TIME, DEATH, and MUTABILITY: A Study of Themes in Some Poetry of the Renaissance - Spenser, Shakespeare, and Donne

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken in order to examine some examples of Renaissance poetry in the light of the themes of love, death, time, and mutability. The scope of the thesis has been restricted to the Mutabilitie Cantos and the Fowre Hymnes of Edmund Spenser; the Sonnets and Ovidian poems of Shakespeare; and the Songs and Sonets and Divine Poems of John Donne. The emphasis of the thesis rests on the poetry of John Donne; but to appreciate better the power of his synthesis of the sacred and profane, the author first examines the Christian idealism of Spenser and the "realism" of Shakespeare.

Spenser is seen as the poet of ideals. He looks beyond the world of decay and time to a "Sabaoth of the Soul". His Hymnes, while not denying the possibility of love in time, see no way for romantic love to transcend death. Nor is earthly love of the same nature as man's love for God. Shakespeare, while recognizing the sway that Time holds over man, asserts the ability of love in friendship--and its expression in verse--to triumph over change and decay. Unlike Spenser, he is not interested in ideal or eternal existences.

Both poets have affinities with Donne. Like Spenser, Donne speaks in terms of eternity. Like Shakespeare, he affirms man's ability to overcome time and change in this world of mutability. His argumentative style and his synthesis of sacred and profane love set him apart. This study examines the varieties of experience found in his love poetry, culminating in his statement in such poems as The Canonization, The Anniversarie, and The Exstasie, that romantic love assumes the eternal stature of sacred love, yet never loses its attachment to physical experience. In his

religious verse also love varies; man can be an inconstant lover of God as well as of women. But always Donne stresses the continuity of experience from love of women to love of God, and the ability of both kinds of love to withstand time and change.

The thesis has tried to avoid identification of life with art, the poet with the poem. Sources and antecedents have been used only where they illuminate the themes under scrutiny. Throughout the study, the ordering used for the poems is not intended to be chronological. The study is a triptych, examining the individual poets without drawing conclusions as to the superiority of one statement over another.

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INTRODUCTION

Love and death are universal preoccupations of art: they are the central and universal elements of all men's lives. Time threatens the short span of life in which man can try to find love, preserve it in verse, and pass it on to posterity. Renaissance poets zealously explored the implications of time's ruthless destruction. In their treatment of love they were faced with a choice of several major directions. In dealing with the tangle of emotions called "love", these poets tried to resolve the conflict between the spiritual and the carnal. Renaissance poets never forgot that man's highest love should be directed towards God. On the other hand, as C. S. Lewis shows in his Allegory of Love, since the advent of courtly love in the eleventh century, European literature had made heterosexual love a major theme of its poetry. Poets of the Renaissance, in dealing with love in time, had to reckon with both spiritual and carnal love.

This essay will study the way three Renaissance poets contemplate love, time, death and mutability. The major emphasis here is on the lyric poems and The Anniversaries of John Donne. To appreciate fully the extent of his poetic treatment, however, it will be necessary to look first at Edmund Spenser's variations on mutability and time in The Mutabilitie Cantos and the Fowre Hymnes, and to consider Shakespeare's sonnets and Ovidian poems.

This essay is limited by several factors. Within the scope of the thesis it is possible to give only a brief account of philosophies and sources. No attempt is made to deal with the whole range of any writer's work. The study is strictly limited to consideration of short lyrics and sonnets, the familiar vehicles for love poetry, or occasionally longer love lyrics. It is undesirable to veer into historical, bibliographical, or biographical by-paths in trying to explain various poems or attitudes. The identity of the Dark Lady or the dates and sources of Donne's Songs and Sonnets are not at stake here.

Spenser's blend of Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic conventions I treat as an artistic attempt to free the soul from the bodily limitations of time and change; he appeals to eternal constants. His vision of mutability in the Cantos is a classic one for the Renaissance. Time had many faces, but all of them promised change;

> Do not I tyme/cause nature to augment
> Do not I tyme/cause nature to decay
> Do not I tyme/cause man to be present
> Do not I tyme/ take his lyse away
> Do not I tyme/cause dethe take his say
> Do not I tyme/passe his youth and age
> Do not I tyme/euery thynge aswage?[1]

This is the world Spenser seeks to escape: he seeks permanence behind change, or a world which changes no more.

Shakespeare's work rejects the conventions of both Petrarchism and Neo-Platonism. Rather than escaping he chooses artistically to come to terms with the very sphere of mutability which threatens love and life. The poet-narrator of the sonnets evokes the processes of time and decay; then he defies them to destroy his love and his art. Both, he is assured, will overcome death. His assurance is a forerunner of that attitude toward time and death found in the poetry of John Donne, the major figure of this study.

Donne was a poet who made physical love a means of conquering time and death by fusing the spiritual and carnal aspects of love. He never denies the validity of passion. Instead he tries to harmonize what he feels in the flesh with what he feels in the spirit, finding the one as able as the other to transcend the world of time, mutability, and death.

[1] Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), pp. 91-92.

CHAPTER ONE

THE IDEAL WORLD OF EDMUND SPENSER

Petrarchism and Neo-Platonism

Petrarch's work was an important catalytic force in Renaissance literature. His poetry significantly contributed to the foundations of Renaissance love poetry by its revitalization of the courtly tradition. The Petrarchan lover suffered because his lady was virtuously chaste and unattainable. Petrarch also endowed his mistress with the ability to raise her lover's eyes to the sphere of the divine. [1]

> In thought I raised me to the place where she
> Whom still on earth I seek and find not, shines;
> There 'mid the souls whom the third sphere confines,
> More fair I found her and less proud to me.
> She took my hand and said: Here shalt thou be
> With me ensphered, unless desires mislead;
> Lo! I am she who made thy bosom bleed,
> Whose day ere eve was ended utterly:
> My bliss no mortal heart can understand;
> Thee only do I lack, and that which thou
> So loved, now left on earth, my beauteous veil.
> Ah! wherefore did she cease and loose my hand?
> For at the sound of that celestial tale
> I all but stayed in Paradise till now.
>
> (Sonnet 261.) [2]

Unfortunately the conventions of "Petrarchism" became a stultifying influence. English poets of the sixteenth century reiterated the same stock praises and phrases Petrarch had used until all interest and emotional impact were destroyed. Shakespeare's mock praise of his mistress satirizes these poems' excesses. In spite of misuses, however, Petrarch's formulation of an idealized and chaste love between man and woman was vital. It, and the elevation of the mistress to Paradise by Dante, refined the basically adulterous [3] relationship of the courtly tradition into praise of a relationship between spirits rather

than praise of adultery. This elevated tradition Spenser used in his formulation of a chaste married love in the first two Hymnes. But Spenser was also interested in the love of man for God. Love of a woman, no matter how holily celebrated, was at the mercy of time and change. In his paeans to heavenly love and beauty, he reflects another literary and philosophical convention of the Renaissance, Neo-Platonism.

The Neo-Platonists of the Florentine Academy contributed two premises that Spenser modified for use in his Hymnes. Both were based on Plato, but developed far beyond his system. First was the elevation of spiritual over physical love:

> And were we not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses)--were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change?
>
> Very true.
>
> But when returning into herself she reflects, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the soul is called wisdom.[4]

Second was the approach to love of and union with God through contemplation of physical love and beauty:

> Beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, which without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty, is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the

> things of love, is to begin from the beauties of the earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two, and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. [5]

This is not to imply, however, that Spenser followed the Neo-Platonists in their progression through love of woman to a love of God. Rather than a progression (the famous "ladder of love") Spenser presents a dichotomy: Christian wedded love and Christian spiritual love. [6] The world of nature and sexuality could be enjoyed and elevated; but it was always subject to time, change, eventual death. Only the world of the spirit remained intact and immutable. Although it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the sources and interaction of Christian and Neo-Platonic elements in the Hymnes and Cantos, a brief survey of the most popular Neo-Platonic ideas will help to show where Spenser followed them and, as importantly, where he departed from them in favor of traditional Christian notions.

The aim of the Neo-Platonists was to synthesize and harmonize all ancient and Christian teachings into one grand system. Their leader in this was Ficino, philosopher and priest, head of the Academy in Florence. His Commentary on Plato's Symposium was one of the primary manifestoes of the Italian Neo-Platonists. Although the facile equation of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes with the theories of Ficino has recently been questioned, [7] a short summary of Ficino's basic ideas will be helpful in studying the Hymnes. For Ficino love emanates from the Creator, infusing the various levels of the universe with a divine face. The philosopher distinguishes three levels: the incorruptible, immaterial level of the fixed stars; the incorruptible, material

level of the planets; and the material, corruptible world of man. As each level has been created by this infusion of divine love, so each in its capacity strives to be reunited with its maker. [8] Thus the cycle of birth and decay in this world is not, for Ficino, a manifestation of its sinful nature; it is an attempt of created matter to reunite itself with God. Ficino refused to find evil in creation. [9]

> All things are in themselves good, because they are from it [the eternal good]. They are also good for us in so far as they are related to it. But they rightly become evil and hard for us because we abandon it most wrongly and follow those things that are necessarily in it and are preserved by it. [10]

Spenser may or may not have known of Ficino first-hand; but he had easy access to more popular writings on the same topics. Leone Ebreo, the Jewish popularizer of Neo-Platonism, in his often-translated Philosophy of Love, describes the ascent and descent of love:

> so love originates from the primal father of the universe, and from him is successively imparted, like the gift of a father to his child, from the greater to the less and from the perfect to the imperfect, or more properly from the more beautiful to the less beautiful, that the perfection and beauty of Godhead may be diffused in the highest measure possible throughout every degree of being in both the angelic and the heavenly world. So each degree of being with paternal love procreates its immediate inferior, imparting its being or paternal beauty to it, although in a lesser degree as is only fitting; and this process is continued throughout the whole of the first half circle down to chaos, the least of all being. And thence love begins to ascend through the second half circle, from the lower to the higher and from the imperfect to the perfect that it may achieve its perfection, and from the less to the more beautiful that it may enjoy its beauty. For first matter naturally desires and covets the elemental forms as beautiful and more perfect than itself, and the elemental forms the compound and vegetative, and the vegetative the sensitive; and the

> sensitive bear sensuous love for the form of the intellect; and the latter, passing with intellectual love from the intellection of a less beautiful intelligible object to another more beautiful, finally attains to that act of intellection, the object of which is the Divinity, the highest of all intelligible things. And this through the final love of His highest beauty. Thus the circle of love is completed in the highest good and the ultimate beloved, which was the first lover, creator and father. [11]

At the center of the universe Ficino and the other Neo-Platonists placed man. The human soul was the "mirror of divine things, the life of mortal things, and the connection between the two." [12] The ultimate goal of the human soul was union with and knowledge of God. Before such a vision and such knowledge were possible, however, man prepared by understanding his love for woman. Desire was believed to be awakened by the reflections of heavenly forms seen in the beloved.

> All the physical drives of human love might be justified spiritually and at the same time idealized intellectually, because love in man is not only a God-given and cosmically necessary and irresistible search upwards toward a perfection which is both spiritual and intellectual; it is also a...compulsion downward to create the likeness of Divine Beauty in the physical world. [13]

Thus physical love and procreation held a respectable place in man's search for God, for the act of love represented man's attempt to create more of the divine beauty here on earth.

For Ficino, the highest knowledge remained knowledge of God, and the highest union that of the soul with its Creator. Faith and contemplation alone could achieve it. Indeed, for Ficino "his whole moral doctrine...[was] a reduction of all specific rules to a praise of the contemplative life." [14]

Here Ebreo differed from Ficino and many of his contemporaries by

making a spiritual and physical love complementary and co-existent. It was such a synthesis as this that later led Donne to his formulation of love in The Exstasie:

> Perfect and true love, such as I feel for you, begets desire, and is born of reason; and true cognitive reason has engendered it in me. For knowing you to possess virtue, intelligence and beauty, no less admirable than wondrously attractive, my will desired your person, which reason rightly judged in every way noble, excellent and worthy of love. And this, my affection and love, has transformed me into you, begetting in me a desire that you may be fused with me, in order that I, your lover, may form but a single person with you, my beloved, and equal love may make of our two souls one, which may likewise without distinction vivify and inform our two bodies. The sensual element in this desire excites a longing for physical union, that the union of bodies may correspond to the unity of the spirits wholly compenetrating each other. [15]

Pico della Mirandola, the pupil and admirer of Ficino, was another major figure in the Florentine Academy. A synthesizer of even greater magnitude than Ficino, Pico combined facets of Thomist Aristotelianism with the modified Platonism of Ficino and the writings of Christian and Jewish mystics. Indeed he appears to have been the first Christian Kabbalist. [16] Pico too placed man at the center of the universe. His Oration on the Dignity of Man insists upon man's ability to find his own place in the hierarchy of being, endowing man with almost unlimited freedom.

> When man came into life, the Father endowed him with all kinds of seeds and with the germs of every way of life. Whatever seeds each man cultivates will grow and bear fruit in him. If these seeds are vegetative, he will be like a plant; if they are sensitive, he will become like the beasts; if they are rational, he will become like a heavenly creature; if intellectual, he will be an angel and a son of God.

> And if, content with the lot of no created being, he withdraws into the centre of his own oneness, his spirit, made one with God in the solitary darkness of the Father, which is above all things, will surpass all things.[17]

Like Ficino, Pico was unwilling to elevate the intellect above faith. However, he followed the Thomist separation of faith and reason so far as to limit philosophy's ability to lead man to the beatific vision - something Ficino would not do. However, Pico did stress the value of contemplation over action.[18]

Little mention has been made of basic Christian doctrines of the Fall or the Atonement, and in the philosophy of the Academy God himself tends to appear as a vague First Principle. Still, the Neo-Platonists were not pagans.[19] It may be difficult now to measure the reconciliation of Christian and pagan thought. (Of course this was not Ebreo's intention at all.) But for the Neo-Platonists there was no difference between caritas and eros.[20] If they talked little of sin and redemption, they still recognized man's need for grace before he could attain knowledge of heavenly things.[21]

The Northern Renaissance

It has become a commonplace to find the northern Renaissance more religious than the southern, "pagan" revival. We have seen that, in their own terms, the Italian Neo-Platonists thought themselves to be reconciling classical and Christian ideas. It is true, however, that the men of the English Renaissance who could be considered Neo-Platonists were interested in different aspects of life than their Italian brethren. Men like Linacre and Colet wrote within the revived tradition, but their interests lay in theology or exegesis; others, like Burton and Raleigh, wrote "popular" rather than

philosophical treatises. Even Chapman and Spenser, the two poets most heavily and directly influenced by Neo-Platonism, also reflect a more "popular" tradition than, say, the Italian poet Benivieni, whose Ode of Love has been cited as a model for the Fowre Hymnes. [22] Spenser would have had to look no further for a popular summary of Neo-Platonist thought than Leone Ebreo, already mentioned, or Castiglione's Courtier, which had gone through sixteen editions before 1600. In the Courtier Spenser would have found the famous "Ladder of Love".

Progress up the ladder of love begins when the lover sees the physical beauty of his beloved; but this beauty, since it is a reflection of the Ideal Beauty, soon leads the lover to meditate on an inner, purified picture of his beloved, a picture free from the flaws of external beauty. He then relates this new picture of his beloved to the idea of beauty he finds within himself. His love then becomes a love of the spiritual, rather than the physical, beauty of his beloved. At this point he becomes aware of all beauty throughout the universe as part of a single manifestation of God's love. Meditating on this composite beauty of all things he should move to a transcendental vision having as its object the beauty of God. When the lover at last perceives the Ideal Form of Beauty, he is ready for the beatific vision, the sight of God himself - or as much of it as man's frail capacities can stand. [23]

Spenser and the World of "Mutabilitie"

From this long introduction to the background philosophy and possible sources of Spenser's poetry, it is time to turn to the poems themselves in order to see how these ideas affect the poet's response to love in a world bound by time to death and mutability. The Mutabilitie Cantos deal directly with the problem of permanence in a world of change. They are not based on

ideas borrowed from the Neo-Platonists, however, but may go back to the Christian Platonism of Augustine and Boethius.[24] They do connect with the Fowre Hymnes in that the Cantos present man in time; the Hymne of Beautie and Hymne of Love present man's love for woman and what forces this love can muster against time and death. The Hymne of Heavenly Love and Hymne of Heavenly Beautie picture a world outside the realm of mutability and death.

In the Cantos of Mutabilitie the goddess Mutabilitie rules the lower sphere of the earth. There time and change control the cycles of life and death. The goddess is the daughter of those rebellious Titans who had once before challenged the power and authority of Jove. Although they were banished from Heaven, their daughter maintained her authority over earth, bringing death into the world of man.

> For, she the face of earthly things so changed,
> That all which Nature had establisht first
> In good estate, and in meet order ranged,
> She did pervert, and all their statutes burst:
> And all the worlds faire frame (which none yet durst
> Of Gods or men to alter or misguide)
> She alter'd quite, and made them all accurst
> That God had blest; and did at first prouide
> In that still happy state for euer to abide.
>
> Ne shee the lawes of Nature onely brake,
> But eke of Iustice, and of Policie;
> And wrong of right, and bad of good did make,
> And death for life exchanged foolishlie:
> Since which, all liuing wights haue learn'd to die,
> And all this world is woxen daily worse.
> O pittious worke of MVTABILITIE!
> By which, we all are subiect to that curse,
> And death in stead of life haue sucked from our Nurse.
>
> (Canto VI, v-vi)[25]

The parallels to the Christian story are obvious: man's challenge to God resulted in death, and the world became subject to decay. But Mutabilitie is not content to remain within her proper sphere. She first challenges the goddess of the moon, symbol of constancy in change; then she enters the court of Jove himself. Her claim to supplant Jove is tried before Nature, a

mysterious veiled figure to whom Mutabilitie presents her case. To prove her claims she calls a procession of the hours, seasons, and months. The seasons pass by first, followed by the months, beginning with the month of birth and planting:

> These, marching softly, thus in order went,
> And after them, the Monthes all riding came;
> First, sturdy March with brows full sternly bent,
> And armed strongly, rode vpon a Ram,
> The same which ouer Hellespontus swam:
> Yet in his hand a spade he also hent,
> And in a bag all sorts of seeds ysame,
> Which on the earth he strowed as he went,
> And fild her womb with fruitfull hope of nourishment.
>
> (Canto VI, xxxii)

Each season and month is identified in the pageant by the specific labor man performs in each season. The poem portrays man and time in concert, fulfilling Nature's intention for her creation and creatures. [26]

But it is agreed by the gods and Nature that man is the rightful subject of Mutabilitie, subject to time and Death. This is grimly illustrated by the last couple of the procession:

> And after all came Life, and lastly Death;
> Death with most grim and griesly visage seene,
> Yet is he nought but parting of the breath;
> Ne ought to see, but like a shade to weene.
> Vnbodied, vnsoul'd, vnheard, vnseene.
> But Life was like a faire young lusty boy,
> Such as they faine Dan Cupid to haue beene,
> Full of delightfull health and liuely ioy,
> Deckt all with flowres, and wings of gold fit to employ.
>
> (Canto VI, xlvi)

What Mutabilitie claims is sovereignty over the universe. Jove attempts to refute her:

> Then thus gan Ioue; Right true it is, that these
> And all things else that under heauen dwell
> Are chaung'd of Time, who doth them all disseise
> Of being: But, who is it (to me tell)
> That Time himselfe doth moue and still compell

To keepe his course? Is not that namely wee
Which poure that vertue from our heauenly cell,
That moues them all, and makes them changed be?
So them we gods doe rule, and in them also thee.

(Canto VI, xlviii)

But she counters, illustrating how each of the supposedly fixed and immutable heavenly bodies (allegorical representations of the gods themselves) [27] also are subject to change.

To whom, thus Mutability: The things
Which we see not how they are mov'd and swayd,
Ye may attribute to your selues as Kings,
And say they by your secret powre are made:
But what we see not, who shall vs perswade?
But were they so, as ye them faine to be,
Mov'd by your might, and ordred by your ayde;
Yet what if I can proue, that euen yee
You selues are like wise chang'd, and subiect vnto mee?

And first, concerning her that is the first,
Euen you faire Cynthia, whom so much ye make
Ioues dearest darling, she was bred and nurst
On Cynthus hill, whence she her name did take:
Then is she mortall borne, how-so ye crake;
Besides, her face and countenance euery day
We changed see, and sundry forms partake,
Now hornd, now round, now bright, now brown and gray:
So that as changefull as the Moone men vse to say.

(Canto VI, xlix-l)

As mortals themselves the gods are part of the realm subject to death. Even Jove is not free.

But you Dan Ioue, that only constant are,
And King of all the rest, as ye do clame,
Are you not subiect eeke to this misfare?
Then let me aske you this withouten blame,
Where were ye borne? some say in Crete by name,
Others in Thebes, and others other-where;
But wheresoeuer they comment the same,
They all consent that ye begotten were,
And borne here in this world, ne other can appeare.

(Canto VI, liii)

Not only are the gods mortal, but their planetary namesakes - their "Spheares"

of influence - move, revealing their mortality.

> Besides, the sundry motions of your Spheares,
> So sundry waies and fashions as clerkes faine,
> Some in short space, and some in longer yeares;
> What is the same but alteration plaine?
> Onely the starrie skie doth still remaine:
> Yet do the Starres and Signes therein still moue,
> And euen it self is mov'd, as wizards saine.
> But all that moueth, doth mutation loue;
> Therefore both you and them to me I subiect proue.
>
> (Canto VI, lv)

But Mutabilitie fails to reckon with the very order in time she herself has presented. The order of the pageant, its symbols of man's life and daily round, is indicative of a plan. Mutabilitie's pride blinds her, as it did her fathers. The ultimate goal of all change is a time when change will cease. The end of the order of Nature is the same end predicted by Christian eschatology. Nature reveals this end when she pronounces her verdict. [28]

> I well consider all that ye haue sayd,
> And find that all things stedfastnes doe hate
> And changed be: yet being rightly wayd
> They are not changed from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate;
> And turning to themselues at length again,
> Doe worke their owne perfection so by fate:
> Then ouer them Change doth not rule and raigne;
> But they raigne ouer change, and do their states maintaine.
>
> Cease therefore daughter further to aspire,
> And thee content thus to be rul'd by me:
> For thy decay thou seekst by thy desire;
> But time shall come that all shall changed bee,
> And from thenceforth, none no more change shall see.
>
> (Canto VI, lviii-lix)

Spenser, as narrator, adds his own comment to Nature's, openly praying for that time when man will rest from his labor, free at last from his bondage to birth and decay, time and death.

When I bethinke me on that speech whyleare,
Of Mutability, and well it way:
Me seemes, that though she all unworthy were
Of the Heav'ns Rule; yet very sooth to say,
In all things else she beares the greatest sway.
Which makes me loath this state of life so tickle,
And loue of things so vaine to cast away;
Whose flowring pride, so fading and so fickle,
Short Time shall soon cut down with his consuming sickle.

Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things firmely stayd
Vpon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie:
For, all that moueth, doth in Change delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbaoth hight:
O that great Sabbaoth God, graunt me that Sabbaoths sight.

(Canto VII, 1-ii)

The Sphere of Mutability: Earthly Love and Beauty

This world of mutability is the same world treated in the Hymne of Love and the Hymne of Beautie.[29] In the Hymne of Love the poet begins with the traditional invocation of the Petrarchan lover. The muse called to inspire the poet's song is Cupid, god of passionate love:

Come then, O come, thou mightie God of loue,
Out of they siluer bowres and secret blisse,
Where thou doest sit in Venus lap aboue,
Bathing thy wings in her ambrosiall kisse,
That sweeter farre than any nectar is;
Come softly, and my feeble breast inspire
With gentle furie, kindled of thy fire.

(22-28)

The universe is the creation of this mighty God of love. It is a universe subject to mutability, even though the elements, "the earth, the ayre, the water, and the fyre" are mixed, tempered, and placed in order so that they do not destroy each other. By Cupid's influence, the "secret sparks of his infused fyre," all things live

. . . and moued are
To multiply the likenesse of their kynd,
Whilest they seeke onely, without further care,
To quench the flame, which they in burning fynd:
But man, that breathes a more immortall mynd,
Not for lusts sake, but for eternitie,
Seekes to enlarge his lasting progenie.

(99-105)

Although Spenser then appears to blend Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic ideas to describe a love inspired by "Beautie", this is not the Platonic Ideal of absolute Beauty. Rather it is a loose, poetic allusion to some general "heavenly fyre" which kindles love in the speaker's heart. The goal of this love is not the knowledge and love of heavenly things, but the realization of a physical desire - albeit a chaste one like that achieved in the Garden of Adonis. Certainly to raise progeny for eternity is more a Christian desire to raise more saints than a Neo-Platonic or even Petrarchan notion. [30]

For hauing yet in his deducted spright,
Some sparks remaining of that heauenly fyre,
He [the lover] is enlumind with that goodly light,
Vnto like goodly semblant to aspyre:
Therefore in choice of loue, he doth desyre
That seemes on earth most heauenly, to embrace,
That same is Beautie, borne of heauenly race.

For sure of all, that in this mortall frame
Contained is, nought more diuine doth seeme,
Or that resembleth more th'immortall flame
Of heauenly light, then Beauties glorious beame.
What wonder then, if with such rage extreme
Fraile men, whose eyes seek heauenly things to see,
At sight thereof so much enrauisht bee?

Which well perceiuing, that imperious boy
Doth therwith tip his sharp empoisned darts;
Which glancing through the eyes with countenance coy,
Rest not, till they haue pierst the trembling harts,
And kindled flame in all their inner parts,
Which suckes the blood, and drinketh vp the lyfe
Of carefull wretches with consuming griefe.

(106-126)

The lover's desires are fixed on physical fulfillment. He takes as his models the lovers of fabulous history who dared everything for love:

> Witnesse Leander, in the Euxine waues,
> And stout Aeneas in the Troiane fyre,
> Achilles preassing through the Phrygian glaiues,
> And Orpheus daring to prouoke the yre
> Of damned fiends, to get his loue retyre:
> For both through heauen and hell thou makest way,
> To win them worship which to thee obay.
>
> (231-237)

The only thing such constant lovers need fear is "That cancker worme, that monster Gelosie" who can turn sweet loves bitter. Once all obstacles are past, however, the lovers can enjoy each other in an earthly Paradise garden closely resembling the Garden of Adonis in The Faerie Queene. Cupid transports them there, where all evil desires and dangers are banished:

> There thou them placest in a Paradize
> Of all delight, and ioyous happie rest,
> Where they doe feed on Nectar heauenly wize,
> With Hercules and Hebe, and the rest
> Of Venus dearlings, through her bountie blest,
> And lie like Gods in yuorie beds arayd,
> With rose and lillies ouer them displayd.
>
> There with thy daughter, Pleasure they doe play
> Their hurtlesse sports, without rebuke or blame,
> And in her snowy bosome boldly lay
> Their quiet heads, deuoyed of guilty shame,
> After full ioyance of their gentle game
>
> (280-291)

This is chaste love, enjoyed by a couple whose wedding could be celebrated, as Spenser's was, by an Epithalamion of the same sensuous innocence.

