series of allusions, metaphors and similes which represent extreme opinions of the countries he satirizes. Following his expressed reasons, he begs her to stay in England which is a "Gallerie," a hallway to Heaven where she shall stay until her death. In a reference to the courtly convention of a hidden or secret love, he admonishes her to keep their love unknown.

The conclusion of the poem repeats situations similar to those found in Elegie 8, "The Comparison," and "A

---

7Grierson, II, 87.
Valediction: "Forbidding Mourning," except that in this poem the result depends on the condition that must be met. Should the mistress comply with the condition, the lovers would be set beyond the evil of the Continent. Here, with truth as opposed to pretense, there is a suggestion of two standards of values. The speaker infers that if his mistress remains at home, she will follow her true calling, while if she accompanies him dressed as a boy, she will appear to be what she is not. She should reject this falsity by remaining in England, where he hopes she will be true and steadfast. The catalogue of types which represent love as nothing but lust are compared to the standards of truth, happiness and spirituality found in the relationship of the speaker and his mistress. These will be safeguarded by her remaining behind:

Be my true Mistress still (l. 14).

My soule from other lands to thee shall soar (l. 18).

When I am gone, dreame me some happiness. (l. 47)

England is also a more fitting place to wait for God's taking her in death than a foreign country (l. 44); and by dreaming happiness, she can "augure" him better fortune perhaps than if they were together. Through these arguments, the speaker suggests that in absence they will be, paradoxically, more united than by actually being together.
Leishman notes that in Elegie 12, "His Parting from Her," the mistress is a married woman, and that the lines describe the secret signs employed by lovers with intent to hoodwink the woman's husband. Moreover, the husband is the theme for the "impudent wit" of the elegy. Its possible source is Ovid's fourth elegy of Book I of the Amores. Gransden, on the other hand, classifies it as a type of nocturne, which gradually unfolds to show its Ovidian character.

Structurally the elegy comprises four parts addressed to Night, Love, Fortune and the mistress. In the apostrophe to night the speaker makes protestations of his love and complains of the loneliness he will suffer after his mistress leaves him (ll. 1-12). In his address to Love (ll. 13-64) the lover blames the god for causing them to love and then for bringing them to punishment, recalling, the while, the hazards of the love affair. Concluding that Love could not be responsible for the separation, the lover requests that he and his mistress become so "riveted" together that they cannot be physically separated. Fortune the lover addresses in defiance (ll. 65-82). Though

separated in body, he says, they will remain united in soul. Moreover, the elements and the seasons will always be present to remind them of each other. In the address to the mistress (ll. 83-104), the lover closes on a note of philosophical acceptance, advises her to take care of herself, swears his eternal love, and says he expects the same from her.

Within each apostrophe, Donne utilizes conceits which actually are quite traditional. Night, the subject of the first apostrophe, is a metaphor in itself, signifying sadness and loneliness. Hell, too, is a figure of suffering and is a part of that darkness which the lovers must endure:

Since she must go, and I must mourn,
    come Night,
Environ me with darkness, whilst I write:
Shadow that hell unto me, which alone
I am to suffer when my Love is gone. (ll. 1-4)

The allusions to Hell and black magic in the lines that follow, merely emphasize the thought that these dark powers represent patterns of the suffering that he will endure in the separation. The classical allusions to Cynthia, goddess of the moon, and Venus, here the bright planet, magnify the lover's "darkness." His will be a misery as black as night with the moon, Venus, and all the stars removed. Further, in the figure of darkness, there is a foreshadowing of the allusion to Chaos (l. 18).

The apostrophe to Love is carried out in much the
same manner as the apostrophe to Night. Love is blind Cupid, the god of "fire and darkness," who the speaker charges with a degree of malignancy toward the lovers, reasoning that since he is blind, must they, as love's martyrs, also not see each other? Furthermore, the god is cruel, for with an image of physical torture, the speaker questions why the god should "break us on the wheel" (1. 17). The speaker further blames the god for the throes of pain that they suffer at parting: "And view old Chaos in the Pains we feel" (1. 18). The lovers' disruption is analogized to physical cataclysm imagined as Chaos, a place where the elements exist in a constant warring separation from each other. The Cupid conceit is continued by the speaker's questioning of the god: have they omitted some formal rite in the religion of love and thus displeased him? Or since their love was sensual at the outset, is he, the lover, being punished when he loves spiritually and his love becomes real:

