MANNERIST ELEMENTS IN THE SONGS AND SONNETS OF JOHN DONNE

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ABSTRACT

For a long time Mannerism has been a critical term peculiar to the Fine Arts. In the last twenty years it has attracted the attention of literary critics who have sought to clarify its relation to literature in both theory and practice. This thesis draws on the conclusions of such writers and applies them to the Songs and Sonnets of John Donne in an attempt to understand him within the Mannerist context—that is, as a poet expressing characteristics of style, sensibility and culture that are originally typified by a group of sixteenth-century Italian artists.

The mode of criticism proceeds on the basis that it is possible to abstract distinctive features from a given style in one art form and apply them, by analogy, to another: thus, discontinuous lines in painting may be seen as analogous to broken sentences in language, or the effect of distorted perspective may be likened to the effect of structural irregularity in a poem. The process may be further supported by reference to cultural, personal or theoretical circumstances that are common to the artist/poets concerned.

In this thesis, the views of certain scholars as to the nature of Mannerism have been applied to Donne. Thus his wit, his dramatic techniques, his use of convention and his
ambiguity have all been examined in the light of Mannerist principles, and have been further exemplified by reference to the fine and plastic arts.

The conclusions reached are that, first, it is possible to approach Donne from a Mannerist viewpoint, that in so doing insights into the nature and organisation of the poetry follow, and that by setting Donne in a European artistic context, something of the insularity and arbitrariness of 'metaphysical' may yield to the broader frame of reference that Mannerism provides.
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CHAPTER ONE

The problem of grouping the Songs and Sonnets has been a perennial one for Donne scholars. For Grierson, the more or less random order of the 1633 edition was preferred in the case where no other authoritative organisational principle was to be found in the various manuscripts and earlier editions;¹ for Leishman, the fifty-four poems resolve into a "rough classification" of seven sections typified by such heads as ten "deliberately outrageous" poems, five "merely witty" poems, four songs, and eight poems "almost certainly written during Donne's middle years;"² while Redpath sees that "one way of classifying them . . . is according to the predominating attitudes expressed" in them, and he then goes on to speak of negative and positive groups.³ In her 1965 edition of The Elégies and the Songs and Sonnets of John Donne, Helen Gardner⁴ presents a fresh look at the problem and concludes that not only should they be divided into two sections, pre-1600 and post-1602, but that they are of three broad types: Ovidian, Petrarchan, and Neo-platonic. In the first of these--those that belong to "the world of Latin love-poetry"⁵--the style is sardonic, cynical, witty and brilliant and they are written from the point of view of a man more interested in himself and his own reactions than in the objects of his thought.
In the years prior to 1598, when Donne joined Egerton's service (the period of Lincoln's Inn and military service), his literary masters were the Roman poets, Horace, Ovid, and Martial, under whose influence he composed his early poems—the "first group." For Donne it was a time of turmoil, for while being temperamentally attracted to the scepticism of the classical elegists whose detachment and satire he admired, he was at the same time in the process of making a scrupulous change from Roman Catholicism to what was to become his Anglican position. It was at this point that Walton speaks of him as given to "no Religion that might give him any other denomination than a Christian," and which anticipates the Preface to the _Pseudo-Martyr_ (1609) where he resists a sectarian choice till, he says, "I had, to the measure of my poore wit and judgement, suruayed and digested the whole body of Divinity, controverted betweene ours and the Romane Church." Some part of Donne's unresolved state must be seen in relation to the broader picture of Renaissance changes which provide an explanatory context for what else appears personal and idiosyncratic. The Copernican cosmology attacked the anthropocentric model on which Mediaeval thought was based and in displacing man from his certain position, it left him to face a philosophical relativity analogous to Bruno's astronomical relativity—"the moon belongs to the earth's sky, just as the earth belongs to the moon's"—or Donne's moral relativity:
Ther's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,  
of every quality comparison  
The onely measure is, and judge opinion.  

Bruno indeed was responsible for crystallising much of the cultural anxiety as he was, for instance, "the first to think of [the Universe] as infinite." At about the same time (1580), Montaigne's sceptical essays systematised doubt and challenged the basis of absolute sets of values. As a result the traditional concepts of self, for example, are assailed, for not only does the nature of external, objective reality change according to the subjective viewpoint, not only is everything we perceive 'altered and falsified by our senses', but also the self changes so greatly from case to case that there is no pinning down its true nature. The fact that there is no escape from the subjectivity of the observer's impressions and experiences does not in itself affect the reliability of the observing self. What does affect it is the continually changing aspects of self towards the same object, by which doubt is cast on the very nature and permanence of the self. This was a shattering blow at faith in the identity of the self from which the culture of the Renaissance was never to recover; without it there can be no explanation of mannerism, either as vision of life or artistic style. The distortion in the visual arts, the strained and restless use of metaphor in literature, the frequency with which characters in drama masquerade as others and question their own identity, are only ways of expressing the fact that, while the objective world had grown unintelligible, the identity of the self had been shattered; had grown vague and fluid. Nothing was what it seemed, and everything was different from what it purported to be. Life was disguise and dissimulation, and art itself helped to disguise life as well as to penetrate the masks.