But, no matter how elevated this love is, there is no hint anywhere in the poem that the lovers have escaped into a timeless garden. They may create for eternity, but they themselves remain mortal, and their love finite. For all their beauty and innocent love they are still Death's creatures.

The sphere of the Hymne of Beautie is again the Sphere of Mutability. Venus is the inspiration and creator of this universe. Spenser combines the theory of Patterns (essentially Platonic) with the theory of infused influence (the Neo-Platonic diffusion of love) to explain the world's creation.

> That wondrous Paterne, wheresoere it bee,
> Whether in earth layd vp in secret store,
> Or else in heauen, that no man may it see
> With sinfull eyes, for feare it to deflore,
> Is perfect Beautie which all men adore,
> Whose face and feature doth so much excell
> All mortall sence, that none the same may tell.
>
> Thereof as euery earthly thing partakes,
> Or more or lesse by influence diuine,
> So it more faire accordingly it makes,
> And the grosse matter of this earthly myne,
> Which clotheth it, thereafter doth refyne,
> Doing away the drosse which dims the light
> Of that faire beame, which therein is empight.
>
> For through infusion of celestiall powre,
> The duller earth it quickneth with delight,
> And life-full spirits priuily doth powre
> Through all the parts, that to the lookers sight
> They seeme to please. That is thy soueraine might,
> O Cyprian Queene, which flowing from the beame
> Of thy bright starre, thou into them dost streame.
>
> (36-56)

Unlike the Cantos, here there is no mention of the sin which allowed change (i.e. decay) to enter the world; nevertheless, the world this hymn deals with is limited by the stringent laws of time. All references are to physical beauty; there is no clear evidence that "an" heavenly beauty is the Heavenly Beauty philosophers posited from the existence of individual beauties. [31] It seems, at one point, that the poet is preparing to ascend the "ladder of love"; he denies that it is only "white and red", the color of his beloved's cheeks, which attract him; he looks instead to an inward beauty.

But they which loue indeede, looke otherwise,
With pure regard and spotlesse true intent,
Drawing out of the obiect of their eyes,
A more refyned forme, which they present
Vnto their mind, void of all blemishment;
Which it reducing to her first perfection,
Beholdeth free from fleshes frayle infection.

And then conforming it vnto the light,
Which in it selfe it hath remaining still
Of that first Sunne, yet sparckling in his sight,
Thereof he fashions in his higher skill,
An heauenly beautie to his fancies will,
And it embracing in his mind entyre,
The mirrour of his owne thought doth admyre.

(211-224)

But the poet stops, as it were, with his foot on the ladder and starts back down. He continues to speak of a love which ends in physical union, a love more akin to that expounded by Ebreo in his first dialogue [32] than the contemplation of the Neo-Platonist philosophers that leads to the beatific vision. In keeping with its earthly nature, this love is then described in traditional terms, the poet comparing his beloved's beauty to the beauties of Nature.

Sometimes vpon her forhead they behold
A thousand Graces masking in delight,
Sometimes within her eye-lids they vnfold
Ten thousand sweet belgards, which to their sight
Do seeme like twinckling starres in frostie night:
But on her lips, like rosy buds in May,
So many millions of chaste pleasures play.

(253-259)

In closing Spenser addresses Venus once again. A curious ambiguity in the passage identifies the limits of this beauty. His final appeal seems directed to his beloved whom he addresses as "Venus". The ambiguity of identification emphasises both the Petrarchan "divinity" of his beloved and, at the same time, the earthly domain of Venus and of the poem itself.

> And you faire Venus dearling, my deare dread,
> Fresh flowre of grace, great Goddesse of my life,
> When your faire eyes these fearfull lines shall read,
> Deigne to let fall one drop of dew reliefe,
> That may recure my harts long pyning griefe,
> And shew what wondrous powre your beauty hath,
> That can restore a damned wight from death.
>
> (281-287)

This fusion of goddess and woman belies any real Neo-Platonic ascent in the first two hymns. Rather than an orderly progression such as he would have found in Benivieni, Spenser has created two distinct pictures of love. The first picture is of a chaste, but limited human experience. The lovers and their passion will perish, for their love, however constant, is bounded by time and death. [33] The second picture of love, found in the last two hymns, is a denial of time's power over man's love for God. Change cannot penetrate here. Death can only re-unite the pious and seeking soul with the most beautiful, immutable object of love, the Creator of love Himself.

The World of Unchanging Love and Beauty

The overt Christian basis of the last two hymns has elements of Neo-Platonism combined with it, but as Ellrodt has pointed out, the basic motif is the Incarnation of Christ: his love and beauty through which man transcends the sphere of Mutability. [34] This is not to say that the poems are ascetic in tone, for Spenser cites as inspiration to the soul's ascent the beauties of the created universe. But these are merely way-stations on the road to knowledge of Divine Beauty and the unchanging world of the heavenly sphere.

In the Hymne of Heavenly Love Spenser identifies the creation of the Trinity with the Neo-Platonic procreative process whereby the love which absolute Beauty has for itself begets all levels of the universe.

Before this worlds great frame, in which al things
Are now containd, found any being place,
Ere flitting Time could wag his eyas wings
About that mightie bound, which doth embrace
The rolling Spheres, and parts their houres by space,
That high eternall powre, which now doth moue
In all these things, mou'd in it selfe by loue.

It lou'd it selfe, because it selfe was faire;
(For faire is lou'd;) and of it selfe begot
Like to it selfe his eldest sonne and heire,
Eternall, pure, and voide of sinfull blot,
The firstling of his ioy, in whom no iot
Of loues dislike, or pride was to be found,
Whom he therefore with equall honour crownd.

With him he raignd, before all time prescribed,
In endlesse glorie and immortall might,
Together with that third from them deriued,
Most wise, most holy, most almightie Spright,
Whose kingdomes throne no thought of earthly wight
Can comprehend, much lesse my trembling verse
With equall words can hope it to reherse.

(22-42)

The angels and all celestial beings are created from the love of God; but the angels' rebellion and fall brings about the creation, on a more modest scale, of man.

Therefore of clay, base, vile, and next to nought,
Yet form'd by wondrous skill, and by his might:
According to an heauenly patterne wrought,
Which he had fashiond in his wise foresight,
He man did make, and breathd a liuing spright
Into his face most beautifull and fayre,
Endewd with wisdomes riches, heauenly, rare.

(106-112)

Man, too, however, falls from grace, bringing death and woe into the world and forfeiting his claim to immortality.

But man forgetfull of his makers grace,
No lesse then Angels, whom he did ensew,
Fell from the hope of promist heauenly place,
Into the mouth of death, to sinners dew,
And all his off-spring into thraldome threw:
Where they for euer should in bonds remaine,
Of neuer dead, yet euer dying paine.

(120-126)

Only the "heavenly love" of Christ who died in the flesh can save man from his self-made predicament. In making the Atonement the central example of heavenly love, Spenser departs from the Italian Neo-Platonic tradition. In his system, man's life on earth is blighted by sin, and his flesh is cursed by decay. Man is completely bound to the dictates of "flitting Time". Only by contemplation of Christ's sacrifice, by considering the love of God manifest in Christ, can man ever hope to break his bondage to death and ascend to a vision of the celestial beauty of God himself, outside the realm of change and decay.

> Then rouze they selfe, O earth, out of thy soyle,
> In which thou wallowest like to filthy swyne
> And doest thy mynd in durty pleasures moyle,
> Vnmindfull of that dearest Lord of thyne;
> Lift vp to him thy heauie clouded eyne,
> That thou his soueraine bountie mayest behold,
> And read through loue his mercies manifold...
>
> (218-224)

> Then shalt thou feele thy spirit so possest,
> And rauisht with deuouring great desire
> Of his deare selfe, that shall thy feeble brest
> Inflame with loue, and set thee all on fire
> With burning zeale, through euery part entire,
> That in no earthly thing thou shalt delight,
> But in his sweet and amiable sight.
>
> Thenceforth all worlds desire will in thee dye,
> And all earthes glorie on which men do gaze,
> Seeme durt and drosse in thy pure sighted eye,
> Compar'd to that celestiall beauties blaze,
> Whose glorious beames all fleshly sense doth daze
> With admiration of their passing light,
> Blinding the eyes and lumining the spright.
>
> (267-280)

Again I would like to stress the break between the world of physical desire and the world of spiritual fulfillment pictured in the Hymnes of Heauenly Love and Beautie. Rather than beginning with the things of earth, man's eyes must first behold Christ crucified. Only then can he aspire to see the pattern of heavenly beauty as it is manifested in the universe. And in

the final Hymne of Heauenly Beautie it is the whole realm of created (albeit mortal) things, rather than the beauties of one woman, that inspire the poet. God's love for man sanctifies human sexual love. But man cannot reach God through this love, which is limited by time and change, as well as by the nature of desire.

The final hymn begins at the point of ascending to the sight of heavenly beauties:

> Rapt with the rage of mine own rauisht thought,
> Through contemplation of those goodly sights,
> And glorioue images in heauen wrought,
> Whose wondrous beauty breathing sweet delights,
> Do kindle loue in high conceipted sprights:
> I faine to tell the things that I behold,
> But feele my wits to faile, and tongue to fold.
> (1-7)

"Faire seeming shewes" are left behind. The speaker seeks "Th'eternall fountaine of that heauenly beautie". He looks to the book of works to give evidence of God's love and beauty.

> Then looke who list, thy gazefull eyes to feed
> With sight of that is faire, looke on the frame
> Of this wyde uniuerse, and therein reed
> The endlesse kinds of creatures, which by name
> Thou canst not count, much lesse their natures aime:
> All which are made with wondrous wise respect,
> And all with admirable beautie deckt.
>
> (29-35)

But all the beauties of creation that Spenser now describes are still subject to time. He is stretching up past them to that realm which exists outside of time, immutable and eternal, where the throne of God is found:

> Thence gathering plumes of perfect speculation,
> To impe the wings of thy high flying mynd,
> Mount vp aloft through heauenly contemplation,
> From this darke world, whose damps the soule do blynd,
> And like the natiue brood of Eagles kynd,
> On that bright Sunne of glorie fixe thine eyes,
> Clear'd from grosse mists of fraile infirmities.
>
> (134-140)

The "Heavenly Beautie" of the poem is personified as the queen of heaven, Sapience, who rests in the bosom of the Father. She is the Wisdom imagined by both Jewish and Christian mystics as a female figure, a personification of the complete knowledge of God, whose beauty far surpasses the beauties of nature and compels men to seek her above all things. She is unchanging truth, a far cry from Donne's truth caught on a ragged hillside.[35] Sight of this heavenly queen is the beatific vision, causing all thoughts of earth to be purged away.

> There in his [the Father's] bosome Sapience doth sit,
> The soueraine dearling of the Deity,
> Clad like a Queene in royall robes, most fit
> For so great powre and peerelesse maiesty.
> And all with gemmes and iewels gorgeously
> Adornd, that brighter then the starres appeare,
> And make her natiue brightnes seem more cleare...
>
> (183-189)

> None thereof worthy be, but those whom shee
> Vouchsafeth to her presence to receaue,
> And letteth them her louely face to see,
> Wherof such wondrous pleasures they conceaue,
> And sweete contentment, that it doth bereaue
> Their soule of sense, through infinite delight,
> And them transport from flesh into the spright.
>
> In which they see such admirable things,
> As carries them into an extasy,
> And heare such heauenly notes, and carolings
> Of Gods high praise, that filles the brasen sky,
> And feele such ioy and pleasure inwardly,
> That maketh them all worldly cares forget,
> And onely thinke on that before them set.
>
> Ne from thenceforth doth any fleshly sense,
> Or idle thought of earthly things remaine,
> But all that earst seemd sweet, seemes now offense,
> And all that pleased earst, now seemes to paine.
> Their ioy, their comfort, their desire, their gaine,
> Is fixed all on that which now they see,
> All other sights but fayned shadowes bee.
>
> (253-273)

And that faire lampe, which vseth to enflame
The hearts of men with self consuming fyre,
Thenceforth seemes fowle, and full of sinfull blame;
And all that pompe, to which proud minds aspyre
By name of honor, and so much desyre,
Seems to them basenesse, and all riches drosse,
And all mirth sadnesse, and all lucre losse.

(274-280)

This is a world of contemplation, far removed from the moral-ethical world of the Cantos.

Spenser closes his four hymns of exploration and praise as he closed the Cantos - with the concept of rest, retirement from the vain shows of an ever-changing world tyrannized by Time. In the last two hymns he has found a fixed point outside the sphere of Mutability; for in contemplation of the beauty of Wisdom he can escape the world of flux.

Ah then my hungry soule, which long hast fed
On idle fancies of thy foolish thought,
And with false beauties flattring bait misled,
Hast after vaine deceiptfull shadowes sought,
Which all are fled, and now haue left thee naught,
But late repentance through thy follies prief;
Ah ceasse to gaze on matter of thy grief.

And looke at last vp to that soueraine light,
From whose pure beams al perfect beauty springs,
That kindleth loue in euery godly spright,
Euen the loue of God, which loathing brings
Of this vile world, and these gay seeming things;
With whose sweete pleasures being so possesst,
Thy straying thoughts henceforth for euer rest.

(288-301)

Conclusion

The term that best describes Spenser's method in the poems I have just examined is "eclectic" - but eclecticism with clearly defined procedures and goals. Spenser prefers order to disorder, hierarchy to chaos, rest to unrest. In the Cantos he accepts the moral and ethical duties owed by man to

God; but at the same time he regards them as temporary. He is still looking for something outside the realm of that fearful goddess whose authority remains fixed over earth, no matter what limitations Nature places on her. Thus it is that Spenser can move from the Cantos to the Hymnes; indeed the progression is necessary. Given the bases of Neo-Platonism elucidated by such non-Christian spokesmen as Ebreo, and the Christian Neo-Platonism that no doubt existed in the climate of opinion surrounding him, Spenser could take from each what he needed to construct his two worlds of love and beauty.

From the Neo-Platonists, then, he borrowed the concept of a universe infused with love. This infusion, equated in the poet's mind with the Christian myth of the Incarnation and Atonement, gave Spenser a vehicle for expression of the varieties of love. It is love which forms matter into all the shapes of creation, love which unites the elements, love which causes all nature to reproduce its kind. Love calls man's attention to beauty in all segments of the universe, as love causes Christ to pity sinful man, and as love leads man back to God after his fall.

Spenser is careful to distinguish, however, between love inspired by Venus, goddess of physical desire, and the love symbolized by the beauty of Sapience, who rules the heavenly sphere. There is no possibility of fusing sacred and profane love, as Ebreo (and Donne) suggest. Above the world of action and passion is a static, immovable world. The only passage to it is repentance and contemplation.

Spenser's ultimate goal, then, is to reach this world, timeless, immutable, and eternal - indeed a Sabbath for the soul.

NOTES

[1] Dante completed the process by making woman the caritas, the way to God, and a personification of heavenly beauty. See Sears Jayne, "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Journal of Comparative Literature, IV (1952), 103.

[2] Petrarch, Selected Sonnets, Odes and Letters, edited by Thomas Goddard Bergin (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966). The sonnet was translated by John Addington Symonds, Sketches and Studies in Southern Europe (Vol. II) (New York: Harper and Bros., 1890).

[3] See the excellent discussion of the eleventh century development of this tradition in C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford University Press, 1959) (1938 corrected version).

[4] The Dialogues of Plato, translated by B. Jowett (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 4th edition, 1953). Phaedo, I, 433-434.

[5] Ibid., Symposium, I, 211.

[6] Paul Ellrodt, Neo-Platonism in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (Geneva: E. Droz, 1964). Reviewed by C. S. Lewis in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1966). Also Sears Jayne, op. cit.

[7] Ellrodt, op. cit.

[8] Leone Ebreo, The Philosophy of Love (London: Soncino Press, 1937) gives a detailed account of the capacities of each level of the creation, the elements, and all creatures to respond to love. See his second dialogue, "On the Universality of Love."

[9] Maurice Evans, English Poetry in the Sixteenth Century (London: Hutchinson, 1967, 2nd edition, rev.) p. 15. Spenser in the Cantos retains the orthodox Christian view that decay is the result of sin.

[10] Quoted by Herschel Baker, The Image of Man (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 244.

[11] Ebreo, op. cit., pp. 451-452.

[12] Baker, op. cit., p. 244.

[13] Jayne, op. cit., 227.

[14] Paul Kristeller, Eight Philosophies of the Italian Renaissance (Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 9.

[15] Ebreo, op. cit., p. 57.

[16] Kristeller, op. cit., p. 58.

[17] Portable Renaissance Reader, ed. by J. B. Ross and M. M. McLaughlin (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p. 479.

[18] Eugene Rice, The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 58.

[19] But for the opposite point of view see C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 10-13.

[20] The Neo-Platonists symbolized the two forms of love in the universe by Venus Coelestis and Venus Vulgaris. Venus Coelestis was the beauty of divinity comparable to caritas. Her zone was the highest sphere of Heaven. Venus Vulgaris symbolized the beauty of the corporeal world, giving life and shape to nature and making beauty accessible to man. Venus Vulgaris showed the way to a vision of Venus Coelestis, for man by contemplation of earthly beauty was lifted to a knowledge of the heavenly.

Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 140-143.

[21] There were, of course, exceptions even to this. Sadoleto in his De Philosophia (1533) insisted on man's natural capacity to become enlightened. He divided the world into the two realms of Aristotle: the world of flux, scientia; and the world of stability, sapientia. The former world all were agreed was accessible to man's reason, but the Academy denied him access to the latter without divine assistance. Sadoleto felt that even sapientia was within the grasp of reason, for "Reason is a divine and admirable gift." Rice, op. cit., p. 84.

[22] J. B. Fletcher, "Benivieni's Ode of Love and Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," MP, (April 1911), 545-560. This long poetic statement of Ficino's theories was graced also by a commentary by Pico. See Jayne, op. cit., for a discussion of the translations of Pico and Ficino available in England during Spenser's lifetime.

[23] These steps are related to the faculties of man, affecting each of man's three souls as the vision proceeds: first, the vegetable, the sensible, and finally the rational. The rational soul's faculty of understanding is the means to the final vision, for the last step is intuitive. James P. Stewart, "Renaissance Psychology and the Ladder of Love in Castiglione and Spenser," JEGP, LVI (1957), 225-230.

[24] Ellrodt, op. cit.

[25] All quotations from Spenser are from the variorum edition, The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. by E. Greenlaw, C. G. Osgood, F. M. Padelford, and R. Heffner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943, 1961).

[26] This interpretation is developed in Sherman Hawkins, "Mutability and the Cycle of the Months," in Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 76-102.

[27] The gods survived into the Renaissance and were "explained" in three general ways. The historical tradition traced them back to historical figures. The astral tradition dealt with them as planetary influences. The allegorical tradition "moralized" them into examples of vices and virtues. Both classical and Christian writers used all three traditions, singly or

in conjunction with each other. Here Spenser combines the historical with a hint of the astral; and his basic method throughout the Cantos is Allegorical. See Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961).

[28] Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 356.

[29] "Hymne" here is used by Spenser in the sense of the Greek meaning, "song" or "paean" in honor of a god or hero. The meaning was applied specifically to hymns of initiation, for example the Orphic hymns of the Hellenic religion.

[30] Ellrodt, op. cit., p. 128.

[31] Ellrodt, op. cit., pp. 130-131.

[32] See Ebreo, p. 57, quoted above, p. 8.

[33] Ellrodt notes too that the Neo-Platonists usually de-emphasized physical passion (here Ebreo is the exception). Spenser hallowed it, distinguishing between love and lust, a distinction the Neo-Platonists did not seem to make.

[34] See Ellrodt, op. cit., Chapter IX.

[35] There is no apparent precedent for such a conception in Benivieni's orthodox Neo-Platonic "Ode of Love." Several critics profess to see a Calvinist influence here, but there is no need to seek further for a source than the general Protestant position on the Atonement and salvation. See. F. M. Padelford, "Spenser and the Theology of Calvin," MP, XXI (1914), 1-18.

[36] I.e., those things on earth which only appear beautiful, or those things which are not real at all, but merely a shadow of the heavenly forms.

[37] Hawkins, op. cit., equates Sapience with Nature in the Cantos. I think rather Sapience is a mystic concept, above all nature's orders and hierarchies, while Nature is a personification of the order and hierarchy preventing chaos from reigning on earth. Nature's dominion does not extend beyond time and change. Frank Manley in his edition of Donne's Anniversaries relates the concept of the anima to Sapience. Ellrodt finds a strong resemblance between the Son and Sapience, although his evidence - Ebreo's concept of Sapience - seems a tenuous connection.

CHAPTER TWO

SHAKESPEARE AND TIME'S RAGES

The Enmity of Time

Spenser's golden world of ideal beauty and love yields to Shakespeare's world, which is very closely in touch with the physical realities of sex, sweat, violent passions, and death. This shift is reflected in the emphatic change of poetic medium - the change from allegory to metaphor. For example, mutability as it appears in the Cantos is personified as the brash daughter of the Titans, and her challenge to the order of Nature may be interpreted like a Christian allegory: Mutability stands for unregenerate man and his pride which holds him captive to sin and death; Nature, vanquishing Mutability, reasserts the salvation of man by a restoration of order to a seemingly disordered universe. The "end of change", then, is the final Kingdom of God on earth, when man's restless pride will no longer govern him. An unchanging world ruled by Christ will come into being. Such an interpretation leads to the consideration of a higher world, the world of the Hymnes, where, in the paeans to Heavenly Love and Beauty Spenser postulates a world without change.[1]

The contrast between Spenser's poetic and that of Shakespeare is evident in Shakespeare's Ovidian poems and Sonnets, the subject of this section. Shakespeare's Ovidian narratives may be inferior to his sonnets (and certainly to his dramas); but as stiff and strange as they may be, the characters of Shakespeare all have independent existences. They are not forces, or the shadows of ideal forms. They are individuals, men and women who succumb to passion, overcome it, or are destroyed by it. But in each case they take the center stage, without strings, battling the forces of mutability and time.

Venus and Adonis

Shakespeare totally demolishes the worlds of courtly love and Neo-Platonic idealism in Venus and Adonis,[2] clearing the way for an examination of very earthly love and lust in Lucrece and the Sonnets.

Several critics have tried to find a serious moral intent behind Venus and Adonis. I find no evidence of such serious didactic intent.[3] Rather the poem reveals an ironic attitude toward passionate love. There is no evidence of an attempt to moralize on the story. The tension is not primarily between love and lust, or chastity and sensuality. Instead, Venus and Adonis assert the ephemerality of beauty and its subservience to destroying time. Neither love nor passion can protect against time and death.

Venus certainly represents love - of some sort - and Adonis beauty - of some sort. But they are not Neo-Platonic or allegorical prototypes. Venus is very human, actually panting - "sick-thoughted", "bold fac'd", and sweating. Claiming to be love's champion, she urges Adonis to propagate his beauty before it is too late:

> Is thine own heart to thine own face affected?
> Can thy right hand seize love upon thy left?
> Then woo thyself, be of thyself rejected;
> Steal thine own freedom, and complain on theft.
> Narcissus so himself himself forsook,
> And died to kiss his shadow in the brook.
>
> Torches are made to light, jewels to wear,
> Dainties to taste, fresh beauty for the use,
> Herbs for their smell, and sappy plants to bear:
> Things growing to themselves are growth's abuse.
> Seeds spring from seeds, and beauty breedeth beauty;
> Thou wast begot, to get it is thy duty.
>
> Upon the earth's increase why shouldst thou feed,
> Unless the earth with thy increase be fed?
> By law of nature thou art bound to breed,
> That thine may live when thou thyself are dead;
> And so in spite of death thou dost survive,
> In that thy likeness still is left alive.
>
> (157-74) [4]

Adonis answers her arguments by exalting chastity and condemning her passion as mere lust.

> What have you urg'd that I cannot reprove?
> The path is smooth that leadeth on to danger.
> I hate not love, but your device in love
> That lends embracements unto every stranger.
> You do it for increase: O strange excuse,
> When reason is the bawd to lust's abuse!
>
> Call it not love, for love to heaven is fled,
> Since sweating lust on earth usurp'd his name;
> Under whose simple semblance he hath fed
> Upon fresh beauty, blotting it with blame;
> Which the hot tyrant stains and soon bereaves,
> As caterpillars do the tender leaves.
>
> (787-98)

Adonis himself, however, is more a parody of chastity than the ideal example of virtue. Adonis' asceticism is awkward, sometimes distasteful, convincing no one of the excellence of abstinence. Indeed, what is he preserving? When Venus drags Adonis off his horse, the scene becomes slapstick.

> Over one arm the lusty courser's rein,
> Under her other was the tender boy,
> Who blush'd and pouted in a dull disdain,
> With leaden appetite, unapt to toy:
> She red and hot as coals of glowing fire,
> He red for shame, but frosty in desire.
>
> (31-36)

It is hard to imagine the victim in such a scene as the perfection of unfallen nature or as the Beauty which sustains and infuses all nature.

The episode of the horses seems to give weight to the argument that Venus represents mere sensual appetite.[5] The horse was a traditional representative of man's passions; as long as man held the reins (reason) he kept his animal nature in check. Loosed from restraint - like run-away horses - his passions would run wild. Yet the real stallion and mare of the poem are acting according to their nature as animals. It appears then that passion is

not to be absolutely condemned nor chastity praised: rather the line is drawn between the lust man tries to justify as nature's law (Venus' argument) and the animal nature of man dressed up in courtly trappings to accommodate sheer lust.

In such ironic treatment of convention lies, I think, an ambiguity which is important to the themes of this study. Adonis may be a comical figure, but his tragic end indicates an attitude towards beauty on the part of the poet that carries over into the sonnets. Adonis is a symbol of earthly beauty and its ephemerality. He is "the field's chief flower". The metaphor of a bird tangled in a net suggests man caught in the web of time.

Adonis is also described as a timid water bird, the prey of eagles. Venus is that eagle, he the hunted victim.

> Even as an empty eagle, sharp by fast,
> Tires with her beak on feathers, flesh and bone,
> Shaking her wings, devouring all in haste,
> Till either gorge be stuff'd or prey be gone:
> Even so she kiss'd his brow, his cheek, his chin,
> And where she ends she doth anew begin.
>
> (55-60)

Her passion will, in fact, destroy him. On the other hand, his flight from her leads him to the encounter with the boar. So, there is no escape for beauty. Whether he chooses incontinence or the hunt, Adonis is doomed. His beauty becomes the prey of death. Beauty is mortal, caught between the destructive forces of passion and the inevitable sickle of time. Venus and Adonis, then, cannot stand for Ideal Love and Beauty. Love in this poem is a destructive force - the mask for predatory passion; and beauty is everywhere the victim of time. The flower, itself short-lived, is plucked by Venus. Adonis is doubly murdered. She gathers her rosebuds in an ironic inversion of <u>carpe diem</u>.