Which since I lov'd for forme before decreed,
That I should suffer when I lov'd indeed . . . (11. 23-24)

Later, scolding Cupid, he rebukes him:

Was't not enough, that thou didn't hazard us
To paths in love so dark and dangerous . . . (11. 39-40)

The "golden fruit" (1. 26) that he refers to is the genuine love that has developed out of his sensual love, so
that he is "left wealthy only in a dream" (l. 28). Within the extended Cupid image, Justice, personified, is blind like Cupid:

So blinded Justice doth, when Favorites fall,
Strike them, their house, their friends,
their followers all. (ll. 33-34)

The lines possessing Ovidian echoes (ll. 41-53) serve not only to remind us that the love defended in the poem is illicit, but also to introduce a Platonic conceit (ll. 57-62), in which the lovers' eyes become fixed in each other's brains, and the lovers become so united that they become immobile, a statue of love.

The speaker's defiance of Fortune is intense: "Do thy great worst, my friend and I have armes" (l. 67). Fortune can strike, but will not affect them, for they have weapons with which to thwart him. Their souls will be one even though their bodies are divided:

Rend us in sunder, thou cans't not divide
Our bodies so, but that our souls are ty'd. (ll. 69-70)

Furthermore, they can exchange tokens, thoughts, and dreams. Moreover, the elements will ever remind him of her and will affect his senses. The air will recall her softness; the fire, her purity; the water, her clarity; and the earth, her reality. Here Donne appears to be playing with the concept of the One and the Many—air and fire representing spirituality; water and earth, the senses.
In the analogy descriptive of the lovers' relationship to the seasons, the speaker images the verdant beginning of love as the spring, ripened love as summer, and the harvest of love as the autumn. Winter, he playfully dismisses.

When the speaker addresses the mistress, he turns consolatory, giving her advice on hope and reminding her, in the allusions to Phoebus, that the sun shines everywhere. His wit turns playful in the reference to equal portions of sunlight, and he puns on the word "Mass." Here he means that the world as a body enjoys the sunlight, and also that the world enjoys the Mass in the church. He further enjoins her to be true to herself, to defy Fortune by taking care of her health and beauty and to be constant. In his wish that their love may grow more spiritualized, or Platonic, and remain unified, he hopes:

That I may grow more enamoured on your mind,
When my own thoughts I there reflected find. (11. 93-94)

Here again is a suggestion of a microcosm that includes only the two lovers, even though absent from each other. In a final conceit, the speaker insists that their love will have the fixity of the Poles (1. 97), that is, that they will be steadfast. Moreover, in the image of heaven's motion, and the world's fire, or soul (1. 100) he introduces the idea that his is an elemental passion
at one with the cosmos.

Elegie 12, "His Parting from Her," begins as a mournful valediction, but during its course, the speaker becomes resigned to the parting. Generally speaking, the elegy is notably soft-spoken and gentle, so tender and conventional that the Ovidian insertion (ll. 41-53) is not quite successful. Because the prevailing tone is that of sadness, resignation and tenderness and is linked to the idealism and poetry of the poem, the Ovidian passage seems out of place.
PART THREE

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION: RECONSIDERATION OF DONNE'S
"MONARCHY OF WIT"
Although they can be catalogued in general groups, each elegy presents surprises. Elegie 8, "The Comparison," because of its harsh and offensive language, is possibly the most odious of Donne's vehement descriptive elegies. The poem, however, is more than a detailed, exaggerated comparison between two mistresses. Its veiled satire of Petrarchan practice, and its examination of two standards of value reveal that Donne is not only thinking, but evaluating. Like Elegie 13, "Julia," it is wit of abuse through hyperbole. However in Elegie 13, "Julia," Donne directs his violence against mental rather than physical evil. He hammers out the caricature of mental evil by the use of harsh verbs, nouns, allusions and metaphor. Yet in his shrieking effort to portray a woman too evil to describe he has produced only a minor accomplishment. Nevertheless, this ill-humored berating also gives an example of the shrill wit of his hyperbole. Just as these two elegies are caricature, the other two elegies of the chapter are wit pieces. Elegie 2, "The Anagram," an extravagant study of reversed praise, is clever because it makes something of nothing by means of sparkling argument. There is less than a "broomstick" in the matter, but the elegy becomes a specimen of great skill in the art of saying one thing in many different ways. It is representative of the sophistical type of argument which defined much of the wit of the age.