The Rape of Lucrece

Venus and Adonis points in two directions. First, its ironic treatment of passion can lead to the malicious tragedy of The Rape of Lucrece, in which time and opportunity bow to the totally destructive lust of Tarquin. Such lust is also the background for those sonnets in which the speaker berates himself for relinquishing control of his body to "a waste of shame". It is a world of decay, leading downward to the destruction of both body and soul. On the other hand, once the mutability and ephemerality of the good and beautiful has been accepted, these threats can be met and subdued. In the sonnets to the friend, Love survives, not in an appeal to transcendental ideals, but through man's own powers of creation and love.

I will examine first the alternatives presented in Lucrece. There is little ambiguity or irony in this poem. Tarquin breaks the code which binds him to serve and protect the innocent. He betrays the trust of his friend Collatine; and he succumbs to his bestial nature. Lucrece, the epitome of earthly beauty and innocence, is destroyed by Tarquin's lust.[6]

Once the deed is done, Lucrece becomes the single focus of attention. In her extended soliloquy she rails against Night, the time of secret crimes:

> O comfort-killing night, image of hell,
> Dim register and notary of shame,
> Black stage for tragedies and murders fell,
> Vast sin-concealing chaos, nurse of blame
> Blind muffled bawd, dark harbour for defame,
> Grim cave of death, whisp'ring conspirator
> With close-tongued treason and the ravisher!
>
> (764-770)

Tarquin is "night's child", and the two have conspired to destroy purity and innocence. Indeed, Virtue is at a disadvantage when evil assails it, for, thinking no evil itself, virtue is defenseless.[7]

Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud,
Or hateful cuckoos hatch in sparrows' nests?
Or toads infect fair founts with venom mud,
Or tyrant folly lurk in gentle breasts?
Or kings be breakers of their own behests?
  But no perfection is so absolute
  That some impurity doth not pollute.

(848-54)

This single stanza is a microcosm of the poem, describing the necessary decay of all things. Worms, the instruments of decay, have destroyed the flower of Lucrece's chastity; and like a cuckoo that drives the rightful owner from his nest, Tarquin has usurped Collatine's place, poisoning the fountain of Lucrece's innocence.

Opportunity, along with Night, has sided with the ravisher to destroy; opportunity no longer comes impartially and randomly but only at the behest of "Wrath, envy, treason, rape, and murder's rages."

Unruly blasts wait on the tender spring;
Unwholesome weeds take root with precious flowers;
The adder hisses where the sweet birds sing;
What virtue breeds, iniquity devours.
We have no good that we can say is ours,
  But ill-annexed opportunity
  Or kills his life, or else his quality.

O opportunity, thy guilt is great!
'Tis thou that execut'st the traitor's treason;
Thou sets the wolf where he the lamb may get;
Whoever plots the sin, thou poinst the season.
'Tis thou that spurn'st at right, at law, at reason;
  And in thy shady cell where none may spy him,
  Sits sin to seize the souls that wander by him.

(869-882)

But the greatest villain of all is Time:

Mis-shapen time, copesmate of ugly night,
Swift subtle post, carrier of grisly care,
Eater of youth, false slave to false delight,
Base watch of woes, sin's pack-horse, virtue's snare!
Thou nursest all, and murder'st all that are:
  O hear me, then, injurious shifting time!
  Be guilty of my death, since of my crime.

(925-31)

Time should allow good as well as evil to come about, should allow beauty to flourish as well as to decay. But Time has betrayed its trust, uniting with night and opportunity to destroy:

> Why hath thy servant opportunity
> Betray'd the hours thou gav'st me to repose,
> Cancell'd my fortunes and enchained me
> To endless date of never-ending woes?
> Time's office is to fine the hate of foes,
> To eat up errors by opinion bred,
> Not spend the dowry of a lawful bed.
>
> Time's glory is to calm contending kings,
> To unmask falsehood and bring truth to light,
> To stamp the seal of time in aged things,
> To wake the morn and sentinel the night,
> To wrong the wronger till he render right,
> To ruinate proud buildings with thy hours,
> And smear with dust their glitt'ring golden tow'rs;
>
> To fill with worm-holes stately monuments,
> To feed oblivion with decay of things,
> To blot old books and alter their contents,
> To pluck the quills from ancient ravens' wings,
> To dry the old oak's sap and cherish springs,
> To spoil antiquities of hammer'd steel,
> And turn the giddy round of fortune's wheel;
>
> (932-952)

This meditation on time is akin to passages in the sonnets describing the effects of time on the affairs of men. In the Sonnets, however, Shakespeare suggests ways of countering the effects of time. As for Lucrece, only through death can she escape the effects of Tarquin's folly. Time has moved inexorably and cannot right the wrong it has allowed to happen, except by bringing Tarquin to damn himself.

> Let him have time to tear his curled hair,
> Let him have time against himself to rave,
> Let him have time of time's help to despair,
> Let him have time to live a loathed slave,
> Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave,
> And time to see one that by alms doth live
> Disdain to him disdained scraps to give.

Let him have time to see his friends his foes,
And merry fools to mock at him resort;
Let him have time to mark how slow time goes
In time for sorrow, and how swift and short
His time of folly and his time of sport:
  And ever let his unrecalling crime
  Have time to wail th'abusing of his time.

(981-994)

Such a fate does await Tarquin, for his crime earns him banishment and undying infamy. Ultimately Lucrece is more in control of her fate than is Tarquin. By revealing his crime to her husband she prepares the way for time to reveal the evil of all the Tarquins.[8]

Finally, both Lucrece and Tarquin live on in time: Lucrece as the symbol of the vulnerable nature of beauty and innocence; and Tarquin as an example of unmitigated lust.

In both the narrative poems Shakespeare has dealt with beauty and innocence at the mercy of time and decay. In neither is he prepared to present an alternative. Certainly love, romantic or ideal, has no place in the worlds of these two poems. The poems themselves, unfortunately, are tedious and static, and comparison with even the most melodramatic of Shakespeare's youthful plays shows how far below his dramatic standard they fall. Yet the poet has integrated the elements of both poems well: the tapestry in Lucrece is a sub-plot reinforcing the major action; the hounds and poor Wat foreshadow the fate of Adonis facing the boar. But there is little sense of immediacy, of involvement with the figures and the action. Lucrece is overwhelmingly didactic and, at times, ludicrous. And in Venus and Adonis we laugh at the fumbling couple without any of the spirit of real comedy we find in the mature works. What the poems do illustrate is Shakespeare's interest in the actual

terms of man's existence. Spenser proposed a future in which man will escape the constant mutability time brings. His hopes are fixed on a speculative plane on which man exchanges the real for the ideal. Even his acknowledgment of the possibility of chaste sensual love is tinged with elements of idealization, "eterne in mutabilitie". The Ideal and the apocalyptic have no place in Venus and Adonis or The Rape of Lucrece. In the Sonnets, too, Shakespeare examines real love as it is affected by, and affects, time, mutability, and death.

The Sonnets: Introduction

In discussing such a large body of material as the Sonnets it is useful to have some idea of how the various poems may be grouped. But I do not propose to re-order the entire body of poems to give a complete outline of subsequences which fit into an organic pattern. My major concern is to discuss the varieties of experience through which Shakespeare examines love, both of a woman and of a friend, in the light of time's actions, the press of mutability, and the inevitability of death.[9] I said before that Shakespeare, in dealing with love, presented an extreme position in Lucrece, and that this position is carried over and expanded in the sonnets - the position that lust, mere animal satisfaction, has usurped the place of love, destroying beauty and leading to both physical and spiritual death. In the sonnets on the dark lady Shakespeare deals with a concrete and present manifestation of lust, the horror culminating in Sonnet 129, the acceptance of flesh's weakness worked out in the following sonnets: 128-152.

It is not necessary to labor the anti-Petrarchan nature of these sonnets. Physically the woman is the antithesis of the traditional fair beauty. Even more important, these poems are set apart from the stylized sonnet tradition by their emphasis on the sensual nature of the relationship, their frank

appraisal of the woman's moral faults, and the speaker's ambivalent attitude toward the relationship. Shakespeare is interested in dramatic reality, and that is what he presents. Such an adulterous and stormy affair culminates in the ferocious Sonnet 129.

> Th'expence of Spirit in a waste of shame
> Is lust in action, and till action, lust
> Is perjurd, murdrous, blouddy full of blame,
> Savage, extreame, rude, cruell, not to trust,
> Injoyd no sooner but dispised straight,
> Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
> Past reason hated as a swollowed bayt,
> On purpose layd to make the taker mad.
> Made in pursut and in possession so,
> Had, having, and in quest, to have extreame,
> A blisse in proofe and provd and very wo,
> Before a joy proposd behind a dreame,
> All this the world well knowes yet none knowes well,
> To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell. [10]

The plight of man caught in such a situation, the knowledge of and at the same time the inability to escape from passion, is the plight of Tarquin (see his soliloquy, ll. 190-280). The sonnet condenses such agony and conflict of passions into 14 lines, succeeding where Lucrece fails. While leaving the experience horribly vivid in its dream-like compulsiveness, the poet universalizes it and all its possibilities for destruction of both body and soul. The description of lust itself (ll. 1-4) and the feelings of the person involved (ll. 5-7, 9-12) are linked dramatically, forcing the reader to re-live the experience. The couplet totally destroys the Petrarchans' claim to find heavenly joys in the mistress; yet the poem is not satiric, but totally tragic.

However, to assume that this sonnet expresses Shakespeare's definitive poetic attitude toward love is to ignore the bulk of his sonnets. Sonnet 138 indicates once the nature of such a relationship is admitted and accepted, one can take an ironic, even wryly humorous view of passion.

> When my love sweares that she is made of truth,
> I do beleeve her though I know she lyes,
> That she might thinke me some untuterd youth,

> Unlearned in the worlds false subtilties.
> Thus vainely thinking that she thinkes me young,
> Although she knowes my dayes are past the best,
> Simply I credit her false speaking tongue,
> On both sides thus is simple truth supprest:
> But wherefore sayes she not she is unjust?
> And wherefore say not I that I am old?
> O loves best habit is in seeming trust,
> And age in love, loves not t'have yeares told.
> Therefore I lye with her, and she with me,
> And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

Even more unique than this anti-Petrarchan view of his lady, however, is the speaker's emphasis on love between friend and friend, the major topic of most of the sonnets. Such a major theme again is contrary to the conventions of the time. The expression of this relationship involves a confrontation of the themes of this study, a recognition that man's life is at the mercy of time, decay and death. But there is no fatalist conclusion drawn. Again and again the effects of time appear, to be countered by one, then another, type of resistance. And all this occurs, not within any grand metaphysical system like that attempted by Spenser, but within the framework of metaphors, metaphors that may themselves be unstable and interpenetrating, but that never lose contact with the natural world, the world of man at war with time. It is Shakespeare's insistence on the validity of the real, rather than the ideal, experience that links him to Donne. True he does not draw on the complex and diverse traditions and intellectual cross-currents that Donne integrated into his poetic vision; but both men asserted the varieties of the real, and their ability to withstand time and change. In this very resistance they transcend mutability and death.

Of Shakespeare, Hallett Smith says this:

> Shakespeare demonstrates the height and climax of the Elizabethan quest in the Petrarchan sonnet tradition: to find variety, passion, invention, and plausibility. His own particular way of developing the type to this climax was through a complexity of metaphorical elaboration - not

> 'metaphysical,' because it does not exist for its own sake but to play against the other factors, rhythmical, rhetorical, structural. They go beyond anything Watson, or perhaps even Sidney, had envisaged, but they are consequences of the same impulse that moved the pioneers of the English sonnet vogue. With this key Shakespeare unlocked - what? I should say that he unlocked the mysterious rooms in a poet's mind in which metaphor as a mode of thinking illuminates new worlds of experience and insight.[11]

Another critic describes the dramatic climate of the poems as a war among the times themselves:

> Impersonal nature has acquired human properties and volition without ceasing to be itself: time, winter, and summer are protagonists of a universal drama;[12]

This last statement may be too close to allegorization of natural forces to be entirely accurate. But it is this drama that I propose to examine, a human drama reflected in the universal drama of nature.

The Doctrine of Increase

The first 17 sonnets appear to form a well-constructed sequence in which the poet urges a young man to marry. In these sonnets, time appears as ravager and destroyer. The seasons are metaphors for old age and destruction, youth and beauty. In Sonnet 2, for example, the "forty winters" become a besieging army attacking the youth's loveliness; in Sonnet 6, Winter's ragged hand defaces a summer's beauty.[13] The "howers" in Sonnet 5 both nourish and ravish beauty, reminiscent of Lucrece's charge to time, "Thou nursest all, and murth-'rest all that are."

> Those howers that with gentle worke did frame,
> The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
> Will play the tirants to the very same,
> And that unfaire which fairly doth excell:
> For never resting time leads Summer on,
> To hidious winter and confounds him there,
> Sap checkt with frost and lustie leav's quite gon.
> Beauty ore-snow'd and barenes every where,
> Then were not summers distillation left
> A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glasse,

Beauties effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it nor noe remembrance what it was.
But flowers distil'd though they with winter meete,
Leese but their show, their substance still lives sweet.[14]

Spenser pictured the seasons in procession with allegorical overtones. Here, rather than mere pageant, is a drama of betrayal and death within the order of nature. Indeed decay is the order of nature, for nature is essentially malicious. Over and over again, urging the young man to marry, Shakespeare evokes the "wastes of time" that bespeak man's helplessness.

In Sonnet 12 the links between nature and the ages of man are made explicit.

When I doe count the clock that tels the time,
And see the brave day sunck in hidious night,
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls or silver'd ore with white:
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopie the herd
And Sommers greene all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the beare with white and bristly beard:
Then of thy beauty I do question make
That thou among the wastes of time must goe,
Since sweets and beauties do them-selves forsake,
And die as fast as they see others grow,
And nothing gainst Times sieth can make defence
Save breed to brave him, when he takes thee hence.

The day is "brave" because it dares precede the night, as well as because of its beauty; just so the youth is brave to withstand time, as well as being himself beautiful. The violet has a prime and a decline, as does man (for "all flesh is grass"); and the "silver curls" specifically personalize age. The most graphic and ominous metaphor is that of the wheat as it is carried off, just as dead men are carried to their graves. Time is the cruel harvester with his inexorable scythe. Only the next year's increase will foil his harvest. Without progeny to carry on the young man's beauty, the poet warns him, "Thy end is Truthes and Beauties doome and date" (Sonnet 14).

In the final sonnets of this series, 15-17, Shakespeare shifts to

the theme, drawn from Ovid and Horace and carried on by Ronsard and the earlier sonneteers in varying degrees, of immortality through verse.[15]

> When I consider every thing that growes
> Holds in perfection but a little moment.
> That this huge stage presenteth nought but showes
> Whereon the Stars in secret influence comment.
> When I perceive that men as plants increase,
> Cheared and checkt even by the selfe-same skie:
> Vaunt in their youthfull sap, at height decrease,
> And were their brave state out of memory.
> Then the conceit of this inconstant stay,
> Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
> Where wastfull time debateth with decay
> To change your day of youth to sullied night,
> And all in war with Time for love of you
> As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

Men, as plants, as all creatures of the universe are part of a constantly mutable order. The ripeness that is all lasts only a second. The theme of appearance and reality invoked by the reference to "this huge stage" adds to the total impression of ephemerality. As the play is performed, ended, and the players dispersed, so man in his attempt to live has only a short time before the curtain is rung down and the reality of death confronts the players of life. The young man, now "most rich in youth", is in the most dangerous stage of life, for he will now become prey to time, his apparent beauty suddenly subject to swift decay.

Sonnet 16, continuing the reflections of the preceding poem, harks back to the young man's procreative obligations.

> But wherefore do not you a mightier waie
> Make warre uppon this bloudie tirant time?
> And fortifie your self in your decay
> With meanes more blessed then my barren rime?

Only the "living flowers" of this young man can really preserve his beauty. No "painted counterfeit" will do him justice. The play on metaphors from both art and nature - "maiden gardens", "pensel", "pen" - develops the climate for the next and last sonnet of the series, Sonnet 17. Here is an attempt to reconcile the two modes of creation, physical and artistic. The poem itself is

curiously feeble in comparison to the earlier sonnets. The couplet, too, is weak: it fails to add anything to the world of metaphor the poet has constructed. But formally at least, it attempts to reconcile art and nature.

> But were some childe of yours alive that time,
> You should live twice in it, and in my rime.

The Fate of Beauty and Love

If Shakespeare had then continued on to immortalize the beauty of this young man, how simple the whole problem would be. But there is no other consistent sequence after Sonnet 17 like this first one. Critics are left to wander among the treasures at will. There are two sonnets that are especially troublesome, for, rather than offering solutions to the problems of time and death, they merely reflect on the problem. These poems may serve as a bridge to those that do offer a variety of concrete solutions.

In Sonnets 126 and 64 Shakespeare gives us eloquent statements of the concrete realities facing the young man. Sonnet 126 is a passionate address, with overtones of the Venus-Adonis myth (not of the poem by Shakespeare): Nature corresponds to Venus, and the "lovely Boy" to Adonis, the beautiful mortal who could not be saved from death even by a goddess. Here he is no symbol of "eterne in mutabilitie" - he is all too finally and tragically Time's prey.

> O thou my lovely Boy who in thy power,
> Doest hould times fickle glasse, his sickle, hower:
> Who hast by wayning growne, and therein shou'st,
> Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet selfe grow'st.
> If Nature (soveraine misteres over wrack)
> As thou goest onwards still will plucke thee backe,
> She keepes thee to this purpose, that her skill.
> May time disgrace, and wretched mynuit kill.
> Yet fear her O thou minnion of her pleasure,
> She may detaine, but not still keepe her treasure!
> Her Audite (though delayd) answer'd must be,
> And her Quietus is to render thee.

The young man, holding the symbols of time (an hour-glass and a sickle) seems to have control over his own destiny. He can preserve his beauty past the allotted time. Nature has had a hand in this dis-ordering of natural order, for she too dotes on the boy and would retard his decay. But eventually Time will call her to account, and Nature will have to surrender the boy to his destroyer.

This sonnet speaks only of physical beauty and its destruction. Sonnet 64 deals with the death of love itself.

> When I have seene by times fell hand defaced
> The rich proud cost of outworne buried age,
> When sometime loftie towers I see downe rased,
> And brasse eternall slave to mortall rage.
> When I have seene the hungry Ocean gaine
> Advantage on the Kingdome of the shoare,
> And the firme soile win of the watry maine,
> Increasing store with losse, and losse with store.
> When I have seen such interchange of state,
> Or state it selfe confounded, to decay,
> Ruine hath taught me thus to ruminate
> That Time will come and take my love away.
> This thought is as a death which cannot choose
> But weepe to have, that which it feares to loose.

Contemplation of time's corrosive actions leads the poet to reflect on the vulnerability of his love. Metaphors from nature - the ocean and the land - share the scene with examples of mutability from the worlds of empire, war, and destruction. "State" unites the two by its double meaning: in l. 9, "state" is the "condition" of the natural ebb and flow of life, symbolized by the tides; in l. 10, "state" refers to the grandeur of human monuments and their ephemerality. These thoughts remind the speaker that his friend too will die. His tears anticipate the loss.

Immortality in Verse

These sonnets are the extreme of pessimism. More typical of the bulk of his poems is Shakespeare's variety of bulwarks against the rage of time and death. One means of preserving love and beauty is through the poetry itself.

This is suggested in the first sequence, 1-17. It also appears in Sonnet 65, which is linked in imagery and tone to the pessimistic Sonnet 64. Recalling still the impermanence of all things, the poet first seems to despair of beauty's ability to survive:

> Since brasse, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundlesse sea,
> But sad mortallity ore-swaies their power,
> How with this rage shall beautie hold a plea,
> Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

"This rage" is the natural but terrible actions of time that despoil beauty. But in the face of this rage, the poet's pen can become effective.

> O fearfull meditation, where alack,
> Shall times best Jewell from times chest lie hid?
> Or what strong hand can hold his swift foote back,
> Or who his spoile or beautie can forbid?
> O none, unlesse this miracle have might,
> That in black inck my love may still shine bright.

Sonnet 18 is a more serene catalogue of nature's decay and the inevitability of death.

> Shall I compare thee to a Summers day?
> Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
> Rough windes do shake the darling buds of Maie,
> And Sommers lease hath all too short a date:
> Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
> And every faire from faire some-time declines,
> By chance, or natures changing course untrim'd:
> But thy eternall Sommer shall not fade,
> Nor loose possession of that faire thou ow'st,
> Nor shall death brag thou wandr'st in his shade,
> When in eternall lines to time thou grow'st,
> So long as men can breath or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

It would sometimes seem that this modest, slow, and stately decline is the epitome of the speaker's statements about his friend. But it is the beauty of the youth that is stressed here, and there is no indication that something other than the outward fairness will be preserved. Sonnet 19, with its greater ferocity, hints at a deeper realization in its reference to "my love":

Devouring time blunt thou the Lyons pawes,
And make the earth devoure her owne sweet brood,
Plucke the keene teeth from the fierce Tygers yawes,
And burne the long liv'd Phaenix in her blood,
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
And do what ere thou wilt swift-footed time
To the wide world and all her fading sweets:
But I forbid thee one most hainous crime,
O carve not with thy howers my loves faire brow,
Nor draw noe lines there with thine antique pen,
Him in thy course untainted doe allow,
For beauties patterne to succeding men.
  Yet doe thy worst ould Time dispight thy wrong,
  My love shall in my verse ever live young.

In later sonnets Shakespeare dwells more on the preservation of a love relationship rather than on mere physical beauty. Yet both of these sonnets indicate that time and mutability are accepted by the poet, for he can preserve within his art the victims of nature and time.

In Sonnet 60 Shakespeare creates the experience of time's passage and of the swift aging of man:

Like as the waves make towards the pibled shore,
So do our minuites hasten to their end,
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toile all forwards do contend.
Nativity once in the maine of light.
Crawles to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses gainst his glory fight,
And time that gave, doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfixe the florish set on youth,
And delves the paralels in beauties brow,
Feedes on the rarities of natures truth,
And nothing stands but for his sieth to mow.
  And yet to times in hope, my verse shall stand
  Praising thy worth, dispight his cruell hand.

Man's growth and decay are part of a greater ebb and flow of natural forces. Here the poet evokes the haste and implacability of the waves. In the second quatrain the life of man is so fused with the metaphors of nature that it is difficult to separate the two. In "nativity" lies the implication of birth and youth as well as the specific image of a new-born child. There is also the implication that the young man's life follows the progression of day into

night.[16] "Crawls" at once pictures the early movements of the child and the journey of the sun; and "crooked eclipses"[17] are not only the eclipses of the heavenly bodies but the fortunes of state that so dogged the footsteps of Tudor courtiers. Time here picks the choicest portions of nature to devour - the "rarities". Indeed in the couplet the poet-protagonist is not speaking of the youth's beauty - that must be destroyed, no poem can preserve it. What the speaker can do is remark and immortalize the young man's "worth" for posterity.

The idea of preserving a moral quality rather than mere physical beauty lies behind two other sonnets on poetic immortality, Sonnets 54 and 55. In 54 the young man's virtue is compared to the rose which is truly sweet, having outward beauty as well as inner worth - its essence. The canker has only an outward appearance, but no scent.

> Oh how much more doth beautie beautious seeme,
> By that sweet ornament which truth doth give,
> The Rose lookes faire, but fairer we it deeme
> For that sweet odor, which doth in it live:
> The Canker bloomes have full as deep a die,
> As the perfumed tincture of the Roses,
> Hang on such thornes, and play as wantonly,
> When sommers breath their masked buds discloses:
> But for their virtue only is their show,
> They live unwoo'd, and unrespected fade,
> Die to themselves. Sweet Roses doe not so,
> Of their sweet deathes, are sweetest odors made:
> And so of you, beautious and lovely youth,
> When that shall vade, by verse distils your truth.

Such a contrast points toward a concern with the young man's inward beauty as well as his outward show, the one as important for posterity as the other. Sonnet 55, contrasting stains and mud with the clearness of the youth continues this idea.

> Not marble, nor the guilded monument,
> Of Princes shall out-live this powrefull rime,
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Then unswept stone, besmeer'd with sluttish time.
> When wastefull warre shall Statues over-turne,
> And broiles roote out the worke of masonry,
> Nor Mars his sword, nor warres quick fire shall burne:

The living record of your memory.
Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth, your praise shall stil finde roome,
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That weare this world out to the ending doome.
So til the judgement that your selfe arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers eies.[18]

The metaphors here are chosen from the monuments of empire and antiquity. Yet the poet is not speaking of mere outward beauty. He is dealing with the nobility of the new Prince who will "pace forth", more excellent than the Princes of ancient fame. The couplet, intimating that the audience for whom the poet writes will include other lovers, stresses the mutual love of speaker and young man.[19]

A more tranquil appraisal of time and immortality, one which stresses such a mutual love, is Sonnet 107.

Not mine owne feares, nor the prophetick soule,
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love controule,
Supposde as forfeit to a confin'd doome.
The mortall Moone hath her eclipse indur'de,
And the sad Augurs mock their owne presage,
Incertenties now crowne them-selves assur'de,
And peace proclaimes Olives of endlesse age.
Now with the drops of this most balmie time,
My love lookes fresh, and death to me subscribes,
Since spight of him Ile live in this poore rime,
While he insults ore dull and speachlesse tribes.
And thou in this shalt finde thy monument,
When tyrants crests and tombs of brasse are spent.

The octave suggests that the young man has escaped from some unnamed threat.[20] Whether the threat be a cosmic one from some metaphysical agent, or whether from some earthly enemy, the unknown punishment has been avoided. The augurs were wrong; peace has settled where uncertainty and strife once reigned. In this "balmie time" of healing and peace death is temporarily subdued. The poem is a monument to both the speaker and the young man, who survive the monuments of age and the "speachlesse tribes" unable to create poetic tributes of their own.

The Triumph of Love

I would like now to turn to a third group of sonnets, those that deal specifically with love as it triumphs over the malicious partnership of time and mutability. In doing this I realize that I am skipping over many sonnets that deal with the "plot-line" of the series, those poems that recount episodes of estrangement and reconciliation, the faults of both poet-narrator and young man, and of course the triangular affair between the narrator, the dark lady, and the friend. I think that all these issues can be viewed as aspects of a struggle to recognize and elevate the changeable nature and condition of man, and reconcile love's strength with its ephemerality. The sonnets I will discuss are the results of this recognition and reconciliation.[21]

Past troubles are laid to rest in Sonnet 119, which recalls the "madding fever" of lust that defied reason and endangered friendship. Nevertheless, the sestet reveals a new attitude on love in time: the idea that from evil may come good, that love in time may strengthen rather than decay.

> O benefit of ill, now I find true
> That better is, by evil still made better.
> And ruin'd love when it is built anew
> Growes fairer then at first, more strong, far greater.
> So I returne rebukt to my content,
> And gaine by ills thrise more then I have spent.

Out of ruin can come a love which transcends the past and prevails over the future.

In Sonnet 53, for example, the beloved is praised for his beauty, but it is his "constant heart" that sets him apart and makes him an ideal pattern for men.[22] Other examples of this new relationship are the linked Sonnets 73-74.

> That time of yeeare thou maist in me behold,
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few doe hange
> Upon those boughes which shake against the could,
> Bare rn'wd quiers, where late the sweet birds sang.
> In me thou seest the twi-light of such day,

As after Sun-set fadeth in the West,
Which by and by blacke night doth take away,
Deaths second selfe that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lye,
As the death bed, whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nurrisht by.
This thou percev'st, which makes thy love more strong.
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.[23]

Once more the seasons give Shakespeare the necessary metaphors for old age and aging. Fall and winter blend into each other as one continuous process of decay, leading up to the complex image of bare trees, old men, and the ruins of time. No one impression is lost, none dominant, emphasizing the community between man and nature. Twilight, sunset, and the west are all reminders of death. Sleep is the counterfeit of the final sleep of death. Yet these indications of approaching death and separation are unable to change the love between the speaker and his friend, for it endures beyond bodily grace or the splendor of youth.[24]

Sonnet 74 is linked to 73, speaking still of the poet-narrator whose spirit - his "better part" - remains, although his body, "the dregs of life", is carried off by death. The poem will perpetuate neither beauty nor fame, but the poet's love. This love remains in verse to recall a love which escaped time's "fell arest".

In Sonnet 115 time itself seems to take on a different aspect. Time in 74 was a cruel master; in Sonnet 115 it is sly, rather than bold, able to

Creepe in twixt vowes, and change decrees of Kings,
Tan sacred beautie, blunt the sharp'st intents,
Divert strong mindes to th'course of altring things:

that is, divert minds to things which change, or divert minds to altering the things themselves. The final couplet perhaps relies for its full impact on the accumulation of images of growth and decay from other sonnets.

Love is a Babe, then might I not say so
To give full growth to that which still doth grow.

The poet realizes that love can grow, as well as decay, in time; so too the statement of it will grow - "My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer". Time's "milliond accidents" may affect all other worldly affairs, but the poet cannot doubt the future of this love, for it grows steadily, never declining or altering.

Other sonnets are meditations on the nature of this love. Sonnet 123 compares past and present, finding nothing so successful in defying time as this love:

> No! Time, thou shalt not bost that I doe change,
> Thy pyramyds buylt up with newer might
> To me are nothing novell, nothing strange,
> They are but dressings of a former sight:
> Our dates are breefe, and therefor we admire,
> What thou dost foyst upon us that is ould,
> And rather make them borne to our desire,
> Then thinke that we before have heard them tould;

The strange "pyramyds" of this sonnet are the monuments of brass and stone the poet has cited before as examples of the ruins of time. Although we admire antiquity, putting our trust in such monuments (making them the 'bourne' of our desire), these monuments lie. They preserve nothing, but rather prove time's triumph over man. We deceive ourselves if we take them for ageless things. The poet defies these false signs of time:

> Thy registers and thee I both defie,
> Not wondring at the present, nor the past,
> For thy records, and what we see doth lye,
> Made more or les by thy continuall hast:
> This I doe vow and this shall ever be,
> I will be true dispight thy syeth and thee.

This love will outlast the changes of time, merely by its own strength. It does not even need art to preserve it. The speaker's vow, while not promising eternal fame or glory, declares the constant survival of love in a world of ceaseless mutability.

This constancy is compared to the inconstancy surrounding the relationship:

Yf my deare love were but the childe of state,
It might for fortunes basterd be unfathered,
As subject to times love, or to times hate,
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gatherd.
No it was buylded far from accident,
It suffers not in smilinge pomp, nor falls
Under the blow of thralled discontent,
Whereto th'inviting time our fashion calls:
It fears not policy that Heriticke,
Which workes on leases of short numbred howers,
But all alone stands hugely pollitick,
That it nor growes with heat, nor drownes with showres.
To this I witnes call the foles of time,
Which die for goodnes, who have liv'd for crime.[25]

In the world of policy (a world which Shakespeare held in contempt - see Henry IV, Parts I and II) friendship is at the beck and call of opportunity. Men and whole estates themselves can be destroyed by civil wars ("thralled discontent") or palace upheavals, sinking the unfortunate household and raising one no less opportunistic in its place. Merit plays no part: "weeds" - the opportunist - and "flowers" - the dedicated servant - alike go down before the swift change of affairs. Policy is continually apostate, breaking faith with all. But all these threats do not obtain against the mutual love the speaker pictures.

The same world of policy appears in Sonnet 125, but it has no more power over the two friends than it had before.

Have I not seene dwellers on forme and favor
Lose all, and more by paying too much rent
For compound sweet; For going simple savor,
Pittiful thrivors in their gazing spent.
Noe, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblacion, poore but free,
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,
But mutuall render onely me for thee.
Hence, thou subbornd Informer, a trew soule
When most impeacht, stands least in thy controule.

Confessing his love and its essential constancy frees the speaker from the claims of time and fortune.

One of the finest statements of the strength of this mutual love, and its defiance of time, is Sonnet 116.

SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true mindes
Admit impediments, love is not love
Which alters when it alteration findes,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever fixed marke
That lookes on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandring barke,
Whose worths unknowne, although his higth be taken.
Lov's not Times foole, though rosie lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickles compasse come,
Love alters not with his breefe houres and weekes,
But beares it out even to the edge of doome:
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Here the constancy and immutability of mutual love refuses to become the fool of time. Only the "edge of doome" will end this love. Far from wishing the world of mutability at an end, the speaker awaits Doomsday without dread for in its very act of conquering Time this love becomes timeless. He is willing to stake his poetry, in which he has already enshrined his affections, on the ability of mutual love to withstand whatever alterations time and decay bring.

None of these proposals is permanent or final, nor does Shakespeare develop a concept of eternity as an alternative. He is too caught up in the organic relationship between man and nature, in the struggle of man in specific experiences within time. Through a manipulation of metaphor he links man to nature and at the same time asserts man's victory over it.

Neither Spenser nor Shakespeare argues his case. Nor does either deal in a world combining the speculative with the natural. They may assert or reflect, but they do not combine speculation, reflection, and argument in an attempt to integrate the varieties of love each discusses. Such integration, such a combined attack on Time, Mutability, and Death, comes more from the poetry of John Donne.

Conclusion

Shakespeare is preoccupied with the ephemerality of beauty and love,

both in nature and in the human experience. But unlike Spenser, he does not care to speculate on ideal solutions or eternity, except insofar as Love's "marriage of true mindes" is idealistic. Love and beauty take their chances in a natural order which develops and destroys with no ultimate purpose behind its own existence. Here nothing works toward perfection: all things increase and decay at the mercy of time.

> Now the 'problem of Time' is a metaphysical problem, and in various forms it is a preoccupation of many of the Metaphysical Poets. Moreover between Shakespeare's mature verse and Donne's there are similarities which it is important to recognize--the immediacy, the images generating intense mental activity ('the intellect at the tip of the senses'), the exploiting of speech rhythm and idiom, and so on: a good deal of Mr. Eliot's account of Metaphysical Poetry applies equally--as he points out--to the blank verse of Shakespeare and other late Elizabethans. This being so, it is all the more important to stress that in the sonnets the 'problem of time' is not a metaphysical problem at all--and the discussion of Platonic Forms and Ideal Beauty is irrelevant. Wherever we look Shakespeare is concerned merely with the effects of time on animate and inanimate beings, on persons and personal relationships. As a poet, he reports and evaluates experiences, but he does not attempt to explain them, nor do they arouse speculation in his mind.[26]

To this excellent evaluation can only be added the cumulative response to the experiences depicted in the sonnets, as I see this response. As the poet sees man, man has pitifully few weapons to ward off Time. The love of woman or the worship of God are not these weapons. Heterosexual love does not lead to present perfection or future bliss. At worst, man is the prey of destructive lusts. At best, he can accommodate himself to passion, but always at the risk of his soul. Turning his back on the courtly ideal, then, Shakespeare chooses as his ultimate weapon a dramatic, personal relationship - one that exemplifies love in time. This love, developed and preserved through Art,

withstands the ravages of time and physical dissolution. It is thus that Shakespeare finds the most effective way of avoiding the finality of time's sickle.

NOTES

[1] Maurice Evans, English Poetry in the Sixteenth Century (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1967, 2nd ed., rev.), pp. 155-158.

[2] The immediate source of the story is found in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Books 8 and 10. This Adonis was not reluctant, however, and it is generally accepted that Shakespeare also used the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in Book 4. See also FQ, III.1. 35-36, for Spenser's Adonis. Douglas Bush, in Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (New York: Norton, new rev. ed., 1963) has a chapter on Shakespeare's Ovidian Poems that discusses sources and mythology at some length.

[3] A. C. Hamilton, "Venus and Adonis," SEL, I (1961), 1-15. H. T. Price, "The Function of Imagery in Venus and Adonis," Mich. Academy of Science, Arts and Letters papers, XXXI (1945), 275-297.

[4] Quotations for both Venus and Adonis and Lucrece are taken from the Arden edition of the poems edited by F. T. Prince (London: Methuen and Harvard University Press, 1960). This theme of propagation appears again in the sonnets, 1-17, but with more serious intent.

[5] R. P. Miller, "Venus, Adonis, and the Horses," ELH, XIX (1952), 249-262 interprets this episode as a parody of the courtly tradition: the mare, coy and aloof, until the stallion seems to leave, at which time she is suddenly very willing.

[6] The many analogies between Lucrece and a besieged city (e.g., 463-469 and the whole section on the tapestry) and between Lucrece and a victim of the hunter (e.g., 543, 545, 510-511) reinforce this picture. Similarly, Tarquin's condemnation of his own behavior emphasizes the destruction of the courtly ideal (e.g., 197-210, 568-574).

[7] H. R. Wally, "The Rape of Lucrece and Shakespearian Tragedy," PMLA, LXXVI (1961), 480-487 relates Lucrece to other innocent victims of evil and their defenselessness (e.g., Cordelia, Desdemona).

[8] See Panofsky, op. cit., pp. 69-93 for an excellent account of the two-fold function of Time: "to unmask falsehood and bring truth to light." (Lucrece, ll. 939-945.)

[9] S. W. Lever, The Elizabethan Love Sonnet (London: Methuen, 1956) treats the sonnets as a number of groups based on one theme or situation which in turn form part of one long sequence developing through the juxtaposition of those themes or situations. I have chosen to follow some of his suggestions, although my review cannot be as thorough as his, for some of the groups lie outside the scope of this study. Lever's groups are briefly, as follows: (1) The mistress, 127-151, in order from lighter sonnets to those of remorse and atonement. (2) The invitation to marry, 1-19. (3) The poet in absence, 24, 46-47, 44-45, 27-28, 43, 61. (4) The friend's fault, 67-68, 54, 94, 33-35. (5) The poet and his rivals, 78-80, 82-86. (6) The poet's error, 109-112, 117-120. (7) The immortalization, 100-108, 115-116, 123-125, 55, 59-60, 62-65.

[10] See Robert Graves and Laura Riding, "A Study in Original Punctuation and Spelling," A Casebook on Shakespeare's Sonnets, ed. by G. Willen and Victor Reed (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1964). They give a close reading of the poem based on the original text as quoted here. All sonnets will be quoted from this text which makes no changes in the Quarto of 1609 save to modernize s and w, and to distinguish between u and v, i and j.

[11] Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry (Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 176.

[12] Lever, op. cit., p. 169.

[13] It is interesting to note that the worm of the carpe diem theme is here a ravisher of unshared male beauty.

[14] Lever, op. cit., pp. 193-200 gives an extensive analysis of the imagery connecting the sonnets of this series, which he extends to Sonnet 19. He notes that the images involve flowers, fading or distilled into an essence, and these represent human beauty perishing or preserved through progeny. This duality continues then through suggestions of treasure hoarded or spent. The rose is the culminating symbol of the young man. Finally, having admitted that death will claim even the progeny of beauty, the poet turns to verse as the immortalizer, equating poetic creation with the grafting of old and new.

[15] See J. B. Leishman, Themes and Variations in Shakespeare's Sonnets (New York: Harper and Row, 1961, 1963) (Harper Torchbooks, 1966). Also T. W. Baldwin, On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Poems and Sonnets (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950).

[16] See the earlier sonnets on Increase, especially Sonnet 7. Sonnet 14 also relates the young man's eyes to the stars. Sonnet 18 uses the metaphor of the sun.

[17] "Crooked" because they disorder the heavens, setting nature awry, as well as because the eclipse of a man is evil fortune.

[18] See Hallett Smith, op. cit., pp. 178-181. He uses this poem as an example of the conflict between Time and Beauty, showing how Shakespeare developed his metaphorical style.

[19] See also Sonnet 100 for another example.

[20] That "mortall Moone" of so much speculation has been identified as the Queen, or as the Armada. It could also mean the moon itself, "mortall" because it was the supreme symbol of mutability, like men subject to eclipse, and the governor of tides and portents.

[21] Both J. B. Broadbent, Poetic Love (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964) and G. Wilson Knight, The Mutual Flame (London: Methuen, 1955) find in such recognition a kind of religious affirmation. For Broadbent it is a secular version of the word made flesh; for Knight it is a religious mastery of time through eternity.

[22] This is a reversal of the Neo-Platonic ideal, for the pattern is the young man himself - he is no reflection of a greater ideal. See Lever, op. cit., p. 184.

[23] See William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, Penguin Books (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1961), 2-3, for an account of the "ambiguities" involved in the poem. For an adverse opinion, see John Crowe Ransom's essay, "Shakespeare at Sonnets," The World's Body (Louisiana State University, 1937).

[24] There is a contrast which reinforces this idea between the old man (and the fire) consuming his own body as fuel, and love which grows greater and stronger as it grows older.

[25] The question of the "foles of time" is usually solved by suggesting the recent Jesuit trials. A. Mizner, "The Structure of Figurative Language in Shakespeare's Sonnets," SoRev, V (1940), 730-747 gives an exhaustive study of this sonnet as an example of Shakespeare's technique.

[26] L. C. Knights, "Shakespeare's Sonnets," Casebook, op. cit., 194-195.

CHAPTER THREE

DONNE'S GOLDEN COMPASS

PART I: SONGS AND SONETS

Introduction

To turn to the poetry of John Donne is to discover a love poetry that integrates, while it transmutes, many of the elements found in the love poetry of Spenser and Shakespeare. Donne fuses the courtly and Neo-Platonic conventions with new science and old alchemy. He expresses these discrete experiences in closely-argued conceits. Beginning where Shakespeare's sonnets left off in their "realism" Donne goes far beyond them in dramatic immediacy and argumentative intensity. But he never loses sight of man's finite limitations: he is constantly aware of man's inconstant nature, both in love and in worship; of the separation time forces on lovers, and of the inevitable final separation of souls and bodies in death. In his sacred verse the same awareness obtains. The poet before God is equally aware of his obligations and failings. Unlike Spenser, Donne discovers that love of woman and love of God are different facets of the same experience. Both physical and spiritual love can be preserved from the ravages of time, decay, and death.

Although for purposes of this discussion the Songs and Sonets and the sacred verse must be divided, I will try to show how the two experiences interpenetrate, strengthening rather than vitiating each other.[1]

The Songs and Sonets have been sub-divided into groups according to their treatment of the themes of time, mutability, and death. It is in relation to these themes that we can best see the development of Donne's philosophy of love.[2]

Poems in the first group stress the inconstancy of love and lovers, the threat of time to love, and the inevitability of love's decay. The second group includes poems of requited love: that is, a love which resists the decay of love in time, but which is subject to the separation death brings. The final group consists of poems of transcendence: the lovers outwit time and mutability by discovering the eternal nature of love's union. I do not imply that there is any chronological or biographical significance in these groupings. As in my grouping of Shakespeare's sonnets, they have been expressly arranged to show the varieties of experience dealt with by Donne the poet.

Sweetness and Wit: The Constancy of Inconstancy

An excellent example of the scornful, satiric element in this first group, with its emphasis on inconstancy, is Woman's Constancy.* The vow of love, so important to conventional lovers, is here a parody of true lovers' oaths.

> Now thou has lov'd me one whole day,
> To morrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say?
> Wilt thou then Antedate some new made vow?
> Or say that now
> We are not just those persons, which we were?

The poem turns on the analogy, familiar enough to the times, between sleep and death. The speaker asks his mistress if she will forswear her oath as one made before the lovers themselves were changed by their short "death" in sleep:

> Or, that oathes made in reverentiall feare
> Of Love, and his wrath, any may forsweare?
> Or, as true deaths, true maryages untie,
> So lovers contracts, images of those,
> Binde but till sleep, deaths image, them unloose?
> Or, your owne end to Justifie,
> For having purpos'd change, and falsehood; you
> Can have no way but falsehood to be true?

Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
Which I abstaine to doe,
For by to morrow, I may thinke so too.

Nothing is constant, and the shifting qualifications of the verse reinforce this impression. Love itself is in constant flux. Time brings changes in all things. The mistress is "lunatique"; not only a mad woman but a woman bound to change ceaselessly as the moon changes. The poet contrasts this relationship to a constant married love, broken only by death. At once he is pointing out the essential fickleness of "lovers' contracts" and the possibility of constant love elsewhere. These lovers, however, mimic constant love. They have shortened the possibilities of love to one brief day. The song, "Goe, and catche a falling starre", echoes this low opinion of woman's ability to be constant. The speaker begins by proposing a series of impossible tasks: catch a falling star; tell me who clove the devil's foot; show me where mermaids sing; tell me if an honest mind can advance in the world. He then proposes a search - equally impossible - for a woman both true and fair. But, at the last moment, he retracts his promise to go. Such a search is, in the end, futile.

If thou findst one, let mee know,
Such a Pilgrimage were sweet,
Yet doe not, I would not goe,
Though at next door wee might meete,
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
Yet shee
Will bee
False, ere I come, to two, or three.

The same tone is found in The Dampe and The Funerall, in which tokens of love have been remaindered to the dead, or dying, speaker. As each poem progresses Donne develops a variation on the Petrarchan theme of death-by-scorn. In The Dampe the mistress' picture is an instrument of death, as well as a symbol of her beauty and cruelty. In the autopsy

following the lover's death from love, the mistress[3] hopes her picture (her beauty) will slay friends and doctors alike, thus elevating one murder to a "Massacre". The poem ends with an effective pun on the sexual connotations of "kill" and "die", the speaker conceding the triumph of his mistress' sexual powers.

> Kill mee as Woman, let mee die
> As a meere man; doe you but try
> Your passive valor, and you shall finde than,
> Naked you'have odds enough of any man.

In The Funerall one might suspect, for a moment, that the relic denotes constancy.

> Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
> Nor question much
> That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns mine arm;
> The mystery, the signe you must not touch,
> For 'tis my outward Soule,
> Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
> Will leave this to controule,
> And keepe these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution.

The "wreath of haire" holds his body together in death as brain and body are connected. Emphasis on the "one of all" implies the lovers' unity. But in a sudden sharp turn the essential cruelty of this mistress is revealed:

> For it the sinewie thread my braine lets fall
> Through every part,
> Can tye these parts, and make me one of all;
> These haires which upward grew, and strength and art
> Have from a better braine,
> Can better do'it; Except she meant that I
> By this should know my pain,
> As prisoners then are manacled, when they'are condemn'd
> to die.
>
> What ere shee meant by'it, bury it with me,
> For since I am
> Loves martyr, it might breed idolatrie,
> If into others hands these Reliques came;
> As 'twas humility
> To'afford to it all that a Soule can doe,
> So, 'tis some bravery,
> That since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you.

The speaker is a sardonic martyr who has died for love. Although "Loves martyr", "idolatrie", and "Reliques" imply a mystery of some sort, the words are all used ironically. There is no indication that the speaker was expressing any relationship like that, say, of The Canonization. This love is disappointing and ephemeral.

In a short but brutal poem Donne assumes the threatening aspect of a lover's ghost. The Apparition is a ghoulish little piece, again playing on the fringes of the conventional death-by-scorn pose. The dead suitor returns to haunt his mistress and her new lover:

> When by thy scorne, O murdresse, I am dead,
> And that thou thinkst thee free
> From all solicitation from mee,
> Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
> And thee, fain'd vestall, in worse armes shall see;
> Then thy sicke taper will begin to winke,
> And he, whose thou art then, being tyr'd before,
> Will, if thou stirre, or pinch to wake him, thinke
> Thou call'st for more,
> And in false sleepe will from thee shrinke,
> And then poore Aspen wretch, neglected thou
> Bath'd in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lye
> A veryer ghost then I;
> What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
> Lest that preserve thee; 'and since my love is spent,
> I'had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
> Then by my threatnings rest still innocent.

The brittle vignette parodies the concept of a scornful but chaste mistress; his woman is only a "fain'd vestall". This naturalistic scene - the reluctant lover and terrified woman side by side, uncommunicating - is humorous in a macabre way. One almost overlooks a semi-inconsistency at the root of the poem: why should he haunt her at all, if his "love is spent"? But this is a cavilling question. The dramatic intensity of the situation carries one through.

This poem should not be taken to imply that what the speakers in these poems are seeking is a constant woman. The speakers, too, are wary of

committing themselves. In The Indifferent* the speaker himself elevates the principle of inconstancy to a constant:

> I can love both faire and browne,
> Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betraies,
> Her who loves lonenesse best, and her who maskes and plaies,
> Her whom the country form'd, and whom the town,
> Her who beleeves, and her who tries,
> Her who still weepes with spungie eyes,
> And her who is dry corke, and never cries;
> I can love her, and her, and you and you,
> I can love any, so she be not true.

The poet is finger-jabbing at us - "her, and her, and you and you". Those "Heretiques in love" who "thinke to stablish dangerous constancie" are accused, not of virtue, but of searching out new vices. Love's sweetest part is variety, and those who try to abrogate this iron rule will be punished by the goddess. Venus condemns to being true (the worst punishment) those whose lovers will be false to them.

A series of poems on the nature of inconstancy as a guiding principle of love is among the wittiest of this group. All of these poems work around a central metaphor or conceit,[4] expanding their initial premise into a series of concentric stanzas relating back to the central premise. In Love's Usury the speaker asks that his youth be kept from the bondage of love. In return he will willingly bow to Cupid's yoke when he is old.

Loves Deitie contrasts the days of those lovers "who dyed before the god of Love was borne" with the present state of love, marked now by "scorne" and inconstancy. The poem is an involved argument on the contrasting states of love. The ancient god of Love followed a decorous path in using his powers.

> But when an even flame two hearts did touch,
> His office was indulgently to fit
> Actives to passives: Correspondencie
> Only his subject was. It cannot bee
> Love, till I love her, that loves mee.

Times have changed, however, and for the worse:

> But every moderne god will now extend
> His vast prerogative, as far as Jove.
> To rage, to lust, to write to, to commend,
> All is the purlewe of the God of Love.

The god of Love has broken into the realm of Jove, the god whose amatory exploits were infamous. Such usurpation has degraded love to lust, made inconstancy the only constant. The result of Cupid's dereliction is revealed in the last stanza.

> Rebell and Atheist too, why murmure I,
> As though I felt the worst that love could doe?
> Love might make me leave loving, or might trie
> A deeper plague, to make her love mee too,
> Which, since she loves before, I'am loth to see;
> Falshood is worse then hate; and that must bee,
> If shee whom I love, should love mee.

The speaker fears that Cupid may even sink so low as to make love once again constant - a "deeper plague". Paradox ends the poem: such constancy even if only imagined, is already falsehood because it is impossible.[5]

The theme of this and other poems is wry. Even The Apparition has little real bitterness in it. Donne is not seriously examining lust, as was Shakespeare, or contrasting it with holy wedded love, like Spenser. Rather, he plays with the theme of inconstancy and constant change. There are several more acid poems, however, that reveal a mood somewhat closer to that of Sonnet 129.

> Whilst yet to prove,
> I thought there was some Deitie in love,
> So did I reverence, and gave
> Worship, as Atheists at their dying houre
> Call, what they cannot name, an unknowne power,
> As ignorantly did I crave:
> Thus when
> Things not yet knowne are coveted by men,
> Our desires give them fashion, and so
> As they waxe lesser, fall, and they sise, grow.

But, from late faire
His highnesse sitting in a golden Chaire,
Is not lesse cared for after three dayes
By children, then the thing which lovers so
Blindly admire, and with such worship wooe;
Being had, enjoying it decayes:
And thence,
What before pleas'd them all, takes but one sense,
And that so lamely, as it leaves behinde
A kinde of sorrowing dulnesse to the minde.

Ah cannot wee,
As well as Cocks and Lyons jocund be,
After such pleasures? Unlesse wise
Nature decreed (since each such Act, they say,
Diminisheth the length of life a day)
This; as shee would man should despise
The sport,
Because that other curse of being short,
And onely for a minute, made to be
Eager, desires to raise posterity.

Since so, my minde
Shall not desire what no man else can finde,
I'll no more dote and runne
To pursue things which had, indammage me.
And when I come where moving beauties be,
As men doe when the summers Sunne
Growes great,
Though I admire their greatnesse, shun their heat;
Each place can afford shadowes. If all faile,
'Tis but applying worme-seed to the Taile.

(Farewell to Love)

Farewell to Love is closer to Shakespeare than to the lighter poems of this group. The poem shifts moods abruptly, from bitter humor to more sombre reflection. It is important to note its reflective nature: there is no specific situation, no dramatic address to lady, reader, or love itself, but a winding organic development from stage to stage, ending in a half-jesting, half-serious renunciation of love.

The speaker begins with a consideration of "some Deitie in love". This refers immediately to the god of love, but more remotely to the elevation of the spiritual element in physical love. The speaker once gave

proper obeisance to his mistress, but only as an unbeliever trying everything. Mere physical desire, however, lay at the bottom of his tentative worship. As desire was spent, the "things not yet knowne" (in a physical, as well as intellectual sense) became less worshipped - and as desire waxed, so did the value of these same unknowns.

Once satisfied, however, this desire quickly decays: the comparison is between a confection figure whose novelty is as thin as its icing and the act of sexual enjoyment ("Being had, enjoying it decayes"). No longer are all one's faculties bent towards the object of worship. Only "one sense" - of touch - is necessary, and, once satisfied, leaves the exhausted lover, according to contemporary convention, dull and stupid. [6] This "sorrowing dulnesse" is very much akin to the sensations described in Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 - "behinde a dreame". In contrast to man, cocks and lions are "jocund" after the act. This contrast to man's post-coital state of mind leads the speaker to reflect on the more dire aspects of the act when man performs it. Each act shortens life. Therefore wise Nature decreed man should despise it ("Injoyd no sooner but dispised straight").

Lines 26-30 are ambiguous. At once they suggest that Nature wishes man to despise sex because life is already short (and sex makes it shorter); therefore man endangers himself when he desires to raise children to carry on the line. [7] It could also mean that man despises sex because it is only momentary and leaves him weak and dull. There is another alternative, that the "curse of being short" is a physical embarrassment. This, as a witty sub-comment, adds pungency.