154
Elegie 11, "The Bracelet," is possibly more brilliant and ingenious, but is more confusing in argument than Elegie 2, "The Anagram." In the former, the fact of the lost bracelet is almost smothered by the infusion of and the swift transitions of inferences centering upon the double meaning of "angel," the spirit or the coin. Elegie 11, "The Bracelet," is a cold, but clever example of intellectual agility, which emerges a solid exercise in wit in which Donne makes "mountains out of molehills" for 114 lines, and in which he best illustrates his virtuoso wit.

In Elegie 1, "Jealosie," of Chapter III Donne reveals his acrid disgust of social practices. This bitterly sarcastic elegy carries Ovidian notes, but the strident tone and the images criticize a society that encourages a state in which a man is cuckolded in his own home. It is a satirical piece, a form in which Donne excels; and although it is one of his lesser elegies, it is a good exemplification of venomous wit. Elegie 4, "The Perfume," also carries Ovidian echoes. Here Donne assumes the posture of an immoral cynic by means of a bizarre procession of images and analogies. And here, as in Elegie 1, "Jealosie," beyond the picture of the illicit affair is a criticism of private and public practices. Along with its element of drama the poem offers a blase' wit different from that of Elegies 2 and 11. Elegie 7, "Natures Lay Ideot," bearing an Ovidian theme, is an artful poem because Donne
leaves the final decision to the reader. In this poem also, he adopts a cynical attitude, which progresses from sarcasm to bitterness. Notable in the poem is his shrewd ability to play with meanings which leave his reader in doubt. His exposure of the scheming lover—through the speaker's own dialogue—displays an arch wit. Elegie 14, "A Tale of a Citizen and His Wife," in the same chapter, is barren of the usual metaphor and paradox. However, Donne, in a conversational manner which carries satirical overtones, makes considerable use of topical references and allusions. It is a simple tale, uncharacteristic of Donne. Its importance possibly exists in that it is a forerunner of the later rake poems. It has dash, but it is coarse and unpolished and is short on Donnean wit.

In the following chapter Elegie 3, "Change," poses the attitude of Renaissance naturalism, within limits. Donne develops his possibly unserious argument mainly by the use of a series of arguments. Perhaps in this pose of anarchic individualism he is not at his best, but he attacks the tradition of man's natural goodness with boldness. In the poem there is less wit than display of fire-eating. Elegie 15, "Expostulation," reveals recognizable Ovidian ideas. The poem, simple for Donne, produces its logic by the use of a series of arguments, with but scant use of figurative language. Donne attempts dash and worldliness, but perhaps is not as successful in the
try as in some of the other elegies. He is also weak in his usual wit. Initially in Elegie 17, "Variety," Donne pretends insolent rebellion to social mores as he does in Elegie 3, "Change." His assumed promiscuous outlook shifts in mid-poem to favor constancy in maturity. The poem contains much pseudo-logical argument. The complete and easily observed change in attitude is unusual for Donne, for usually his changes of thought are abrupt and are placed in the final couplet, or they are darting interplays of wit. There is wit here, but not the connoisseur's wit as found in Elegie 11, "The Bracelet." In Elegie 10, "The Dreame," Donne follows the traditional dream-vision pattern. He uses few metaphors, developing the contrast by means of subtle argument and sly satire in the coin image. Elegie 10, "The Dreame," is a conventional elegy, but it is catchy in its intentional or accidental ambiguity. There is wit in the ambivalence of argument, but the poem resembles in meaning and style some of the poems in the Songs and Sonets.

Elegie 9, "The Autumnal," inclines toward a generous use of classical allusions and Greek sources. Donne uses an array of metaphors, as well as a proof-making dialectic to build his elaborate compliment. Therefore he uses conventional methods to produce his unconventional approach. Since this elegy is a verse to a patron, written possibly with the hope of financial gain, the exaggerated
praise possibly should be taken conditionally. The wit of the elegy, with its aim of making middle-age seem attractive, exists in both the sprightliness and tenderness of the tone as well as in the variety and ingenuity of the far-fetched analogies.