These ambiguities reflect the speaker's uncertainty. His senses dictate one thing, his intellect another; "love", whatever its essence, is brief, destructive, and vain. He appears to want to give it up altogether.

He also does give up trying to find "some Deitie in love", for there is none. When tempted by the "heat" of beauty he will admire it, but seek its shadows - i.e., avoid being seduced by this beauty's danger. In the course of the poem he has answered his initial question; the "unknowne power" is lust. But failing to avoid it - and he will fail - all his resolution will not save him from self-destroying lust. Love is lust, decay, death. Yet every man still seeks it.

What bitterness obtains throughout the poem, however, does not match in kind or intensity Shakespeare's evaluation of lust. Donne is posing, half-serious only, exhibiting his talent for qualification and argument. No less conscious of his art, Shakespeare is speaking of degradation and danger to the soul. This is not here a concern of Donne.

The same atmosphere obtains in Loves Alchymie. Obscenity and wit are the touchstones.[9]

> Some that have deeper digg'd loves Myne then I,
> Say, where his concentrique happinesse doth lie;
> I have lov'd, and got, and told,
> But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
> I should not finde that hidden mystery;
> Oh, 'tis imposture all:
> And as no chymique yet the'elixar got,
> But glorifies his pregnant pot,
> If by the way to him befall
> Some odoriferous thing, or med'cinall,
> So, lovers dreame a rich and long delight,
> But get a winter-seeming summers night.

The "elixar" is not the quintessence of two constant souls. It is a nasty patent medicine, drummed up by a phony alchemist. It tricks lovers into expecting a union of souls as well as bodies, a union which lasts throughout time. Instead they get a short night of passion which pleases their bodies but leaves the souls dissatisfied. The connotations of "winter-seeming" are death and dullness, concomitants of love in the Farewell. Love is not the "hidden mysterie" of the philosophers, but a dream, a

shadow, "imposture all". The man who claims to find the image of the divine in his beloved (or to marry her mind, guided by reason rather than desire) deceives himself and is deceived by the concoction of the alchemist (i.e., the philosopher). Love dies, not slowly or gently, but abruptly.

> Our ease, our thrift, our honor, and our day,
> Shall we, for this vaine Bubles shadow pay?
> Ends love in this, that my man,
> Can be as happy'as I can; If he can
> Endure the short scorne of a Bridegroomes play?
> That loving wretch that sweares,
> 'Tis not the bodies marry, but the mindes,
> Which he in her Angelique findes,
> Would sweare as justly, that he heares,
> In that dayes rude hoarse minstralsey, the spheares.
> Hope not for minde in women; at their best
> Sweetnesse and wit, they' are but Mummy, possest.

"Mummy" was a substance, derived from the mummy, taken as an elixir to restore and prolong vitality. Here, however, "Mummy" is at once the lump of flesh that excites desire, and an instrument of decay and death. Rather than prolonging life, this "Mummy" shortens it. This elixir is a deceptive and destructive medicine.

In this first group of poems, then, love is associated with death, either ironically or, as in the last two poems, ruthlessly and sometimes grimly. Underlying all the lyrics is the assumption that love cannot endure in time, for time brings inevitable change: the concomitants of love are decay, the harrying clock, the grave. Yet the poet avoids an overt statement of the simple form of carpe diem theme so prominent at the time. Like Shakespeare, he is too interested in the experience to turn for an answer to an obvious invitation to "make haste". But none of these poems explores with such serious intensity the consequences of lust. Nor do they turn to philosophy or transcendence as Spenser was wont to do. They serve to show how Donne's mind worked. His ultimate conclusions, however, while taking account of these facets of experience, will be unique.

Constancy and the Threat of Time

A Lecture upon the Shadow technically belongs in the first group, for the love it speaks of is an experience based on a union threatened by the very real possibility of love's decay. But it can also serve to show the impossibility of hard and fast categories. This lecture in love's philosophy uses an analogy between morning and afternoon shadows and the brevity of love. Like the disappearing morning shadows lovers' doubts fall away as love grows. But time rules the lovers as the sun rules day. Its daily journey westward symbolizes life's inevitable progress toward death, which circumscribes love. Similarly the lovers, unable to stay in shadowless noon, will feel the new shadows (those which "will worke upon ourselves, and blind our eyes") of love's decay.

> The morning shadowes weare away,
> But these grow longer all the day,
> But oh, loves day is short, if love decay.
>
> Love is a growing, or full constant light;
> And his first minute, after noone, is night.[10]

The Lecture concludes without commenting on the necessity of love's decay; love may decay - it must be constant, or it is no love at all. Linking love to the sun makes it appear the speaker expects love to behave like the hours, moving from youth into decay. But one is never sure.

One is sure in certain other poems, however. This second group of poems is distinguished by a description of mutual love that prevails over love's decay, although even such constancy is still at time's mercy. In A Feaver Donne depicts such a love. The source of the convention - the world's destruction as the result of a woman's death - can be traced to myths like Persephone's [11] abduction into the nether world, or the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. The woman in the poem is an embodiment of the

world's soul, as well as the epitome of all feminine beauty. If she dies, "The whole world vapors" with her death. Nor will the speaker any longer be able to "celebrate" women (in his poetry) for the fairest flower of all will be gone. Thus the woman of the poem is, like Shakespeare's young Adonis, a symbol of beauty's fragility and short-livedness. At the centre of the poem is the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm. The woman as the world's soul, dying, will leave behind her the carcass of a world, only the ghosts of men and women. Her fever is the fire which destroys all things on the last day.

Then the poem changes, qualifies, averts such catastrophe even as in the mythic world rejuvenation followed death. This fever cannot be a final fire, nor can it be fatal to the woman herself: "For much corruption needfull is/ To fuell such a feaver long". Since the woman is also a symbol of purity, she has no dross to fuel such a fire. Rather,

> These burning fits but meteors bee,
> Whose matter in thee is soone spent.
> Thy beauty, 'and all parts, which are thee,
> Are unchangeable firmament.
>
> Yet 'twas of my minde, seising thee,
> Though it in thee cannot persever.
> For I had rather owner bee
> Of thee one houre, then all else ever.

Meteors belonged to the sublunary sphere of mutability and were a symbol of that mutability. This woman's essence is immutable like that of the fixed stars.

There is still a contradiction in the poem, however, that the last stanza must resolve. Although the woman is a symbol of the world soul, and her essence incorruptible, still she is also a symbol of beauty's evanescence. The poet recognizes this in the final lines, and chooses the "one houre" of love, realizing that is all he is allowed. The speaker realizes the

hyperbole of his argument, and finally resigns himself to the shortness of his love. To strengthen this sense of urgency in the face of decay the poem has dwelt on words of death - "die", "death", "carkasse", "corrupt wormes", "waste", "corruption" - rather than on an overt call to seize the hour.

Parting-as-death figures prominently in other poems of this group. The Expiration is a light song based on the contemporary poetic notion that the soul could be withdrawn from the body through a kiss.[12] The parting lovers are left merely "ghosts" who continue to slay each other by their constant farewells, "going, and bidding, goe". This same attitude marks the poignant Sweetest Love, I Do Not Goe. Again lovers are parting. The speaker admonishes his beloved not to "waste" his life, as he goes, by sighing or weeping, for since the two are so united it is his soul she sighs away, his "lifes blood" she weeps.

Let not thy divining heart
Forethinke me any ill,
Destiny may take thy part,
And may thy fears fulfill;
But thinke that wee
Are but turn'd aside to sleepe;
They who one another keepe
Alive, ne'r parted bee.

In Valediction: of My Name in the Window the speaker warns his mistress of the dangers involved in parting. The first three stanzas turn on the analogies between glass and the speaker's name:

My name engrav'd herein,
Doth contribute my firmnesse to this glasse,
Which, ever since that charme, hath beene
As hard, as that which grav'd it, was;
Thine eyes will give it price enough, to mock
The diamonds of either rock.

The name is a charm, engraved under the influence of certain stars.

'Tis much that Glasse should bee
As all confessing, and through-shine as I,
'Tis more, that it shewes thee to thee,
And cleare reflects thee to thine eye.
But all such rules, loves magique can undoe,
Here you see mee, and I am you.

It is as hard and firm as the diamond, as clear (as true) as the glass itself. The glass reflects the picture of the woman - his very self - whenever she looks at the window. As the name cannot be erased by the "showers and tempests" of time, so he will remain unchanged.

Stanza IV, however,introduces the deaths-head.

Or, if too hard and deepe
This learning be, for a scratch'd name to teach,
It, as a given deaths head keepe,
Lovers mortalitie to preach,
Or think this ragged bony name to bee
My ruinous Anatomie.

As his three souls - the intellectual, the sensitive, the vegetable - are left with her, so is the name, symbolic of his body. When he returns, he will bring with him the body which houses all these parts of his anatomy. This name was cut when "love and griefe their exaltation had". So, as these remain to influence her in his absence, she must recall his presence daily, and, in his absence, "daily mourne". The implications of the astrological charms reminds him that the fate of lovers is determined by things beyond their control. They live on a plane of decay and change, in contrast to the fixed stars, even though their constancy may be greater than that of mere physical objects.

Indeed perhaps it is not even as great. In the last sections the speaker hesitates. Perhaps she will break down in the face of a new lover's pleas. Even if she should open the window to look on a new lover, his name would be there to remind her of their vows.

The final stanza returns to earlier certainties. The lovers may part, but their love will remain constant, without reliance on such lesser objects as charms and curses:

> But glasse, and lines must bee,
> No meanes our firme substantiall love to keepe;
> Neere death inflicts this lethargie,
> And this I murmure in my sleepe;
> Impute this idle talk, to that I goe,
> For dying men talke often so.

Comforting rather than scolding in tone is A Valediction: of Weeping. The imagery of this poem - circles, maps, the whole world, contrasts between "all" and "nothing" - anticipates the expression of love that can escape time and mutability.[13] But this poem itself deals with a love firmly rooted in the sphere of mutability. Be the lovers ever so constant, their love lasts only as long as life; their love at first stands threatened by a separation like that of death; and as the poem ends, again death appears in the image of interlocked souls and breaths.

> Let me powre forth
> My teares before thy face, whil'st I stay here,
> For thy face coines them, and thy stampe they beare,
> And by this mintage they are something worth,
> For thus they bee
> Pregnant of thee;
> Fruits of much griefe they are, emblemes of more,
> When a teare falls, that thou falls which it bore,
> So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore.[14]

The images are drawn from the analogies between microcosm and macrocosm, from the every-day world of lovers' tears up to the sphere and influence of the moon.

The lover begins, weeping, to compare his tears to coins, minted with the image of his mistress. They are occasioned by her, as well as by the grief of parting; thus they are "pregnant" with her, as well as with the "fruits" - the children - of their mutual grief. And just as the tear falls and destroys the image of its creator, so are the lovers destroyed

when separated.

These tears - emblems of perfect (circular) love of these two - grow into a picture of the whole world. The lovers are the whole world to each other.

> On a round ball
> A workeman that hath copies by, can lay
> An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,
> And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,
> So doth each teare,
> Which thee doth weare,
> A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
> Till thy teares mixt with mine do overflow
> This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.

The second stanza begins with a larger circle - the "geocosm", as Marjorie Nicolson calls it.[15] Just as the empty tears become emblems of the lovers, their grief, and their separation (their nothing-ness) all at once, so the globe of the map maker becomes "All". Each tear becomes a world; and these tears together - now a deluge - drown the whole world.[16] Now their tears are a new Flood which destroys the second earth; at the same time, the mistress becomes a "heaven" which opens to pour forth a rain of tears. (And as his mistress she is his "heaven", the repository of his soul.)

Now she, as heaven, becomes the symbol of an even greater sphere:

> O more then Moone,
> Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy spheare,
> Weepe me not dead, in thine armes, but forbeare
> To teach the sea, what it may doe too soone;
> Let not the winde
> Example finde,
> To do me more harme, then it purposeth;
> Since thou and I sigh one anothers breath,
> Who e'r sighes most, is cruellest, and hasts the others death.

She is "more then Moone" not only because she rules entire seas, rather than merely influencing the tides,[17] but because she encompasses all, from their tears to the continents and the heavens. Her sphere is similar to that of

the moon, for she can still or incite the winds and the seas to drown him, as the two lovers destroyed each other in tears, and as their souls can sigh the other away. But like the moon, she is constantly changing. She rules a mutable sphere subject to decay and death. And it is death while separated from her the speaker fears.

> When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not winde,
> But sigh'st my soule away,
> When thou weep'st, unkindly kinde,
> My lifes blood doth decay.

In all these poems the poet is not urging his mistress to love because he hears "Time's winged chariot". The speaker in each poem is aware of love's fragility, yet he assumes the lovers will remain constant. The real danger is that time brings death - and each separation is a foretaste of that final separation.

> Two graves must hide thine and my coarse,
> If one might, death were no divorce.

The Death's-head: Nocturnals

Before looking at the final group of poems dealing with what I have termed a transcendental union, one that withstands time and the grave, I would like to discuss several poems that seem to deal directly with the real death of a woman. A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day might be thought of as a summation of the preceding valedictions' underlying assumptions about real, physical death; The Dissolution points toward an awareness of some union after death, some means of escaping the final separation.

The Nocturnall uses imagery from alchemy and Renaissance natural history to complement the religious and philosophical implications of St. Lucie's Day.[18]

In the poem the dead woman is associated with the goddess-saint, as well as with the sun. The speaker is associated with winter and

midnight, darkness and death. Through the processes of the poem - a kind of poetic alchemy - he becomes the epitome of a dead world deprived of its life-giving and life-sustaining sun.

'Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,
  The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
  Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
    The world's whole sap is sunke:
The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunke,
Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seeme to laugh,
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

The poem begins by setting the scene - the dark, dead eve of St. Lucie's Day. The sun (and perhaps the stars, "his flasks") can no longer light the earth. It has been drained of the life-giving "sap". The stanza describes the contraction of things. Not only has the earth lost its vitality but all living things have been deprived of the Paracelsan "balme", the elixir of vitality. Life has shrunk, as a dying man shrinks once dead. Man too is swallowed up by the dropsical earth in lieu of its vital sap. The stanza finally focusses on the individual speaking, the epitome of all these dead things.

Study me then, you who shall lovers bee
At the next world, that is, at the next Spring:
  For I am every dead thing,
  In whom love wrought new Alchimie.
    For his art did expresse
A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and leane emptinesse;
He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not.

The speaker addresses the as-yet-unborn lovers of the next Spring. He is the "god" of the old year. His decline represents its death. The new lovers will "study" him as an example of the continuing cycle of death and rebirth. But here the process is reversed. He dies, to be reborn as total negativity. The process whereby he becomes the "quintessence" of nothing is an alchemic one. In this reversal of processes Love performs its

distillations from "nothingness", rather than from existing elements. As a "quintessence", a pure distillation of heavenly things believed to be a healing and life-preserving substance, he is gathering all negative things and distilling death, rather than life. If these new lovers study the speaker, now the essence of all emptinesses, they will see that, rather than bringing life, he brings death.

> All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
> Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have;
> I, by loves limbecke, am the grave
> Of all, that's nothing, Oft a flood
> Have wee two wept, and so
> Drownd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
> To be two Chaosses, when we did show
> Care to ought else; and often absences
> Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

"All others" I take to mean "all other men", for man was believed to contain the best from all other creatures. Standing above all animals, his place was below only the angels and God himself. The fire that heated "loves limbecke"[19] has destroyed this man, the "grave" as well as the "epitaph" of nothing. "Oft a flood" recalls the microcosmic destructions former separations caused in the world of these two lovers. Reference to these cataclysms recalls the lovers of A Valediction: of Weeping; those lovers, too, became "carcasses" when their souls were separated. Or they became "Chaosses" when they forgot their attachment and tore apart their two souls, thus destroying their little world; for then "Chaos is come again".

But these earlier separations are nothing when compared to the final separation of the Nocturnall.

> But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)
> Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown;
> Were I a man, that I were one,
> I needs must know; I should preferre,
> If I were any beast,

Some ends, some means; Yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love; All, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, 'a light, and body must be here.

But I am None; nor will my Sunne renew.
You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser Sunne
  At this time to the Goat is runne
  To fetch new lust, and give it you,
    Enjoy your summer all;
Since shee enjoyes her long nights festivall,
Let me prepare towards her, and let me call
This houre her Vigill, and her Eve, since this
Both the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

The speaker has lost all claims to be anything. Plant, stone, or animal, all have some attribute of sense or feeling. Her death (first mentioned here, although it is really the cause of all the other deaths) has deprived him of all his soul's faculties, all his body's properties. He is less than a shadow; indeed there can be no shadows, for the earth's light has gone out. Her death has removed the light and body which he, as a shadow, would have reflected. Finally he turns to the new lovers. His sun will not renew, but for them a new sun and a new sky will herald spring, the season of lust, under the zodiacal sign of the goat. For all but these two dead lovers the summer will bring with it fruitfulness, heat, light, and the longest days of the year. The dead earth will renew itself, then follow the pattern of the dead lovers. In the final lines the goddess-saint and the dead woman are fused. She calls him at this hour of her day--the day of the light-goddess. He reenacts the sympathetic death of nature on "this houre her Vigill", celebrating her martyrdome by enacting one of his own (love "ruin'd mee"). Finally he prepares to follow the dead woman as the earth god died with the dying sun, resurrected only with the new sun of the new year. The last line's repetition emphasizes the cyclical nature of the poem's processes, even as it accepts them. Yet this is no morbid,

egocentric lament; it realizes one aspect of man's role in the cosmic order. But here it is still an order which inevitably leads to the grave.

The Dissolution deals with the same situation - a woman's death. But the use of image and metaphor is much more limited, and the spirit and conclusion much different from the conclusion of the Nocturnall.

Shee'is dead; And all which die
To their first Elements resolve;
And wee were mutuall Elements to us,
And made of one another.
My body then doth hers involve,
And those things whereof I consist, hereby
In me abundant grow, and burdenous,
And nourish not, but smother.
My fire of Passion, sighes of ayre,
Water of teares, and earthly sad despaire,
Which my materialls bee,
But neere worne out by loves securitie,
Shee, to my losse, doth by her death repaire,
And I might live long wretched so
But that my fire doth with my fuell grow.

In Renaissance physiology the body was thought, at death, to dissolve into its four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Since, however, these lovers were so intertwined, her death has invested him with a double portion of the elements.

Now as those Active Kings
Whose foraine conquest treasure brings,
Receive more, and spend more, and soonest breake:
This (which I am amaz'd that I can speake)
This death, hath with my store
My use encreas'd.
And so my soule more earnestly releas'd,
Will outstrip hers; As bullets flown before
A latter bullet may o'rtake,the pouder being more.

Here the lovers are not left to languish apart after death. Having been united here, they will be reunited after death.

Transcendence: Poems of Union

The Dissolution can serve as an introduction to the final group of poems, those in which love, a love which unites both body and soul,

carries the lovers beyond time, change, or death in a union that defies the "rags of time". Donne continues to rely on alchemy, the elemental theories of natural science, the microcosm and macrocosm analogies. But whereas before they emphasized love's limits and mutability, here they describe a love growing, and even outlasting time. In Loves Growth Donne defines a love which is the antithesis of the Neo-Platonic ideal. This love is a real and physical experience.

> I scarce beleeve my love to be so pure
> As I had thought it was,
> Because it doth endure
> Vicissitude, and season, as the grasse;
> Me thinkes I lyed all winter, when I swore,
> My love was infinite, if spring make'it more.

Grass, once a symbol of ephemerality, now is a symbol of growth and endurance. Love, too, endures and grows. "Mixed of all stuffes",

> Love's not so pure, and abstract, as they use
> To say,who have no Mistresse but their Muse,
> But as all else, being elemented too,
> Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do.

"Gentle love deeds" growing and budding are one example of love's ability to grow in time; the concentric circles of the water are another:

> If, as in water stir'd more circles bee
> Produc'd by one, love such additions take,
> Those like to many spheares, but one heaven make,
> For, they are all concentrique unto thee;
> And though each spring doe adde to love new heate,
> As princes doe in times of action get
> New taxes, and remit them not in peace,
> No winter shall abate the springs encrease.

The circle, a symbol of perfection and eternity, is here a symbol of love's growth in time. This is a far cry from love's short day in Lecture upon the Shadow. Rather each year brings new growth with no sign of slackening. Nor can Time affect the lovers of The Sunne Rising. The lovers are audacious in their address to that "Busie old foole, unruly Sunne", for

Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
Nor houres, dayes, months, which are the rags of time.

The lovers have become the macrocosm, transcending it rather than destroying it in tear-floods and sigh-tempests. They are the epitome of the world of men - all states and princes. Alchemy here is chicanery. The only reality is their mutual love which has harnessed the sun - symbol of time's yoke - to its service.

She'is all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes doe but play us; compar'd to this,
All honor's mimique; All wealth alchimie.
Thou sunne art half as happy'as wee,
In that the world's contracted thus;
Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties bee
To warme the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art every where;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare.

Nor does love in The Good-Morrow decay and die, although it again is a physical love. The lovers are the macrocosm, each one a world, together a world that surpasses the worlds of explorers and map-makers. Donne gives the elemental theory a new twist, expressing the same, constant, undying love that "sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do".

What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.

The constant references to circles - worlds, hemispheres, the sun's center and sphere - have already been noted, as associating such a love with perfection, eternity, and immutability, all of which could be symbolized by the circle. Profane love thus becomes an analog of the divine love, and, like it, incorruptible. Yet it does not lose its implications of physical enjoyment.[20] The Anniversarie makes such implications explicit.

All other things, to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay;
This, no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday,

Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keepes his first, last, everlasting day.

It is true that

Two graves must hide thine and my coarse,
If one might, death were no divorce. . . .

But soules where nothing dwells but love
(All other thoughts being inmates) then shall prove
This, or a love increased there above,
When bodies to their graves, soules from their graves remove.

The poet is talking about a love of body for body and soul for soul. This is not the Neo-Platonic "either-or", nor a spurious and "poetic" elevation of a distant mistress. It is a statement of assurance that, one manifestation of their love past, another will take its place without destroying the essence of the former. Time has lost its meaning for these lovers. It no longer threatens them with its sickle, nor on this plane can it bring any change except growth and increase, not dissolution, after death.

And then wee shall be throughly blest,
But wee no more, then all the rest.
Here upon earth, we'are Kings, and none but wee
Can be such Kings, nor of such subjects bee;
Who is so safe as wee? where none can doe
Treason to us, except one of us two.
True and false feares let us refraine,
Let us love nobly, 'and live, and adde againe
Yeares and yeares unto yeares, till we attaine
To write threescore: this is the second of our raigne.

Something else is happening to the lovers, a process hinted at in A Nocturnall and expanded in A Valediction: forbidding Mourning. The lovers are becoming priests of a new religion, a religion of love, one that has its culminating experience in The Extasie and its formalization in The Canonization.

Although the lovers in A Valediction: forbidding Mourning are parting, as they have in earlier Valedictions, here there is no fear of inconstancy, no admonition, no "teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests". The very

first stanza, although using the simile of a death-bed, actually points toward life:

> As virtuous men passe mildly'away
> And whisper to their soules, to goe,
> Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
> The breath goes now, and some say, no:

It is in this silence that the lovers part, for

> 'Twere prophanation of our joyes
> To tell the layetie our love.

"Sublunary lovers" suffer and change when their bodies are separated, for they have only passion to rely on.

> But we by'a love, so much refin'd,
> That our selves know not what it is,
> Inter-assured of the mind,
> Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.[21]

"Virtuous men" die with hopes of heaven and resurrection; so the lovers part with the assurance that their love will continue. This separation is without danger just as the motion of the stars is "innocent" or harmless. Here one can also associate the charms involved with stars and the safety that good constellations assured. Too, stars were part of unchangeable firmament. They connect the lovers with a heavenly - i.e., immutable - love.

> Our two soules therefore, which are one,
> Though I must goe, endure not yet
> A breach, but an expansion,
> Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.
>
> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiffe twin compasses are two,
> Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
> To move, but doth, if the'other doe.
>
> And though it in the center sit,
> Yet when the other far doth rome,
> It leanes, and hearkens after it,
> And growes erect, as it comes home.
>
> Such wilt thou be to mee, who must
> Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;
> Thy firmnes makes my circle just,
> And makes me end, where I begunne.

Donne here is working with the paradox of two souls that are one, one unit that is really two. Gold, the most stable, pure, and supreme metal is a perfect comparison for the single soul stretched between the separated lovers. The souls are two, but both parts of one compass; and together they draw the circle of immutability. Such a love as this depicts is related, both imagistically and conceptually, to the concentric circles of Loves Growth and the spheres of The Sunne Rising.

The sphere and circle are also religious symbols of eternity and divine perfection; and the lovers of these final poems effortlessly assume the function of love's priests. In forbidding Mourning they dare not reveal their parting for fear of "prophanation" of their love. In The Extasie they seek to instruct another lover in the mysteries of a love transcending time and space. This poem has received much comment, and since it is one of the poems central to the thesis of this study, I must take some space to discuss what I consider the most acceptable thesis, suggested by Miss Gardner.[22]

Miss Gardner finds the source of this poem's attitude toward love in Leone Ebreo's Philosophy of Love. The problem for most critics arises from the stanzas dealing with the return of the lovers' souls to their bodies. Using Ebreo she demonstrates first, that the love being described is that love, engendered by reason, which begets desire, yet does not decay after satisfaction of that desire.[23] The lovers enjoy a love of this kind; their union is such that each has become the other, and both together, one.[24] The ecstasy described here is the ecstasy which results when the two souls of such perfect lovers are drawn out of their bodies into a communion that, if carried on too long, leads to death.[25] The souls return to their bodies for the immediate reason of continuing to instruct initiates into love's

mystery. The body is not denied, but recourse to it is not for any "immodest proposal", but to continue their instructions in love by example. All this follows Ebreo's independent use of Neo-Platonism. He emphatically rejected the pure contemplation of Ficino and Pico and replaced it with a blending of spiritual and carnal love very similar to the poetic creation of Donne. In expanding upon this theory, Gardner, in a careful explication of the poem, points up its Neo-Platonic and Ebrean elements.[26]

The first twenty-eight lines set the scene; it is spring, the season for lovers. The "modest" violet, important later to the explanation of this "mystery", symbolizes the purity of the union.

Where, like a pillow on a bed,
  A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest
The violets reclining head,
  Sat we two, one anothers best;

Our hands were firmely cimented
  With a fast balme, which thence did spring,
Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred
  Our eyes, upon one double string;

So to'entergraft our hands, as yet
  Was all our meanes to make us one,
And pictures on our eyes to get
  Was all our propogation.

As 'twixt two equal Armies, Fate
  Suspends uncertaine victorie,
Our soules, (which to advance their state,
  Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee.

And whil'st our soules negotiate there,
  Wee like sepulchrall statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
  And wee said nothing all the day.

If any, so by love refin'd
  That he soules language understood,
And by good love were grown all minde,
  Within convenient distance stood,

He (though he knew not which soule spake,
  Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take,
  And part farre purer then he came.

Before the souls go out, only through touch and sight - a corporal and a spiritual sense - do the lovers communicate. Once the souls have gone out, however, their communication is on a totally spiritual plane. Their souls are like armies, not because they are at war, but because, being equal, they are engaged in combining and creating a new union of equals: one which will, like tincture of gold, make the soul of the watcher purer (create "a new concoction").

The conception of souls as a mixture is important to an understanding of the second section.[27]

> This Extasie doth unperplex
> (We said) and tell us what we love,
> Wee see by this, it was not sexe,
> Wee see, we saw not what did move:
>
> But as all severall soules containe
> Mixture of things, they know not what,
> Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
> And makes both one, each this and that.
>
> A single violet transplant,
> The strength, the colour, and the size,
> (All which before was poore, and scant,)
> Redoubles still, and multiplies.
>
> When love, with one another so
> Interinanimates two soules,
> That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
> Defects of lonelinesse controules.
>
> Wee then, who are this new soule, know,
> Of what we are compos'd, and made,
> For, th'Atomies of which we grow,
> Are soules, whom no change can invade.

It was not sexual attraction alone that the two loved. The two mingled souls, now one, have become a new soul which now understands its transcendental love. The illustration of the double violets gives a concrete example of multiplicity in one, recalling the setting on the bank of flowers. This new unity of multiplicities, this new soul, is immutable. No change can affect it, for it has passed beyond the bounds of time and death.

The knowledge this new soul enjoys of itself and its genesis make it invincible. Thus in this poem we find a culmination of Donne's various poetic attitudes toward love in time. This love can so unite two souls that they transcend time and decay. This ecstasy is not solely directed toward spiritual consummation, however. Souls must fulfill the demands of the soul's kingdom, the body. Only in the flesh can the lovers serve as examples to the watching pupil.

> But O alas, so long, so farre
> Our bodies why doe wee forbeare?
> They'are ours, though they'are not wee, Wee are
> Th'intelligences, they the spheare.
>
> We owe them thankes, because they thus,
> Did us, to us, at first convay,
> Yeelded their forces, sense, to us,
> Nor are drosse to us, but allay.
>
> On man heavens influence workes not so,
> But that it first imprints the ayre,
> Soe soule into the soule may flow,
> Though it to body first repaire.
>
> As our blood labours to beget
> Spirits, as like soules as it can,
> Because such fingers need to knit
> That subtile knot, which makes us man:
>
> So must pure lovers soules descend
> T'affections, and to faculties,
> That sense may reach and apprehend,
> Else a great Prince in prison lies.
>
> To'our bodies turne wee then, that so
> Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
> Loves mysteries in soules do grow,
> But yet the body is his booke.
>
> And if some lover, such as wee,
> Have heard this dialogue of one,
> Let him still marke us, he shall see
> Small change, when we'are to bodies gone.

Now in the system enunciated by Leone Ebreo such an extended ecstasy will lead to death; too long absence of soul from body destroys the body. Therefore the souls must return to their bodies, or dissolve in

death. I think here too great a reliance on Ebreo distorts the poem, for the souls do not return out of mere necessity or fear, but because the natural vehicle of souls' love is the body. The body is to the soul what air is to heavenly influences. Just as angels can take bodies of air so the soul takes the body as its vehicle. By implication, then, the body is the highest physical manifestation of love.[28]

Souls must descend to bodies to make the organs of sense obedient to reason. If the soul does not regulate all the organs of the body, it abandons its kingdom. There is a mutual need between body and soul: the body conveys the first knowledge of the beloved to the soul, and the soul therefore must repay the body with satisfaction of a refined desire. The bond of the souls is not broken when they return to their bodies, but strengthened. In the flesh the two lovers can continue to instruct other initiates into love's mysteries.

Such lovers need only one more thing to complete their triumph over time and decay. They themselves must become patterns for later lovers. In The Canonization they become eternal patterns for others to emulate, thus achieving immortality.

The tone of The Exstasie is one of argument and intellection. In The Canonization the poet shifts to a more colloquial tone, no less rigorous in its statement, but much more immediate. Indeed at first the reader is unsure of just how such a canonization will come about when the speaker begins,

> For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love,
> Or chide my palsie, or my gout,
> My five gray haires, or ruin'd fortune flout,
> With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve,
> Take you a course, get you a place,
> Observe his honour, or his grace,

And the Kings reall, or his stamped face
  Contemplate; what you will, approve,
    So you will let me love.

The world of daily affairs is dismissed in this and the second stanza. The speaker laughingly disclaims any connection between his love and the precious world of Petrarchan lovers.

Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?
  What merchants ships have my sighs drown'd?
Who saies my teares have overflow'd his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
  When did the heats which my veines fill
  Adde one man to the plaguie Bill?
Soldiers finde warres, and Lawyers finde out still
  Litigious men, which quarrels move,
    Though she and I do love.

In the third stanza the transition from earthly kingdoms, concerns, diseases, and deaths is effected. The tension of the poem becomes that between the world of conventional lovers and kingdoms and the world of the speaker and his mistress.[29]

Call us what you will, wee'are made such by love;
  Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us finde the'eagle and the Dove;
  The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
  By us, we two being one, are it,
So, to one neutrall thing both sexes fit.
  Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
    Mysterious by this love.

All elements of earthly love are epitomized by these lovers, who in turn transcend mere earthly love: the passion of the fly (or the self-destructive love of the moth for the candle); the equally self-consuming self-love of the candle; the strength of the eagle; the gentleness and constancy of the dove. The Phoenix best represents their union. This bird, consumed by its own fire every thousand years, was the supreme example of resurrection, rising from its own ashes to live another thousand years. Thus the Phoenix was an emblem of Christ's resurrection - or a symbol of the rejuve-

nating powers of such a love as makes these two "saints" of love. Like the Phoenix, the lovers die and rise again with every act of love. By their renunciation of the world they become saints as well as martyrs. And so they become "mysterious" - that is, "holy" - the word connoting both the mysteries of religious experience and the equally mysterious ecstasy of love. The two go voluntarily, gladly, to each death, rising again to live by dying.

> Wee can dye by it, if not live by love,
> And if unfit for tombes or hearse
> Our legend bee, it will be fit for verse;
> And if no peece of Chronicle wee prove,
> We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes;
> As well a well-wrought urne becomes
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombes,
> And by these hymnes, all shall approve
> Us Canoniz'd for Love.
>
> And thus invoke us; You whom reverend love
> Made one anothers hermitage;
> You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
> Who did the whole worlds soule extract, and drove
> Into the glasses of your eyes,
> So made such mirrors, and such spies,
> That they did all to you epitomize,
> Countries, Townes, Courts: Beg from above
> A patterne of your love!

The "well wrought urne" which becomes the reliquary for these saints' ashes is the poem itself. Through the mysterious process of poetic creation, the lovers have become saints, eternal symbols of the transcendent power of love. Their ability to overcome the bounds of time and death - both physical and metaphorical - is expressed by the poem itself. First, they escape decay and death by becoming symbols to later generations of lovers who look to their love as an ideal, a perfect - and therefore unchangeable - union. Second, the poem itself is a bulwark against time and mutability, for the "pretty roomes" will preserve their memory.

Thus the process of canonization begins. The fourth stanza develops a series of references to saints. Their "legende", written into

"hymnes" (or sonnets, a lighter form of verse), may not be history ("Chronicles") but it will serve to immortalize these saints of love. The lovers, having renounced the world but not the flesh, move from the world of time - from which they have distilled the essential - into eternity. In a more decadent world (where love has become "rage" - i.e., mere lust) lovers will ask these saints to intercede for them, begging for a pattern of this mysterious experience of love, sacred at the same time as it is carnal: the word made flesh.

From the cynical light lyric like Woman's Constancy to such a poem as The Exstasie is a long way; yet the range of experience Donne examines and questions has, I think, certain basic motivational questions underneath it: "How can we know love?" "How can love survive in time?" "Is love strong enough to overcome the grave?" In answering these questions affirmatively, Donne makes love the ultimate weapon within the sphere of this world. It remains to be seen how he deals with man's love for God, the other subject of his poetry. Before dealing with the divine poems, however, I would like to examine briefly what may seem to be a contradiction of all the Songs and Sonets say about love. The world's inevitable decay and the baseness of flesh form a ground-base to the long poems of Donne's middle career, The Anniversaries.

PART II: THE ANNIVERSARIES

The Decay of the World

Enough has been written on The Anniversaries to disqualify Jonson's remark that "Dones Anniversaries were profane and full of Blasphemies. That he told Mr. Done, if it had been written of ye Virgin Mary it had been something. . ."

Most critics now concentrate on justifying Donne's reported response to such accusations - "that he described the Idea of a woman and not as she was." In one of his letters Donne himself defended his alleged effulgency:

> I hear from England of many censures of my book of Mistress Drury; if any of those censures do but pardon me my descent in printing anything in verse (which if they do they are more charitable than myself. . .), I doubt not but they will soon give over that other part of that indictment, which is that I have said so much; for nobody can imagine that I who never saw her, could have any other purpose in that, than that when I had received so very good testimony of her worthiness, and was gone down to print verses, it became me to say, not what I was sure was just truth, but the best that I could conceive; for that had been a new weakness in me, to have praised anybody in printed verses, that had not been capable of the best praise that I could give.[30]

Unfortunately these two statements contradict each other. Although readers now tend to take the reported, rather than the expressed, intention, the exact nature of that "Idea" of woman remains a problem. Most important for this study, however, is the point of view expressed in The Anniversaries towards decay, time, and death. But, rather than beginning with a discussion of this "Idea" of woman, it seems more relevant to this study to seek answers in terms of Donne's attitudes here to death and the world's decay. I then hope to relate these attitudes to the woman - or women - who are the focus of the poems.

In the First Anniversarie it is the "occasion of the untimely death

of Mistress Elizabeth Drury" that is the inspiration for a meditative poem on "the frailty and the decay of this whole world". In a series of meditations[31] Donne describes the world first made subject to death and decay by the sins of the angels and man (an orthodox Christian doctrine), and man's futile attempts to raise himself above the decay and death that surround and infect him. The poem is relentlessly pessimistic. A young girl has died, and her death illustrates the mortality of this world and its corruption.

> Sicke World, yea dead, yea putrified, since shee
> Thy'intrinsique Balme, and thy preseruatiue,
> Can neuer be renew'd, thou neuer liue,
> I (since no man can make thee liue) will trie,
> What wee may gaine by thy Anatomy.
> Her death hath taught vs dearely, that thou art
> Corrupt and mortall in thy purest part.[32]
> (56-62)

Man is himself helpless in the face of death and decay:

> Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
> Thou knowest how poore a trifling thing man is.
> (183-184)

This death and decay grow greater as time progresses. Every man does what is right in his own eyes.

> 'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerance gone;
> All iust supply, and all Relation:
> Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
> For euery man alone thinkes he hath got
> To be a Phoenix, and that there can bee
> None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.
> (213-218)

The pillars of reward and punishment have slipped, leaving disorder in the macrocosm.

> The worlds proportion disfigured is;
> That those two legges whereon it doth rely,
> Reward and punishment are bent awrie.
> And, Oh, it can no more be questioned,
> That beauties best, proportion, is dead,
> Since euen griefe it selfe, which now alone
> Is left vs, is without proportion.
> (302-308)

For man, subject as he is to this disorder and swift decay, there is only one solution - turn away from the world (and the body, with its built-in corruption) or become completely de-humanized.

> And that except thou feed (not banquet) on
> The supernaturall food, Religion,
> Thy better Grouth growes withered, and scant;
> Be more then man, or thou'rt lesse then an Ant.
> (187-190)

The Soul's Salvation

In the Second Anniversarie Donne outlines the steps for an ascent away from this world of decay, again relying on Elizabeth Drury's death to give an example of the possibilities for such a "Progresse of the Soule".[33]

The theme of the poem's first section is the conventional one of contemptus mundi. The renunciation of the First Anniversarie is linked to the exultation of the Second.[34]

> These Hymns thy issue, may encrease so long,
> As till Gods great Venite change the song.
> Thirst for that time, O my insatiate soule,
> And serue thy thirst, with Gods safe-sealing Bowle.
> Bee thirsty still, and drinke still till thou goe;
> T'is th'onely Health, to be Hydroptique so.
> Forget this rotten world. . . .
> (43-49)

Donne's long and detailed description of the death-bed scene, a favorite theme of the period, emphasizes the state of the soul imprisoned in this mortal body:

> Thinke but how poore thou wast, how obnoxious,
> Whom a small lump of flesh could poison thus.
> This curded milke, this poore vnlittered whelpe
> My body, could, beyond escape, or helpe,
> Infect thee with originall sinne, and thou
> Couldst neither then refuse, nor leaue it now.
> Thinke that no stubborne sullen Anchorit,
> Which fixt to a Pillar, or a Graue, doth sit
> Bedded and Bath'd in all his Ordures, dwels
> So fowly as our soules, in their first-built Cels.[35]
> (163-172)

Once released, however, the soul flies straight to God.

> This to thy Soule allow,
> Thinke thy sheell broke, thinke thy Soule hatch'd but now.
> And thinke this slow-pac'd soule, which late did cleaue,
> To'a body, and went but by the bodies leaue,
> Twenty, perchance, or thirty mile a day,
> Dispatches in a minute all the way,
> Twixt Heauen, and Earth;
>
> (183-189)

The final sections of the poem deal with a vision of heavenly joys such as only a mystic revelation might bring.

> ...But vp vnto the watch-towre get,
> And see all things dispoyld of fallacies:
> Thou shalt not peepe through lattices of eies,
> Nor heare through Laberinths of eares, nor learne
> By circuit, or collections to discerne.
> In Heauen thou straight know'st all, concerning it,
> And what concernes it not, shall straight forget.
>
> (294-300)

The necessary grace for such salvation comes from contemplation of the "shee" who inspired the poem. In the final lines there is an ambiguity about the role of this "shee". Some feel that Donne is attempting to canonize Elizabeth Drury by association with those saints of France, "where mis-devotion frames/A thousand Prayers to Saints..." I think the poem stops short of anything so specific, leaving "shee" her multiple and indefinite role as an "occasion":

> Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame
> The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came.
>
> (527-528)

The two poems present a dual vision, a vision that totally separates body from soul, earth from heaven, the mutable from the eternal. Corruption and death are the essence of the former, perfection and eternal bliss of the latter. One is tempted to make a facile connection between Donne and Spenser here, since both use the beauty of a woman (or Woman) as a spring-board for poetry about the transcendental. Both affirm traditional Christian doctrine.

Yet the surface connections break down on closer examination. The approaches of the two authors toward the problem of change are at different poles, and the Anniversaries clearly illustrate this. For Spenser change was the root of decay - the symbol of this world's decay, and the instrument of man's death. But Donne is not ready to give up his world of change for any future vision. Indeed, the Anniversaries can be viewed in the same light as Shakespeare's sonnets on "immortality through verse", not only for Elizabeth Drury, but for John Donne, the "trumpet" of Elizabeth's holy living and dying. The future world of bliss does not supersede this world of decay, as it does in Spenser. The poet does not allow this kind of vision, by the very nature of his poem. Donne, the moralist and preacher, declaimed the decay of the world. But at the same time Donne the poet affirmed man's triumph over death and mutability through the poetry itself, in his display of learning and intricate comparisons no less than in his religious fervor. The essentially ceremonial nature of The Anniversaries is apparent when compared with Donne's religious verse, in which a real struggle emerges between the mind and the soul. In the Holy Sonnets there is real division between the two. In the Anniversaries the poetry, the learning is preeminent.

The symbol of goodness, perfection, and eternity is ostensibly Elizabeth Drury. It has often been pointed out that one dead girl could not believably represent so much. How could a specific person represent the immutable and eternal, and be an inspiration to man's soul, his immutable and eternal part? Extending the "shee" to include other specific women does not seem to me to be the answer.[36]

Professor Manley has attempted to show that the symbol of the girl in these poems represents not one, or even several specific persons, but the intuitive feminine intelligence of the heart:

> [This wisdom] forms the essential structure of each poem - the alternation of contempt for the world (meditation) and praise of virtue (eulogy) --as well as the total structure of both poems taken together as a unit. In the first Donne realizes imagistically, through the death of a girl...., the grace and the indwelling wisdom of God, sapientia creata, that was lost in the fall; and the entire movement is downward to decay. In the second, however, he has found his direction; through the realization of his soul's loss he has regained the wisdom that orients him toward God, and the entire poem surges upward toward eternal life. It is as a concrete image of that Wisdom, its direct emotional apprehension, that the mysterious figure of woman at the center of the poem is best understood. She is in herself the object and the wit: the realization as well as the means to realize it, for the only way to understand the Anniversaries is intuitively, through symbolic understanding.[37]

This symbol is a combination of all Virtue, Grace, Goodness, and Wisdom. In the Renaissance assimilation of pagan survivals into a Christian framework, perhaps she can even be a manifestation of some aspects of the Trinity.[38] Elizabeth Drury, then, has ceased to exist. In her place, according to this theory, we should read Sapience, the indwelling wisdom that is the representative of God's grace. The poems then become a strange kind of allegory. Again, then, parallels with Spenser come to mind.

Once more, I would say the differences overshadow the similarities. Even if we accept Manley's theory, that Donne was reaching out to allegory, his vision is blurred if not lost altogether in the copious displays of cleverness which comprise the two poems. In contrast, Spenser's Hymnes are clear and direct in their delineation of the sacred and the secular. His final affirmation of the transcendental as superior and necessary is never obscured. The poetry is directed towards this affirmation. Donne never quite gets there until much of his poem is finished. In

lingering to describe the death scene in such detail, his ascent of the soul is retarded and anti-climactic. But even more important, I think, is the concreteness of Donne's poetry which precludes (in my mind, anyway) the possibility of symbolism, if not allegory, in the Anniversaries. True, as in the Canonization, Donne may give a situation pregnant with many other connotations. But the situation in the Anniversaries is not a cover for presentation of a vision. It is the occasion for a learned display. The presentation of orthodox doctrine - the fall, Adam's sin, the immortality of the soul and the vileness of the body - leads to no philosophical statement. The death of Elizabeth leads to a poem, not a vision.

In Donne's love poetry, is this the end of love, to leave the flesh and the world behind? In the Songs and Sonets I find no trace of such an attitude. In the discussion of The Exstasie, as well as in The Canonization, the union of souls and their elevation is complementary to, indeed an integral part of, a sensual experience. In The Anniversarie lovers may be separated in death (each man must die alone), but only for an instant. They are united, by an increased love, in heaven. While on earth, their love will continue to grow. Such a love, increasing and involving all facets of experience, is the topic of The Exstasie. I have already discussed the hybrid Neo-Platonism of this poem which unites the spiritual and sensual into one experience of love. Finally, such lovers are invoked in the Canonization as examples of those "whom reverend love/ Made one anothers hermitage". These lover-saints renounce no facet of earthly love; they fulfill all its commandments, made "mysterious by this love".

It is true that the world remains, throughout the love lyrics, a place of mutability and physical death. But there is no feeling that

because of this, all earthly joys are products of "this rotten world". The world changes, decays; knowledge is impartial - but the experience of love is constant and sacred.

Such a consistent attempt to break down the age-old dichotomy between spiritual and sensual love, such a constant elevation of love over time and change as the final lyrics describe, is incompatible with the attitudes expressed in the Anniversaries. "Shee" is elevated at the expense of all earthly joys; nor is "shee" the means whereby a romantic love of a woman leads to the admiration of God. There is no possibility that the poem refers to sensual love elevated to a higher love of souls, or even any attempt to follow the Neo-Platonic "ladder of love". "Shee" is not a woman of flesh and blood, but a tissue of symbols and association. There is no continuity between this kind of woman and the woman who inspired the poet to write "Here the admyring her my mind did whett/To seeke thee God; so streames do shew the head". In this Holy Sonnet dedicated to his dead wife Donne is speaking of two loves, the love of woman and the love of God, which are separate facets of a common, central experience of love. In the Holy Sonnets and his other poems of religious experience[39] which are the next part of this study, I hope to show that, both imagistically and conceptually the "profane" lyrics and sacred poems are organically related; and that the Anniversaries stand outside the mainstream of Donne's poetry.[40] In his lyric poems, both sacred and secular, Donne asserts that love, rather than self-denial and mystery, was the power that could overcome time and death.

PART III: THE DIVINE POEMS

Donne's Hope of Heaven

The utter simplicity of the ideas behind the religious poetry of John Donne may account in part for their relative neglect. They are rarely discussed at such length as his Songs and Sonets. With the exception of several sonnets - such as the complex 10 (XIV) of the Holy Sonnets - most are treated as an afterthought to Donne's oeuvre.

But the divine poems follow, I believe, a pattern consistent with Donne's secular verse. Just as in the Songs and Sonets Donne explores the ramifications of love between man and woman, so in the sacred poems he explores the love between man and his God. He does this within the very traditional framework of the standard Protestant Christian faith: God's Son died for the sins of mankind; now mankind must seek through faith and love to win the grace offered him by the Atonement. The simplicity of these ideas is complemented by the lessening of the poems' complexity. But Donne's old frame of mind is still evident. He questions, chops, changes, is passionate and despairing, contemplative and witty, seeking to explore and develop paradox within the mystery of Christian theology.

As he avoided following one abstract philosophy of love in his love poems, so he avoids 'systems' of theology or philosophy in his divine poems. Rather than restricting himself to strict Neo-Platonism in The Exstasie, he used some of its ramifications to write his own philosophy of love. In his divine poems, though his theology is traditional, it is a highly personalized search for God that occupies the poet's mind and heart.

In this section I hope to show that Donne moves away from the extreme position of The Anniversaries - "the poyson's gone through all" -

and returns to one complementary to that of the Songs and Sonets: that is, an experience of love for God developing in time; an acceptance of the necessary mutability of human love directed towards God; and an acceptance of death, by which Donne looks beyond the grave to the final resurrection.

Both Helen Gardner[41] and Louis Martz[42] have studied the meditative structure underlying many of the individual Divine Poems. In a major contribution to Donnian scholarship Miss Gardner, from a careful re-examination of the original manuscripts, has discovered that Grierson's original "random ordering" of the sonnets obscured a sequence, or rather two related sequences, based on the patterns of meditation.[43] Douglas Peterson attempts to find in twelve of the sixteen sonnets an over-riding pattern, reading them as an Anglican form of meditation. For him they represent an exercise directed toward achieving perfect contrition.[44]

According to Anglican doctrine "perfect contrition" is achieved by the penitent only after three stages have been passed and he is ready to receive the grace necessary for salvation. The seeker must transcend that repentance motivated merely by fear of judgment and hell and move to a valid sorrow motivated by hatred for sin and appreciation of the grief his sins have caused God. The hatred must be generated by a realization of God's love for man and the miracle this love engendered - the sacrifice of Christ. Only when the penitent can love God "because he first loved us" can he receive grace. Since there is no priestly mediator, however, man's knowledge that he has achieved salvation comes only through personal intuition. The penitent spirit constantly straddles complacency and despair in his search for salvation.

As before the dramatic relationship between a man and a woman was the central concern of the poet, now the relationship between a man and his

God is the center of all the poems. The state of his soul totally absorbs the speaker, with the same concrete, immediate force as did the state of his love for a woman. As before he was conscious of the body's rightful demands, now he becomes aware of the complementary demands of the spirit.

Whether or not Donne wrote six - or twelve - of his Holy Sonnets as a sequence or sequences is a question that cannot be fully answered. Not enough evidence is available to us. I would like to steer a middle course between those, like Grierson, who have read the sonnets as "separate ejaculations", and those, like Gardner and Peterson, who have read them as organized sequences. Using Gardner's ordering of the poems makes this much clear: the poems do represent a progressive exploration of the soul's search for, and understanding of, the relationship between a man and his God. This is how I would like to view them, stressing again the themes of time, mutability, and death as they are represented in the divine poems.

God's Love for Man

In the first sonnet the poet presents the theme which motivates the entire body of poems: how man, in his natural inconstancy of spirit, can remain faithful to his love of God. Usurpation of the soul by Satan has aroused fear of despair, the most hideous of all sins. Only through meditation on the love of God can the spectre of eternal death be banished.

As due by many titles I resigne
My selfe to thee, O God, first I was made
By thee, and for thee, and when I was decay'd
Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine,
I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine,
Thy servant, whose paines thou hast still repaid,
Thy sheepe, thine Image, and till I betray'd
My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine;
Why doth the devill then usurpe in mee?
Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?
Except thou rise and for thine owne worke fight,
Oh I shall soone despaire, when I doe see
That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt'not chuse me,
And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose mee.
(II)

The speaker assumes several dramatic personae in his conversational prayer. First he is Adam, made "By thee, and for thee", and "decay'd" by his sin of disobedience. This sin of Adam is redeemed by the death of Christ, God's Son. The speaker then plays on this association between the first, divine Son and the speaker himself, as a child of God. As God's son, he carries within him a spark of divinity. He is also the servant of God (as Christ was the Suffering Servant) paradoxically bought by the enslavement in the flesh of his Master. He is the lost sheep, gathered by a tender shepherd in whose image he was made. His body is still the temple of the Holy Spirit, corruptible and subject to death, but not in its essence sinful. Despair has gripped this soul, however. Only a response from his Master and Maker can save him.

Sonnets (2), (3), and (4) are repeated requests for the necessary grace that will allow the searching soul to escape despair and find its way to God. True to Donne's style of dramatic invention, each encounter of the soul with despair is a separate situation. Each deals, in Gardner's terms, with "the last things" of a man's life - sickness, approaching death, the final judgment. In these poems death has a double intensity. Not only is the body dying - a fact Donne accepts as inevitable - but the soul is in danger of death as well. Each sonnet contains in its sestet a plea for grace.

In (2) the soul is a treacherous wanderer, not able to return to its home in heaven until its treachery is atoned for.

> Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
> By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;
> Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
> Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,
> Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,
> Wisheth himselfe delivered from prison;
> But damn'd and hal'd to execution,
> Wisheth that still he might be imprisoned;

The soul which has longed to be free of the flesh, unless it has achieved grace, will confront its judgment more fearfully than it faced life in the flesh. In a kind of holy alchemy, the repentant soul can be purged only by the elixir of Christ's blood:

> Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke;
> But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?
> Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,
> And red with blushing, as thou art with sinne;
> Or wash thee in Christs blood, which hath this might
> That being red, it dyes red soules to white.
> (IV)

Donne imagines his own death in Sonnet 3 (VI)[45] :

> This is my playes last scene, here heavens appoint
> My pilgrimages last mile; and my race
> Idly, yet quickly runne, hath this last pace,
> My spans last inch, my minutes last point,
> And gluttonous death, will instantly unjoynt
> My body, and soule, and I shall sleepe a space,
> But my'ever-waking part shall see that face,
> Whose feare already shakes my every joynt:

It is important to note that in this sonnet the body is not identified with the sins, but rather with the earth from which it is made and to which it returns:

> Then, as my soule, to'heaven her first seate, takes flight,
> And earth-borne body, in the earth shall dwell,
> So, fall my sinnes, that all may have their right,
> To where they'are bred, and would presse me, to hell.
> Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evill,
> For thus I leave the world, the flesh, and devill.
> (VI)

Then the speaker pictures the judgment on that last day when time and death cease:

> At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
> Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
> From death, you numberlesse infinities
> Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
> All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
> All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
> Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes
> Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe.
> (4)(VII)

Donne, far from deprecating the role of the body at the resurrection, gave it an important place in his picture of that timeless eternity:

> In the generall resurrection upon naturall death, God shall work upon this dispersion of our scattered dust, as in the first fall, which is the Divorce, by way of Re-union, and in the second, which is Putrifaction, by way of Re-efformation; so in this third, which is Dispersion, by way of Re-collection; where mans buried flesh hath brought forth grasse, and that grasse fed beasts, and those beasts fed men, and those men fed other men, God that knowes in which Boxe of his Cabinet all this seed Pearle lies, in what corner of the world every atome, every graine of every mans dust sleeps, shall re-collect that dust, and then re-compact that body, and then re-animate that man, and that is the accomplishment of all.
> (LXXX. Sermons (21), 1640)[46]

In the sestet of Sonnet (4) the speaker turns away from the drama of the resurrection to reflect: "But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space". He is asking to be led to repent. Once he has been taught how to repent, the blood of the Atonement will cover his sins and assure his body and soul eternal life.

Holy Sonnet 5 (IX) arouses, in order to quench, the temptation to doubt; here man's reason and will, heavenly gifts now sadly misused, must be disciplined. The speaker resigns himself to the mystery of God's plan. "Why," asks the penitent, "should my foreknowledge of evil or my supremacy over the animals (the result of man's unique faculty of reason) make <u>me</u> culpable?" The very thing man <u>is</u>, seems to damn him.

But at the acme of rebellion and doubt the speaker falls back:

> But who am I, that dare dispute with thee?
> O God, Oh! of thine onely worthy blood,
> And my teares, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
> And drowne in it my sinnes blacke memorie.
> That thou remember them, some claime as debt,
> I thinke it mercy, if thou wilt forget.
> (IX)

According to Gardner, Sonnet 6 (X) marks a victorious conclusion to the meditation on the Last Things; for Peterson it merely closes the first phase of the meditation, signifying the penitent's victory over fear of death.

> Death be not proud, though some have called thee
> Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not soe,
> For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
> Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee;
> From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
> Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
> And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
> Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
> Thou art slave to Fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
> And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,
> And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
> And better then thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
> One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
> And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die.
> (X) [47]

The likening of sleep to death was a commonplace of the times. Yet here the conceit is freshened by the implications it has for the speaker's attitude toward death. Death does not wholly separate this life from the life to come, but merely intervenes for a short space. Life will resume, the soul will be reunited with the body, and both will continue forever, while Death and its cohorts (disease, poison, war) will be vanquished.

This sonnet epitomizes Donne's religious response to death. Like those of his love poems which treated death as merely one more obstacle to the lovers' constant love, this sonnet treats it as an obstacle the soul must endure. A short sleep, after all, is all that keeps body and soul from an eternal waking, and the eternal love of the soul for its God.

If death, physical death, has been put in its proper perspective, there is still life to consider. The repentant speaker must still recall God's love and respond to it. Sonnet 7 (XI) recalls the supreme sacrifice, the crucifixion, with a vivid recapitulation of the passion of Christ

reenacted vicariously by the speaker himself:

> Spit in my face yee Jewes, and pierce my side,
> Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,
> For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hee,
> Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed:
> But by my death can not be satisfied
> My sinnes, which passe the Jewes impiety:
> They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
> Crucifie him daily, being now glorified.

Again, however, the flesh is not mortified, because it is evil. Man is "vile" because of his sin; his "flesh" merely makes him weak and vulnerable to time, death and change.

> Oh let me then, his strange love still admire:
> Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.
> And Jacob came cloth'd in vile harsh attire
> But to supplant, and with gainfull intent:
> God cloth'd himselfe in vile man's flesh, that so
> He might be weake enough to suffer woe.
> (XI)

If flesh itself were defiling, God could not have come in the person of Christ. Flesh did not make God "vile". Rather it offered him the vehicle through which a man may understand this supreme love. If love of a woman comes through the senses, so must love of God. If pleasure is one means to understanding, the suffering of one body for all is another - equally valid. Sonnet 8 (XII) illustrates how necessary was the Incarnation for man. Man is working from a position of supremacy. Although his body, since compounded of the four elements, is less pure than they, more subject to decay, still this mutable, corruptible flesh and its equally wavering soul have called forth the ultimate sacrifice.

> But wonder at a greater wonder, for to us
> Created nature doth these things subdue,
> But their Creator, whom sin, nor nature tyed,
> For us, his Creatures, and his foes, hath dyed.
> (XII)

Man's Love for God

The last three sonnets of this group, a trilogy on the Trinity and its place in man's salvation, answer the question "Wilt thou love God as he thee?" As the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, so the soul of man is the kingdom of God. Yet this soul is held prisoner by the usurper, Satan:

> Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
> As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
> That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend
> Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
> I, like a usurpt towne, to'another due,
> Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
> Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
> But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue,
> Yet dearely'I love you, and would be lov'd faine,
> But am betroth'd unto your enemie,
> Divorce mee,'untie, or breake that knot againe,
> Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
> Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.
>
> (10)(XIV)

Extended and involved explications have amply demonstrated the force and interaction of the verbs, and the roles the members of the Trinity play in each instance.[48] One example of this interaction should suffice. "Shine" involves the Creator-Father as the maker of light, the Son as the light of the world, the Holy Spirit as the soul's guide, bringer of the light of grace and inspiration. Such is the passionate nature of this triune God, however, that his love can be compared to the sensual love of man and woman. God must ravish the soul away; reason will fail to liberate this "usurpt town", for it is captive to the devil. Only a love transcending the bounds of reason can achieve the liberation. Only the sublime grace of God will break down the walls.

To do all this God "Hath deigned to choose thee, by adoption/ Coheir to His glory and sabbaths endless rest."[49] For man to escape time

and reach that "endless rest" of an eternity with God,

> The Sonne of glory came downe, and was slaine,
> Us whom he'had made, and Satan stolne, to unbinde.
> 'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
> But, that God should be made like man, much more.
> (XV) [50]

Having understood what it means to love God, the soul looks to the commandment which it must follow. Perhaps it is the most Donnian touch of all that an explicit statement of the process should be cast in the form of a legal quid-pro-quo:

> Father, part of his double interest
> Unto thy kingdome, thy Sonne gives to mee,
> His joynture in the knottie Trinitie,
> Hee keepes, and gives mee his deaths conquest.
> This Lambe, whose death, with life the world hath blest,
> Was from the worlds beginning slaine, and he
> Hath made two Wills, which with the Legacie
> Of his and thy kingdome, doe thy Sonnes invest[.]
> (XVI)

Man's inheritance from Christ's estate is eternal life. Here and now man cannot understand all the mystery, nor can he be a part of that "knottie Trinitie": knotty because it is inextricably tied, difficult, and part of the "jointure" of the three-in-one. This new will is the new covenant Christ has inaugurated. The speaker is ready to enter it. He has reached the point of understanding. His reason and will are directed to affirming the final law of love:

> Thy law's abridgment and Thy last Command
> Is all but love; oh let that last will stand![51]

Looking back at this group of sonnets with their emphasis on man's search for love of God in time, it is hard to subscribe to the commonplace that Donne's predominant concern in his religious poetry is despair, or the enunciation and purgation of the soul's fear and trembling. Death is horrible. But it is also a blessing, for it unites the soul with God. Only the fear

that love may fail and despair take its place threatens the soul.

It is true that in other sonnets Donne expresses unrelieved anxiety which seems alleviated only by the grace of God:

> Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?
> Repaire me now, for now mine end doth haste,
> I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,
> And all my pleasures are like yesterday,
> I dare not move my dimme eyes any way,
> Despaire behind, and death before doth cast
> Such terrour, and my feebled flesh doth waste
> By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh;
> Onely thou art above, and when towards thee
> By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
> But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
> That not one houre I can my selfe sustaine;
> Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art
> And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.
>
> Holy Sonnets, 1635 (I)

But this is no more the essence of his religious experience, than his "witty" poems on love's inconstancy are the ultimate expression of his attitude towards the experience of love. Much more characteristic is the expression of a religious experience in terms of sensual love. The emphasis is on the soul's inconstancy in religious devotion. The speaker struggles to reach an immutable love - one that will assure the soul of eternal life. Donne describes the soul's mutable love of God as he did the varieties of love of women:

> Oh, to vex me, contraryes meete in one:
> Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
> A constant habit; that when I would not
> I change in vowes, and in devotione.
> As humorous is my contritione
> As my prophane love, and as soone forgott:
> As ridlingly distemperd, cold and hott,
> As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
> I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day
> In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:
> To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.
> So my devout fitts come and go away
> Like a fantastique Ague: save that here
> Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.
>
> (XIX) Westmoreland 3

These "devout fitts" are in the nature of man's love for God. The finite, death-directed part of man will never achieve full constancy. The important thing is the struggle to reconcile the eternal and mortal parts of man.

Elsewhere Donne uses the microcosm-macrocosm analogy first to elevate the creature, then to mourn its degradation.

> I am a little world made cunningly
> Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,
> But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night
> My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.
> 1635, 2 (V)

New seas of tears, fires of passion and sighs of air must come to bring this lover to his Beloved.

> O might those sighes and teares returne againe
> Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
> That I might with this holy discontent
> Mourne with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine;
> In my Idolatry what showres of raine
> Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart did rent?
> 1635, 3 (III)

But, as tear-floods and sigh-tempests were not the ultimate solution for Donne's lovers, so mere grief is not the way to God. Indeed it becomes a further stumbling-block.

> . . . To (poore) me is allow'd
> No ease; for, long, yet vehement griefe hath beene
> Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne.
> 1635, (III)

Too-great contemplation of his sins leads man to the worst sin of all - despair. It is through love that he is saved. Donne complements his view of sensual love - expressed in religious terms - with an expression of love for God in terms of sensual love.

> Since she whome I lovd, hath payd her last debt
> To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
> And her soule early into heaven ravished,
> Wholy in heavenly things my mind is sett.
> Here the admyring her my mind did whett
> To seeke thee God; so streames do shew the head,
> But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,

A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett.
But why should I begg more love, when as thou
Dost wooe my soule, for hers offring all thine:
And dost not only feare least I allow
My love to saints and Angels, things divine,
But in thy tender jealosy dost doubt
Least the World, fleshe, yea Devill putt thee out.
Westmoreland 1 (XVII)

Here Donne is not relying on Neo-Platonism. He speaks out of a real experience of love which, although based on a physical relationship between husband and wife, transcends the finite limits of such a love. God now woos the speaker; God is a "jealous" lover, one who wishes to replace the world, the flesh, and the devil in the speaker's affections. Nor must the speaker here "begg more love". The Atonement has provided ample proof of God's 'wooing' of man's soul.

In his sonnet on the church Donne courts the Bride of Christ as he courted his mistresses, his "amorous soul" seeking the love of the true church as he sought before the constant love of man for woman:

Show me deare Christ, thy spouse, so bright and cleare.
What, is it she, which on the other shore
Goes richly painted? or which rob'd and tore
Laments and mournes in Germany and here?
Sleepes she a thousand, then peepes up one yeare?
Is she selfe truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
Doth she,'and did she, and shall she evermore
On one, on seaven, or on no hill appeare?
Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
First travaile we to seeke and then make love?
Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights,
And let myne amorous soule court thy mild Dove,
Who is most trew, and pleasing to thee, then
When she'is embrac'd and open to most men.
Westmoreland 2 (XVIII)[52]

The questions in this poem reveal the same thirst for knowledge of an unchangeable love that his earlier examinations of profane love reveal. The Song of Songs had long been interpreted as an allegory of Christ's love for His Church, His "Bride". Now the speaker becomes an initiate in love, pleading with this divine Husband to reveal the secrets of love, the identi-

fication and meaning of his elusive Spouse.

Divine Poems: Time and Salvation

The conception of the church as the bride of Christ recurs in Upon the Annunciation and Passion falling upon One Day. 1608. The poem begins with the familiar circle motif to illustrate the contiguous nature of man and God in the Incarnation:

> Tamely fraile body'abstaine to day; to day
> My soule eates twice, Christ hither and away.
> Shee sees him man, so like God made in this,
> That of them both a circle embleme is,
> Whose first and last concurre; this doubtfull day
> Of feast or fast, Christ came, and went away;
> (ll. 1-6)

Like the circle which represented the world of the lovers in The Sunne Rising or the twin compasses of Valediction: forbidding Mourning, both God and man and their mutual love are endless and continual. On this day God celebrates both his birth and death as man. Time contracts. One day represents all of Christ's life on earth in a single moment of time, from conception to the cross.

> All this, and all betweene, this day hath showne,
> Th'Abridgement of Christs story, which makes one
> (As in plaine Maps, the furthest West is East)
> Of the'Angels Ave,'and Consummatum est.
> How well the Church, Gods Court of faculties
> Deales, in some times, and seldome joyning these;
> As by the selfe-fix'd Pole wee never doe
> Direct our course, but the next starre thereto,
> Which showes where the'other is, and which we say
> (Because it strayes not farre) doth never stray;
> So God by his Church, neerest to him, wee know,
> And stand firme, if wee by her motion goe;
> His Spirit, as his fiery Pillar doth
> Leade, and his Church, as cloud; to one end both:
> (ll. 19-32)

Just so, too, man's death and birth are one. His soul is born with him, yet is born again into heaven when he dies. His life's span is so short that birth and death seem but one day apart. His life should be, in

imitation of Christ, both a life of love and duty and a preparation for the death which will re-unite him with God, beyond the worlds of time and change. In fact, as the last lines imply, the motions of time are circular and therefore represent constancy in change.

> This Church, by letting these daies joyne, hath shown
> Death and conception in mankinde is one;
> Or'twas in him the same humility,
> That he would be a man, and leave to be:
> Or as creation he hath made, as God,
> With the last judgement, but one period,
> His imitating Spouse would joyne in one
> Manhoods extremes: He shall come, he is gone:
> (ll. 33-40)

All the time between creation and judgment is joined by the Atonement, for it erases the sins of Adam's children and prepares man for Doomsday. The Church - "his imitating Spouse", the viceroy of God on earth - is the instrument for drawing all these circles. She herself will complete a circle by being re-united with her husband at the end of time. Then, too, will man be re-united with God and the circle of love completed.

In Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward the circle is used again to portray the interdependence of man and God.

> Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
> The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
> And as the other Spheares, by being growne
> Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne,
> And being by others hurried every day,
> Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey:
> Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
> For their first mover, and are whirld by it.
> Hence is't, that I am carryed towards the West
> This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the East.
> (ll. 1-10)

Unlike the lovers who controlled the Sun, making him arrange his sphere to celebrate their love,[53] this man riding westward feels his soul possessed by another "intelligence", that of the prime Mover, God.[54] Such a relationship sets off a chain of recollections of opposites and complementary

occurrences in the passion of Christ. The sun, setting in the west, reminds him of Christ's death in the east; one dying "sun" brings man eternal life. God's death, which the speaker pictures in his mind, brings life - but the sight of God brings death! The sight of God's death brought chaos in nature, and now the speaker fears to see "those hands which span the Poles,/And tune all spheares at once, peirc'd with those holes."

> Though these things, as I ride, be from mine eye,
> They'are present yet unto my memory,
> For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards mee,
> O Saviour, as thou hang'st upon the tree;
> I turne my backe to thee, but to receive
> Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
> O thinke me worth thine anger, punish mee,
> Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
> Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace,
> That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face.
> (ll. 33-42)

Despair is absent here; the speaker is aware of his unworthiness, yet trusts in the mercy and justice of Christ to "burne off" the stains of sin. This will not destroy, but restore, man in the image of God and allow him sight of that constant love of God he seeks.

The Hymns: Immutable Love

In the Hymns Donne is working almost consistently with a note of assurance that God has turned his face toward His disciple. A Hymne to Christ, at the Author's Last Going into Germany, prepares this amorous soul to meet its Beloved. The trip itself becomes an emblem of the soul's journey:

> I sacrifice this Iland unto thee,
> And all whom I lov'd there, and who lov'd mee;
> When I have put our seas twixt them and mee,
> Put thou thy sea betwixt my sinnes and thee.
> As the trees sap doth seeke the root below
> In winter, in my winter now I goe,
> Where none but thee, th'Eternall root
> Of true Love I may know.
> (ll. 9-16)

Love seeks to return to its source. This does not deny the vital and legitimate claims of other loves, which enabled the speaker to first seek God.

> Nor thou nor thy religion dost controule,
> The amorousnesse of an harmonious Soule,
> But thou would'st have that love thy selfe: As thou
> Art jealous, Lord, so I am jealous now,
> Thou lov'st not, till from loving more, thou free
> My soule: Who ever gives, takes libertie:
> O, if thou car'st, not whom I love
> Alas, thou lov'st not mee.
>
> (ll. 17-24)

But the divine Lover now calls this soul to him. Indeed the speaker desires God's jealousy, for without jealousy how can he be sure of love? Those loves which he before cherished he now devotes to God, turning his soul to search for the hidden source of all love:

> Seale then this bill of my Divorce to All,
> On whom those fainter beames of love did fall;
> Marry those loves, which in youth scattered bee
> On Fame, Wit, Hopes (false mistresses) to thee.
> Churches are best for Prayer, that have least light:
> To see God only, I goe out of sight:
> And to scape stormy dayes, I chuse
> An Everlasting night.
>
> (ll. 25-32)

In his religious verse Donne returns again and again to the circular idea of sources and the link between beginning and end. This perfection stands against the changeable, its symmetry against the unsure span of time man must rely on. Preparing his soul for death, he is not sunk in despair but rather interested in preparation for the approach of death:

> Since I am comming to that Holy roome,
> Where with thy Quire of Saints for evermore,
> I shall be made thy Musique; As I come
> I tune the instrument here at the dore,
> And what I must doe then, thinke now before.
>
> (Hymne to God my God, in my Sicknesse, ll. 1-5)

This approach means a fusion of all experience: mainly, the human experience of birth and death Donne spoke of in The Annunciation and Passion:

> I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;
> For, though theire currants yeeld returne to none,
> What shall my West hurt me? As West and East
> In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the Resurrection.
> (ll. 11-15)

These correspondences extend to more geographical similes and their spiritual counterparts. Death and resurrection are the twin poles of a man's spiritual life. The sun sets in the west, a symbol of man's death; but it rises again in the east as his soul and body will rise again. So too the two natures of man, his sinful and his divine image, meet in his last hours:

> We thinke that Paradise and Calvarie,
> Christs Crosse, and Adams tree, stood in one place;
> Looke Lord, and finde both Adams met in me;
> As the first Adams sweat surrounds my face,
> May the last Adams blood my soule embrace.
>
> So, in his purple wrapp'd receive mee Lord,
> By these his thornes give me his other Crowne;
> And as to others soules I preach'd thy word,
> Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne,
> Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down.
> (ll. 21-30)

Indeed death must precede resurrection. Time must be cherished and put away before eternity can be understood.

The Sun as a symbol of life and resurrection appears also in the little hymn Donne had set to music and sung in his church, A Hymne to God the Father. The Son of God, the light of the world, must continue to illuminate the soul, in death as in life. Thus fear and despair are banished, and God's love bridges the gap separating death from life.

> I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
> My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
> Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne
> Shall shine as it shines now, and heretofore;
> And, having done that, Thou hast done,
> I have no more.
> (ll. 13-18)

Donne, therefore, is not writing merely of the despair this life and this dying bring. He is concerned with death, yes - for death is the ultimate, perhaps the only really certain, fact of existence. Love of a woman can overcome it, love of God must precede it, else the soul is lost. The soul's incessant wanderings, its constancy in inconstancy is a basic concern of Donne's verse, no less than the darkness of death. As a man bent on knowing and exploring his own states of mind he is acutely aware of the soul's erratic motions, its predilection for things other than the source of all love. Finally, however, he seems to have reached some equilibrium, some sense of the essential continuity of life and death. Love of God and God's love for man manifested in Christ form in the divine poems a circle impervious to time, unchanged and indeed made urgent by the fact of physical death.

PART IV: CONCLUSION

/Donne's "pre-occupation with death" has been made much of in criticism of his work. Certainly, we have seen that his poetry, both secular and religious, uses death as a touchstone for both imagery, setting, and theme. Whether he is at his "wittiest", comparing lovers' partings to a death, or whether he is preparing his soul for its encounter with God, Donne thinks in terms of how death gives added urgency to the experiences of life. This is perhaps a better way to view his references to death, rather than as some ominous pre-occupation with its grisly details./

/In his religious verse Donne is aware of his need to prepare for death, not only through holy living - he is not so interested in his verse with morality or ethics - but by achieving a constant loving relationship with God. /Aware of man's inconstant nature/, he attempts to overcome the heart's inconstancy in love by examining, exhorting, dramatizing his heart's need for God. God is in the role of beloved - or, at times, as in the Sonnets, the speaker is the sought-after lover pleading with God to woo him. Using a commonplace of Christianity -/death as a gateway to a better life -/ Donne creates a sense of dramatic urgency to his spiritual preparation <u>this</u> side of time.

(Eternity is not really a factor in Donne's religious poetry. This life is time present. Time future is thought of only in terms of the soul's readiness for judgment.) Only in <u>Upon the Annunciation and Passion falling upon One Day. 1608</u> does Donne make use of <u>time</u> as a central metaphor. Here time past and time present are overtly related. The day is a microcosm of the macrocosm of salvation's plan - the Incarnation and the Atonement. This moment in time represents all that Donne's religious poetry strives to

understand and experience. These points in time saved man from being determined by his own sin, saved him from the decay around him, indeed seated within his own finite body.

The eventual death of the body is of concern, naturally, since it means the end of life as is known now. But the immortal part of man preserves continuity between here and there. Yet Donne's sacred verse sets up no dichotomy between decaying flesh and immortal soul. Man's soul is precariously attached to its eternal home. It is inconstant in its affections, both toward God and toward man. It is immortal, not immutable, and its experiences are what Donne portrays in his Holy Sonnets and Hymns.

In the Anniversaries it appears that Donne has drawn a stern line of division between body and soul, making decay and death the sole province of the former, eternal life and bliss that of the latter. But in his own sermons, as well as in his Sonnets, Donne stressed the resurrection of the body as well as its sanctification by Christ. It seems unlikely that the sense of decay and mutability evoked in the Anniversaries was much more than a pose required by the form and theme of the poems. In the main body of his work Donne's informing ideas are not the unrelievedly pessimistic ones of The Anniversaries.

Certainly in his Songs and Sonets Donne ranges over attitudes that are not consistent with a view of this life and body as one of decay. Instead, love between man and woman informs his poetry, elevating the physical to a new plane, transcending time and death. He is urbane, exalting inconstancy and infidelity. He is also realistic, pointing out the finite nature of love and the limit death puts on the time lovers spend together. But his vision extends as well to a love that is unfettered by time and space. He spiritualizes physical enjoyment by making it a necessary

fulfillment of the soul's limitless capacity to experience love.

These themes are carried through to the artifact, the poems themselves. The well-wrought urns of Donne's poetic imagination are a part of his answer to the riddle of lovers' mortality. The lovers of The Canonization have not only their love as an example to later lovers, but as they exist in the poem itself they achieve immortality. Indeed the immortality of the lovers in these "pretty roomes" is more assured than that of the narrator in The Anniversaries, where the speaker is the "trumpet" declaring the way to his audience, and his fame is, he hopes, assured through the verse. But it is rather Donne's lovers, defying the "busie old foole", time's messenger, who epitomize the transcendence of time and mortality, taking their place in the timeless world of art.

NOTES

[1] I have limited discussion to the Songs and Sonets, The Anniversaries, and the Holy Sonnets, Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward, Upon the Annunciation and Passion Falling upon One Day. 1608, and the three hymns: A Hymn to Christ, Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness, and A Hymn to God the Father.

[2] Helen Gardner in her edition of The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) from which all quotations of the Songs and Sonets will be taken, divides the poems thematically a bit differently. On the basis of the relationship between man and woman she distinguishes the following categories: those basically "realistic", including many "cynical" poems, untouched by idealization or by the concept of love as a mystical union - e.g., The Indifferent, The Curse, The Expiration, The Valediction of Weeping; second, poems of unrequited love - e.g., Love's Exchange, Image and Dream, The Blossom ; and finally, poems of mutual love, treating love as union and miracle - e.g., The Good-Morrow, Air and Angels, The Exstasie. As dependent on this last group Miss Gardner also includes poems that reject love as mystery and union - e.g., Love's Alchemy and Negative Love. She loosely styles the second group as "Petrarchan", the last as "philosophic". See her introduction, pp. li-lvii.

[3] Here Donne is extending the Petrarchan hyperbole to its fullest logical conclusion, thereby making the conceit ridiculous.

[4] I am using the word "conceit" as Helen Gardner has defined it: "A conceit is a comparison whose ingenuity is more striking than its justness, or, at least, is more immediately striking. All comparisons discover likeness in things unlike: a comparison becomes a conceit when we are made to concede likeness, while being strongly conscious of unlikeness." In "The Metaphysical Poets," Seventeenth Century English Poetry, ed. William Keast (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 54. This is not to overlook the fusion of disparate elements which takes place in the expansion of the conceit; both centrifugal and centripetal forces are at work within the poem and both play a part in the strength of the conceit. The central cord of the conceit is Donne's power of argument which ties all together.

[5] See for example Womans Constancy, Loves Usury, Loves Diet.

[6] Gardner, op. cit., p. 213.

[7] This is Grierson's reasoning, but Gardner points out that Aristotle's case was man's dying that makes man beget children to satisfy the wish for immortality; but the poem seems to support Grierson.

[8] The "summers Sunne" relates back to the myth of cocks and lions, whose zest supposedly came from "an extra share of the sun's working vigour", Gardner, op. cit., p. 213.

[9] Clay Hunt, Donne's Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) analyses this poem as a satire on the Neo-Platonic use of alchemic terms to express the spiritual nature of love.

[10] "Decay" also uses the meaning of "decline" in opposition to "growing". M. A. Goldberg, Explicator, Vol. XIV (1955-56), #50, reads this poem as a formal Neo-Platonic lecture on love. The lover urges union in the full light of the sun - the 'real' world of Platonic Ideals - as opposed to the shadows of Platonic unreality. Light stands for divinity, darkness for sin and error. If man waits for union of body and soul until after noon, he loses the chance for both spiritual ecstasy and physical fulfillment.

[11] See Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 97, 162, 165 ff., for a much wider discussion of this myth and its significance in poetry.

[12] This idea is in turn related to the ancient belief that the soul was contained in the breath, a concept related to the understanding of the basic relationship between the breath, the soul, and life itself.