Elegie 18, "Loves Progress," is pure cavil in which Donne uses parody of conventional Petrarchan description, beside a variety of imagery to develop his casuistry on the purpose of love. The metaphysical conceits of the bear-whelp and the ocean voyage progress by means of allusions and metaphors. Even though Donne has produced the elegy with an eye to his audience, and is being purposefully audacious, nevertheless it is an important poem, because it illustrates Donne's use of conceits—more extended here than in most of the Elegies. The poem is one of amazing and consciously designed wit. The discovery conceit of Elegie 19, "To His Mistress Going to Bed," is similar to the geographical conceit of Elegie 18, while the body-clothing conceit of Elegie 19 is the strongest example of depth metaphor and paradox in all of the Elegies. Elegie 19, "To His Mistress," is more erotic than the other elegies but it is deeper in imaginative emotion. There are varying degrees of tone in the poem—gaiety, seriousness, pretense. In the mock-serious section Donne equates Body to Soul and plays with the concept of the One and the Many. This elegy is possibly a good example of the quality in
wit that regaled his friends. Because of the layers of meaning in the poem in general, and especially because of the compressed thought in the body-clothing conceit this elegy would rank Donne as a "monarch of wit." Elegie 20, "Loves Warre," is characterized by strong verbs and nouns. Donne builds the picture of war by means of minor paradoxes, antithetical statements and metaphor. The poem is less successful than Elegies 18 and 19, since Donne does not quite succeed in his analogy of the free city to love. However, the war analogy gives a background and a comparison. Nor does the wit reach the complexity or perfection of Elegies 18 and 19 in the same chapter.

The four valediction poems incline more toward the Songs and Sonets, especially "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Elegie 5, "His Picture," founded on Platonic belief, contains metaphor, and is marked by dignity, tenderness and some melodrama. It could possibly be ranked as one of Donne's minor elegies. The wit of the poem apparently lies in the picture, since it is the lover's youthful appearance, symbolic of his youthful love. Elegie 6, "Oh, Let Me Not Serve So," contains traditional analogies, but no depth metaphor or paradox. Actually, the images and analogies renounce the lovers' relationship; while the tone is that of unsatisfied resignation, joined with violent cynicism. Because of the subdued quality of this valediction it is uncharacteristic of most of Donne's
elegies. The wit of the poem is the traditional wit of the age, not Donne's "modern" wit. Elegie 16, "On His Mistress," one of Donne's better-known elegies, is initially musical, but depends much on an accumulation of nouns and verbs, and conventional phrases and clauses. There is no depth metaphor or paradox; however there are many similes, allusions and metaphors in the typically harsh mid-section of the poem. The comforting and advising tone of the first and last sections is an unusual attitude for Donne. This tone lends the impression that the lover is more genuinely concerned than most of the lovers in Donne's elegies. The poem's slight humor, its tenderness and its conventionality are possibly the factors for its popularity. Except for the poem's harsh mid-section, wherein Donne distinguishes between truth and pretense by the use of accumulated allusions, similes and metaphors, it is marked by more feeling than wit. Elegie 12, "His Parting from Her," is similar to Elegie 16. The poem is distinguished by tenderness, traditional conceits and classical allusions. The lover appears to be in love, or at least wishes to be believed. And even though the elegy varies from Ovidian imitation to some satire, its tone approaches the level of that of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." It, like Elegie 16, shows more feeling than wit.

Chapter I shows that wit grows from metaphor and
its accompanying paradox, while the analyses of Donne's Elegies indicate, that although argument develops some of the meaning, it is metaphor, along with other imagery, which expresses or emphasizes most of it. Donne's imagery reveals as well the influences of his broad education: ancient philosophy, Renaissance scholasticism, Spanish mysticism, Catholic theology, Protestant theology, Ovid, obscure Spanish literature, geography, law, medicine and the social experiences of his University days. Such a store of information may give the impression of more profundity than Donne actually had, but it also afforded him a rich background from which to draw his far-fetched figures. Furthermore, this diverse information gives his wit the impression of intellectuality rather than of emotionality. Some of the lines are beautiful, some are genuinely effective, while others are obviously written for effect or reaction. Therefore, Donne's brilliant but mirthless wit is frequently the true wit of an original mind, though his wit often becomes a mere exercise of it, or an effected wit for wit's sake.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
List of Works Cited


List of Works Consulted


Bennett, R. E. "The Addition to Donne's Catalogus Librorum," Modern Language Notes, XLVIII (March, 1933), 167-168.


"The Term 'Metaphysical Poets' before Johnson," Modern Language Notes, XXXVII (January, 1922), 11-17.


———. "Donne's Farewell to Love," Modern Philology, XXXVI (February, 1939), 301-303.