[13] See the chapter in M. M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), "Donne: the Progress of the Soul," for a study of these motifs in Donne's love poetry.

[14] For the same image of the lover "drown'd in a transparent teare" see Witchcraft by a Picture.

[15] See Marjorie Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle (Columbia University Press, 1962) on the analogies drawn in poetry of this period between the world - the geocosm - and man - the microcosm - as well as the specific conceit of the map as a symbol of the human body.

[16] See A Nocturnall upon Saint Lucies Day, being the Shortest Day for the same image. See page 79 for the analysis linking the two poems and their attitudes toward love and death.

[17] Gardner, op. cit., p. 197.

[18] St. Lucies Day was the shortest day of the year, the day of the winter solstice. In primitive times both summer and winter solstices were the occasion for festivals associated with light and fire. (See Sir James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (New York: Macmillan, 1963), pp. 745-753: fire was considered a creative as well as a cleansing agent.)

In classical religion the day was the holiday of Lucina, a goddess of light associated with Diana and Juno, whose power ranged over various light-giving and light-preserving functions. Lucina's transfer to Christian hagiography came in the first or second century when a young martyred girl became identified with the goddess of the same name and assumed the same holiday and functions. (J. G. R. Forlong, Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. II (New Hyde Park: University Books, n.d.), p. 461).

[19] Here the fire associated with the festivals links the religious and alchemic elements into a truly organic series of metaphors.

[20] Clay Hunt in Donne's Poetry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954) explicates this poem differently. According to his reading, the love here is exclusively that of souls, for the love of bodies is inevitably restless, unstable, and impermanent.

[21] In Neo-Platonic theories perfect lovers are unaware of what it is they love. See the discussion of The Extasie, below.

[22] In Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 279-306.

[23] See the passage from Ebreo quoted above, p. 8.

[24] Ebreo, op. cit., p. 260.

[25] Ebreo describes such an ecstasy in comparison with sleep: sleep restores life by the work of the "spirits" withdrawn from the mind and sent to the lower regions to perform nutrition; thus the mind is deprived of its reasoning powers and disturbed by dreams caused by vapors from the imagination. In ecstasy, however, the soul itself is withdrawn, leaving only the vital spirit which, if left too long, will be unable to hold body and spirits together, and the body will die.

[26] This is not to say that Donne subscribed to the theories of the Neo-Platonists in the Italian Academy, as I have outlined them at the beginning of this paper. What such a comparison does show is the complexity of sources Donne assimilated and transmuted for his own purposes.

[27] See The Good-morrow: What ever dies, was not mixed equally;/If our two loves be one, or, thou and I/Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.

[28] See Aire and Angels for use of the doctrine that angels take bodies of air to work in the affairs of men.

[29] Cleanth Brooks, "The Language of Paradox," John Donne's Poetry, ed. A. L. Clements (New York: Norton, 1966), pp. 177-185.

[30] E. Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne(Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), I, 305-306.

[31] It has been established by Professor Martz, as well as by Miss Gardner and others, that the meditative exercises of the Jesuits (and modifications of them) powerfully influence the organization of The Anniversaries and some of the religious verse. Briefly, this pattern is a three-fold structure involving the three faculties of man's soul - memory, reason, and will. These are directed through the following exercise: the composition of place - a scene, question, or concept involving the memory and a petition in accordance with that scene; a point of theology, abstracted from the composition and expanded upon by the reason; and the colloquy, an outpouring of the will directed towards God. The outline below illustrates Martz's interpretation of the First Anniversarie and its three-fold structure.

31 (cont'd)

Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962) (rev. ed.), pp. 222-223.

Introduction, 1-90: The world is sick, "yea dead, yea putrified," since she, its "intrinsique balme" and "preservative", its prime example of Virtue, is dead.

Section I, 91-190: "how poore a trifling thing man is."
1. Meditation, 91-170. Because of Original Sin man has decayed in length of life, in physical size, in mental capacity.
2. Eulogy, 171-182. The girl was perfect virtue; she purified herself and had a purifying power over all.
3. Refrain and Moral, 183-190. Our only hope is in religion.

Section II, 191-246: "how lame a cripple this world is."
1. Meditation, 191-218. The "universall frame" has received injury from the sin of the Angels, and now in universe, in state, in family, "'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerance gone."
2. Eulogy, 219-236. Only this girl possessed the power which might have unified the world.
3. Refrain and Moral, 237-246. Condemn and avoid this sick world.

Section III, 247-338:"how ugly a monster this world is."
1. Meditation, 247-304. Proportion, the prime ingredient of beauty, no longer exists in the universe.
2. Eulogy, 305-324. The girl was the "measure of all Symmetrie" and harmony.
3. Refrain and Moral, 325-338. Human acts must be "done fitly and in proportion."

Section IV, 339-376: "how wan a Ghost this our world is."
1. Meditation, 339-358. "Beauties other second Element, Colour, and lustre now, is as neere spent."
2. Eulogy, 359-368. The girl had the perfection of color and gave color to the world.
3. Refrain and Moral, 369-376. There is no pleasure in an ugly world; it is wicked to use false colors.

Section V, 337-434: "how drie a Cinder this world is."
1. Meditation, 377-398. Physical "influence" of the heavens upon the earth has been weakened.
2. Eulogy, 399-426. The girl's virtue has little effect on us now because of this weakened "correspondence" between heavens and earth; in fact, the world's corruption weakened her effect while she lived.
3. Refrain and Moral, 427-434. Nothing "Is worth our travaile, griefe, or perishing", except the joys of religious virtue.

Conclusion, 435-474.

[32] All quotations from The Anniversaries are taken from Frank Manley, John Donne: the Anniversaries (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963).

[33] Donne's appeal to Elizabeth Drury in the Second Anniversarie has led several critics to seek out the old Catholic under the new Anglican when he says (in ll. 33-36):

> Immortall Maid, who though thou would'st refuse
> The name of Mother, be unto my Muse
> A Father, since her chast ambition is,
> Yearely to bring forth such a child as this.

Patrick Cruttwell, in The Shakespearean Moment, finds the ex-Catholic is trying to worship the Virgin Mary under the guise of a more Protestant appeal. I would say, however, that this particular facet of the poem is quickly subsumed under the greater feminine principle at work here. See M. Bewley, "Religious Cynicism in Donne's Poetry," Kenyon Review, XIV (1952), 619-646, for an extreme opinion.

[34] Martz, op. cit., pp. 236-237. I have added the explanatory notes from the text of the article itself.

Introduction, 1-44.

Section I, 45-84: "Forget this rotten world."
1. Meditation, 45-64. On contempt of the world and of one's self.
2. Eulogy, 65-80. The girl was the pattern of virtue.
3. Refrain and Moral, 81-84. The world must be thought of as "nought".

Section II, 85-156: "our state in our deathbed."
1. Meditation, 85-120. On physical death.
2. Eulogy, 121-146. On the girl and her death.
3. Moral, 147-156. (The refrain is absorbed into the moral and both, after this, are incorporated into the Eulogy.) Like her, even the most righteous must accept death as way to heaven.

Section III, 157-250: "Of the soul in the body."
1. Meditation, 157-219. On the loathsomeness of the body, but also the soul's flight to heaven after death.
2. Eulogy, 220-250. On the beauty of the girl's body.

Section IV, 251-320: "Poore soule, in this thy flesh what dost thou know?"
1. Meditation, 251-300. Our ignorance in this life and knowledge in heaven.
2. Eulogy, 301-320. The perfect knowledge of the girl and her virtuous actions.

Section V, 321-382: The joys of heaven.
1. Meditation, 321-355. The corrupt company of earth and the divine company of heaven.
2. Eulogy, 356-382. Praise of the girl now in heaven.

34 (cont'd)

Section VI, 383-470: Of joys in this life and next.
1. Meditation, 383-446. On accidental and essential joys.
2. Eulogy, 447-470. The girl's essential joys on earth as manifestations of her perfection, and this perfection the highest possible of soul on earth.

Section VII, 471-510: "Only in Heaven joyes strength is never spent."
1. Meditation, 471-496. The body's perfection at resurrection.
2. Eulogy, 496-510. The girl the beginning and end of creation, perfect.

Conclusion, 511-528: the girl as a saint in heaven, a pattern for life and death.

35 This is in marked contrast to his expression of the relationship of body and soul in The Exstasie, where the soul is a prisoner only if it does not make use of its vehicle, the body.

36 M. Nicolson , The Breaking of the Circle (Columbia University, 1962) (rev. ed.). She finds "shee" a combination of Astrea, the Virgin Mary, and Queen Elizabeth.

37 Manley, op. cit., p. 19.

38 William Empson describes her as "the Logos"; and her ability to induce the mystic vision links her with the Holy Ghost as dispenser of divine Grace.

39 A. Alvarez, in The School of Donne (Toronto: Mentor Books, 1961, 1967) calls Donne's religious poetry the first English poetry of religious experience, and thus traces Donne's influence on Herbert, Vaughn, Crashaw, and Marvell.

40 M. M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), in her analysis of Donne's attitudes, traces a curve downward to the Anniversaries which to her are expressions of intense bitterness before the peace of conversion. Williamson and Martz both count the poems as way-stations on the road to Donne's ordination and deanship. I think it is impossible to say just what part they played in his lengthy "conversion", but I do think that they represent a hiatus, rather than part of the continuum from the Songs and Sonnets to the Hymnes of Dr. Donne.

41 See Helen Gardner, John Donne: the Holy Sonnets (Oxford; Clarendon, 1952). Hereafter the reference to this book will appear as "Gardner, Holy Sonnets". All quotes of the Divine Poems are from this text.

42 L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 43-56. Martz also outlines the structure of Good Friday, 1613 as meditative. Martz stresses only the importance of meditation to the individual sonnet, rather than to sequences.

[43] Gardner, Holy Sonnets. Her hypothesis is that later manuscripts and editions obscured the order of the 1633 sequence of twelve sonnets: the first six (Grierson II,IV, VI, VII, IX, X) form a meditation on the last things; the second six (Grierson XI - XVI), on the mutual love of God and man. Miss Gardner also feels the sonnets should be dated earlier than had been formerly supposed, proposing a date in 1609. She cites both internal evidence (the disagreement over the fate of the body at death) and external evidence (the identification of the cycles sent to Mrs. Herbert and the Earl of Dorset). I will give Gardner's numbering in Arabic numerals, Grierson's in Roman, also indicating when the sonnets are other than the twelve in the sequence - i.e., Westmoreland, 2 (XXIII).

[44] Douglas Peterson, "John Donne's Holy Sonnets and the Anglican Doctrine of Contrition," SP, LVI (1959), 504-518.

[45] See the Second Anniversarie, ll. 85-120.

[46] Coffin, The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne (New York: The Modern Library, 1952), p. 520. Preached at St. Paul's, Easter Day in the evening, April 9, 1626.

[47] As death is Novissimus hostis, the enemy which watches me, at my last weaknesse, and shall hold me, when I shall be no more, till that Angel come, Who shall say, and sweare that time shall be no more, in that consideration, in that apprehension, he is the powerfullest, the fearfullest enemy; and yet even there this enemy Abolebitur, he shall be destroyed. (LXXX. Sermons (15), 1640). Coffin, op. cit., p. 488.

[48] See "Readings of Holy Sonnet XIV: a Critical Discussion" in A. L. Clements, ed., John Donne's Poetry (New York: Norton 1966). It includes J. C. Levenson, Explicator XI (Mar. 1953), Item 31; George Herman, Explicator XII (Dec. 1953), Item 18; Levenson, Explicator XII (Apr. 1954), Item 36; George Knox, Explicator XV (Oct. 1956), Item 2; Clements, "Donne's Holy Sonnet XVI," in MLN, LXXVI (June 1961), 484-489; and John E. Parish, "No. 14 of Donne's Holy Sonnets," College English (Jan. 1963).

[49] Holy Sonnet 11 (XV).

[50] To save this body from the condemnation of everlasting corruption, where the wormes that we breed are our betters, because they have a life, where the dust of dead Kings is blowne into the street, and the dust of the street blowne into the River, and the muddy River tumbled into the Sea, and the Sea remaunded into all the veynes and channels of the earth; to save this body from everlasting dissolution, dispersion, dissipation, and to make it in a glorious Resurrection, not onely a Temple of the holy Ghost, but a companion of the holy Ghost in the kingdome of heaven, This Christ became this Jesus. To save this man, body and soule together, from the punishments due to his former sinnes, and to save him from falling into future sinnes by the assistance of his Word preached, and his Sacraments administred in the Church, which he purchased by his bloud, is this person,

[50] (cont'd.)

The Lord, the Christ, become this Jesus, this Saviour. To save so, All wayes, In soule, in body, in both; And also to save all men. (LXXX. Sermons (40), 1640), Lincoln's Inn, Sunday after Trinity (1612?). Coffin, op. cit., p. 480.

[51] Now, as Saint Paul says, that he would know nothing but Christ (that's his first abridgment) and that he would know nothing of Christ, but him crucified, (and that's the re-abridgment) so we seek no other glasse, to see ourselves in, but Christ, nor any other thing in this glasse, but his humiliation. "Denmark House, some few days before the body of King James was removed from thence, to his buriall", (April 26, 1625). Coffin, op. cit., p. 509.

[52] See Satire III for a similar, but much harsher, analysis of the claimants for the believers' affections.

[53] The Sunne Rising.

[54] Breake of Day:

> Must businesse thee from hence remove?
> Oh, that's the worst disease of love,
> The poore, the foule, the false, love can
> Admit, but not the busied man.
> He which hath businesse, and makes love, doth doe
> Such wrong, as when a maryed man doth wooe.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

The artifact - the poem itself - is important to all three artists considered in this study. Spenser's Hymnes are the vehicle by which the poet leads his soul to understand its two natures: its desire for physical beauty and its need for love of God. The Hymnes are timeless monuments that allow their speaker to survive the ceaseless flux of mortal life and its end in the dust. Time is a fetter for Spenser. He seeks to break free of it, and of its handmaid, mutability. His hymns of praise elevate the final knowledge of and sight of God's majesty and wisdom. This sight will remove him from the world of change. Shakespeare overtly speaks of art as a means to overcome time. But, unlike Spenser, he is able to move experientially within time's world for the building blocks of his sonnets. He embraces the enemy, wraps her in the cloak of metaphor, and leads her to his chamber. Time is no allegorical figure for him, but a friendly enemy who can be evoked at will and overcome by love. Perhaps here we must deal with the difference between Shakespeare and Spenser as one between a dramatist and an allegorist. For Shakespeare Time and Change are actors on the stage to be manipulated in dramatic style. For Spenser they are figures within the pageant of mutability.

Donne's art, as we have seen, seeks to construct an ikon from the lovers of his poetry. Like the lovers on Keats' Grecian urn, they live forever as saints and high priests of love. This use of art to transcend time is most successful in his Songs and Sonets. The Anniversaries, I believe, fail in this respect. They lack the force and intensity of the lyrics, and become vast exercises. The divine poems, however, retain the

verve of the love lyrics. These devotions are written so as to become examples of man's ability to work through the inconstancy of his soul. They harness this inconstancy and put its force to work in a sensual, yet vigorous appreciation of God's immutability.

Donne's lovers escape time through their mutual love. But they do not seek to escape love's experiences in time. In devotion as well, Donne's poetic voice dwells on the soul's wilful changeability. But Donne is not the poet of the gracefully ephemeral. Shakespeare reigns supreme here. From Adonis to the "lovely boy" of the sonnets, Shakespeare is fascinated by time's attacks on Beauty and Beauty's weakness. Spenser's wariness of change in time does not obtain in Shakespeare. Like Donne, once he has accepted the fact of death and the fragility of existence here, the experiences of love (and their expression in art) transcend Time's ruthless hour-glass and sickle.

Shakespeare's sense of experience, however, differs widely in its expression from that of Donne. Both poets are "dramatic", but with a difference. Donne is the poet of situation. His world is one in which the persons are paramount - lover confronts lover, the soul confronts God. Shakespeare's drama is more cosmic. The forces of nature imitate and decree the actions of man. "Sympathetic poetry", it might be called. Man is part of the world of nature, and nature, as Spenser pointed out in the Cantos, is the province of ceaseless change. In the Sonnets confrontation occurs on a much wider stage than that provided by Donne. In the end love triumphs over nature's flux; but its victory is still expressed through the metaphor of nature.

The two poets are even further apart when we examine the subjects of their drama. Indeed, in his examination of the moral and ethical problems

of love, Shakespeare is much more the contemporary of Spenser than of Donne. Both Spenser and Shakespeare deal with ethics and morality in a way Donne does not. This is most evident in the three poets' treatments of romantic love. Spenser sanctifies physical love in the bonds of marriage, although he restricts its potentialities. For Shakespeare, heterosexual love can never be elevated. Its realm is, at best, one limited to the sphere of mutability and subject to decay. At worst, it endangers man's very soul. Romantic love is never far from degenerating into mere desire. Thus, Spenser and Shakespeare appear to be the two poles. These two positions, however, have a similar basic premise. Both attach moral and ethical significance to romantic love. Both regard physical pleasure as a potential danger to man's spiritual nature. Both fear the soul's destruction if passion is allowed free rein.

Donne, partly because he makes no rigid dichotomy between soul and body, is less interested in ethical and moral considerations. He is playful, rather than moralistic, in his treatment of passion and inconstancy; and he speaks of passionate love in a variety of terms culminating in an expression of transcendental, but still romantic, love. Shakespeare expresses such a love only between male friends, and in this way seeks to escape a "waste of shame". For Donne physical love does not threaten the soul with eternal death: it is the way of life. Even in his religious poetry, the experience is a situation of confrontation rather than a question of morality. The only "sins" he fears are inconstancy and despair, not ethical shortcomings. Like Spenser, Donne contemplates the Atonement. He thinks not of ecstatic vision, however, but of the meaning such a sacrifice has: the promise of eternal life that sprang from Christ's mystery.

But, although on the question of ethics, Spenser and Shakespeare

stand closer, when we consider the variety of experience each poet encompasses, Shakespeare and Donne far outdistance Spenser. They attempt to confront the irrevocability of death and the movement of time with the weapon of love: a transmutation of experience in time into timeless, changeless forms that save man from the world of time, decay, and death.

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Collmer, Robert G. "The Function of Death in Certain Metaphysical Poems," McNeese Review, xvi (1965), 25-32. Refutes Williamson's assertion that the "Metaphysical" view of death was peculiar to their thinking; rather death was a favorite Renaissance theme. For Donne in particular, he feels, death was "divisive", the result of a forcible intrusion.

Crofts, J. E. V. "John Donne," Essays and Studies, xxii (1937), 128-143. Extremely critical of Donne. Rejects the idea that Donne considered the intellect a valid way to knowledge: "contact with ultimate reality could be found only in passion: the passion of love, or the passion of faith."

Duncan, E. H. "Donne's Alchemical Figures," ELH, ix (1942) 257-285. Excellent guide to the alchemical figures in Donne. Little explication.

Freccero, John. "Donne's 'Valediction Forbidding Mourning'," ELH, xxx (1963), 335-376. A highly technical explanation of the derivation and connotations of the compass, from Dante to Donne.

Harding, D. W. "Coherence of Theme in Donne's Poetry," Kenyon Review, xiii (1957), 427-444. Finds the central theme a fear of death.

Levine, Jay A. "'The Dissolution': Donne's Twofold Elegy," ELH, xxviii (1961), 301-315. Not only is the poem a funeral elegy; it is primarily an erotic poem describing the "death" occurring during the sex act itself, perhaps even a complaint of impotence.

Lewis, C. S. "Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century," Seventeenth Century English Poetry, W. R. Keast, ed. New York: Oxford University Press (1962), 92-110. A critical view of Donne's love-poetry as overrated and un-lovely.

Mazzeo, Joseph A. "Notes on John Donne's Alchemical Imagery," Isis, xxxxviii (1947), 103-123. Based on Duncan's article explicating Donne's alchemy.

Ornstein, Robert. "Donne, Montaigne, and Natural Law," JEGP, lv (1956), 213-229. Follows up Bredvold's suggestion that Donne was influenced by Montaigne. But feels Montaigne a "true sceptic" - Donne "looks back upon a medieval Christian heritage."

Peterson, Douglas L. "John Donne's 'Holy Sonnets' and the Anglican Doctrine of Contrition," SP, lvi (1959), 504-518. Links Gardner's Sonnets 1-12 into a sequence on the doctrine of contrition.

Rooney, William J. "'The Canonization' - The Language of Paradox Reconsidered," ELH, xxiii (1956), 36-47. Takes issue with Brooks' reading of the poem: the poem does not function to convey a paradox, but merely uses paradox to become "a beautiful speech".

Smith, A. J. "The Metaphysic of Love," RES, n.s., ix (1958), 362-375. After discussing the various theories of love, both courtly and Neo-Platonic, concludes Donne's Extasie not original or profound, but merely a "witty" use of sources.

Warren, Austin. "Donne's 'Extasie'," SP, lv (1958), 472-480. Finds philosophy of poem "incoherent".

Williamson, George. "The Design of Donne's 'Anniversaries'," MP (1963), 183-191. Critical of Martz's theory of meditative structures.

B. William Shakespeare

Cantelupe, E. B. "An Iconographical Interpretation of 'Venus and Adonis'," SQ, xiv (1963), 141-151. Rejects Neo-Platonism as an influence. Poem is a realistic comedy.

Graves, Robert and Riding, Laura. "A Study in Original Punctuation," Casebook, 161-172. The famous reading of Sonnet 129. Sonnet is read virtually without punctuation.

Hamilton, A. C. "'Venus and Adonis'," SEL, i (1961), 1-15. Identifies the two with "ideals"; Adonis is "the perfection of unfallen nature", Venus perfect Love. Adonis' death introduces the world's mutability.

Hunter, G. K. "The Dramatic Technique of Shakespeare's Sonnets," Essays in Criticism, iii (1953), 152-164. Stresses immediacy of sonnets, the description of a person caught in a situation. Contrasts sonnets with analytic nature of Donne's dramatic situations.

Kaula, David. "'In War with Time': Temporal Perspectives in Shakespeare's Sonnets," SEL, iii (1963), 45-57. Divides the sonnets into two groups according to their presentation of time and the relationship between speaker and friend: in one, the group of sonnets promising immortality and urging procreation, time is a "cosmic power"; in the other, which deals with a more private relationship, friendship's mutability is the subject.

Knight, G. Wilson. "Symbolism," The Mutual Flame. London: Methuen (1955), 58-68. Also in Casebook. Focussing on imagery in the sonnets, stresses the unresolved problem of the sonnets, whether love can outlast time. Finds religious and mystic elements in the poetry to the young man.

Knights, L. C. "Shakespeare's Sonnets," Explorations. London: Chatto and Windus (1946), 40-65. Also in Casebook. Stresses Shakespeare's interest in the effects of time. Finds the best poetry in Shakespeare's "contemplation of change".

Kuhl, E. P. "Shakespeare's 'Rape of Lucrece'," PQ, xx (1941), 352-360. Discusses the political implications the story had for Tudor England. The author believes Shakespeare was protesting against the royal rule.

Miller, R. P. "Venus, Adonis, and the Horses," ELH, xix (1952), 249-264. By an analysis of the horses' episode, finds a "moral dimension" in the poem: a critique of the romantic tradition as one motivated by passion, not love.

Mizener, Arthur. "The Structure of Figurative Language in Shakespeare's Sonnets," Southern Review, v (1940), 730-747. Also in Casebook. An answer to Ransom's charge that the sonnets' structure is not "logical". A close reading of Sonnet 124 to show how metaphors intertwine to create coherent work.

Price, H. T. "The Function of Imagery in 'Venus and Adonis'," Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters, Papers, xxxi (1945), 275-297. Reads the poem as a serious, didactic piece pre-figuring the tragedies.

Putney, R. "'Venus and Adonis': Amour with Humor," PQ, xx (1941), 533-548. Maintains Venus and Adonis relished for "the fun they provided as part of a tragicomic, comitragic, or purely comic tale.

Wally, H. R. "'The Rape of Lucrece' and Shakespearean Tragedy," PMLA, lxvi (1961), 480-487. Reads the action of the poem in terms of Shakespeare's tragic sensibility.

C. Edmund Spenser

Bennett, J. "The Theme of Spenser's 'Fowre Hymnes'", SP, xxviii

(1931), 18-57. Gives credit to Pico's commentary on Benivieni's poetic Neo-Platonic statement. Stresses unity of four hymns.

Chapman, Raymond. "Fortune and Mutability in Elizabethan Literature," Cambridge Journal, v (1952), 374-382. Links the two concepts in Elizabethan thinking: fortune a random element in a regular process of change and decay.

Fletcher, J. B. "Bienivieni's 'Ode of Love' and Spenser's 'Fowre Hymnes'," MP, viii (1910-1911), 545-560. A translation of the Ode with very brief introduction, marking the Ode as Spenser's immediate inspiration.

Fletcher, J.B. "A Study in Renaissance Mysticism: Spenser's 'Fowre Hymnes'," PMLA, xxvi (1911), 452-475. Interprets the hymns as an ascent of the soul to the beatific vision of Sapience - the glory and knowledge of God.

Holme, J. W. "Italian Courtesy Books of the Sixteenth Century," MLR, v (1910), 145-166. Concentrates on the Courtier and the reasons for its influence in the Renaissance, comparing and contrasting other books with it.

Lee, R. W. "Castiglione's Influence on Spenser's Early Hymnes," PQ, vii (1928), 65-77. Comparison of Bembo and the early hymns, using Hoby's 1561 translation of The Courtier.

Padelford, F. M. "Spenser and the Theology of Calvin," MP, xii (1914), 1-18. Emphasizes the harmony between Calvinism and the Fowre Hymnes, especially the last two.

Padelford, F. M. "Spenser's 'Fowre Hymnes'," JEGP, xiii (1914), 418-433. Discusses Calvinistic bases of last two hymns that he feels are in opposition to the Neo-Platonism of the first two.

Padelford, F. M. "Spenser's 'Fowre Hymnes': A Resurvey," SP, xxix (1932), 207-232. An answer to Mrs. Bennett's article (cited above) which reiterates the author's reading of the steps in the ascent, as he sees it, of the hymns. Also reiterates his stand on the Calvinistic, rather than Neo-Platonic, nature of the last two hymns.

Sears, Jayne. "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Comp Lit, iv (1952), 214-238. Discusses the availability of popular and erudite Neo-Platonic works in England; limits their direct influence to Spenser, Chapman, Burton, Raleigh, and Colet.

Siegel, Paul N. "The Petrarchan Sonneteers and Neo-Platonic Love," SP, xlii (1945), 164-182. Divides Elizabethan sonnets into two rigid categories: the Petrarchan "free love" sonnets of the feudal nobility; and the idealistic Neo-Platonic variety of the new Tudor aristocracy.

Stewart, James. "Renaissance Psychology and the Ladder of Love in Castiglione and Spenser," JEGP, lvi (1957), 225-230. Purports to show how Castiglione and Renaissance psychology influenced Spenser's Heavenly hymns.

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