I have quoted Hauser at some length here because in pinpointing "the fluid self" as a historic phenomenon, he provides a setting for individual expressions of subjective crisis. We see it in Pontormo, of whom it has been said that "the expression ... .
of his ideas and personality, is measurable only by insatiable subjective criteria," as though his art is an attempt to shape and hold tantalisingly fleeting visions. In Parmigianino we see the "fluid self" distorted on a convex board, pulled into an image of blurred outline that suggests a tentative and shifting view of himself. Michelangelo reacted extremely, but was borne along on the crest of a sublime self-confidence that resisted doubt until his old age. He was "the first modern, lonely artist driven by his inner daemon, not only because of his obsession with his art . . . but because with him individualism attained its really modern, problematic form." It is the 'problematic' that is interesting here for, with all Michelangelo's God-like assertion of will, the Sistine altar wall and the Sonnets show an agonised soul: yet even his imagination, painting and sculpture are finally repudiated in favour of a will yet stronger:

Onde l'affettuosa fantasia
Che l'arte mi fece idol 'e monarca
Conosco or ben, com 'era d'error carca
E quel ch'a mal suo grado ogn' nom desici

Ne pinger ne scolpir fie piu che quieti
L'anima, volta a quell' amor divino,
Ch' aperse, a prender noi, 'n croce le braccia.

And so with Donne, the breakdown of scholasticism, the post-Lutheran crisis in religion, the "sea-discoverers to new worlds" gone, all contributed to a sense of profound change. As to the effect it had on him, we may quote Grierson who writes that "the ordered system which Dante had set forth was
breaking in pieces . . . under the criticism of Copernicus, Galileo, and others, and no poet was so conscious as Donne of the effect on the imagination of that disintegration.  

Thus, intensely aware of change too rapid to organise, of the collapse of a whole epoch, yet also of the excitement of new possibilities, Donne strove to gain an identity that could retain what was of value in the old philosophy and accommodate the challenges of the new. Doubtful, however, of the usual props, he was thrown in on himself and had to rely on his own abilities to sift, evaluate and create, to the extent that he came to find his own "awareness of self as the supremely important and interesting fact of life."  

To emphasise the self-conscious relation between Donne and his highest ideals in this way is immediately to assume a fragmentation of being such as Hamlet so clearly demonstrates—that is, where 'self' is conceptualised and given the independence to hold apart from action and thought: and where Hamlet, unable to act, is paralysed by scruples, Donne is galvanised into only verbal action and tries, sometimes frantically, to adjust the contradictions of his age and to come to terms with himself. What this means in more practical terms is that in the early years, to 1598, when Donne's avid reading habits led him to the Roman elegists, Ovid, Propertius, and Tullius, he found in them a detachment and vigour analogous to his own: but instead of slavishly adopting them as exemplary models he saw in them the means to project and thence to understand the nature of his own thought.
It is as though the young Donne who was, after all, a "great frequenter of playes,"\textsuperscript{18} took over the role of the Ovidian cynic in order to see how it felt. Or alternatively, we may say that he donned various masks to test his reactions, for in the dramatisation he could separate out the twisted strands, the "subtile knot," that made up his personality, could stand away from a part of himself to better assess it. In the \textit{Elegies}, for example, Grierson suggests the cultivation of a role as a key to their meaning, when he writes that the reader

will begin to suspect that the English poet is imitating the Roman, and that the depravity is in part a reflected depravity. In revolt from one convention the young poet is cultivating another, a cynicism and sensuality which is just as little\textsuperscript{ }taken \textit{au pied de la lettre} as the idealising worship . . . of the sonneteers.\textsuperscript{19}

While of the \textit{Satires}, Milgate writes that perhaps the "earnestness is indeed a pose . . . and that the persona, the voice speaking in the poems, is well controlled to persuade us of a genuine moral fervour in the speaker."\textsuperscript{20} In fact, Milgate thinks the persona technique is designed to appeal to the court circles, which is not to my purpose, but still, the fact that he considers Donne to be speaking in role is helpful in establishing his divided self. In this regard it is interesting to note that "in the High Renaissance the individual had been so little concerned with his inner problems that independent self-portraits were rare. But in the first phase of Mannerism they appear in floods . . .,"\textsuperscript{21} and one painter (Bronzino) in particular invites comparison with Donne in that his portraits are
strikingly reminiscent of what in England was the 
Elizabethan age: of reckless outward splendour and inner 

doubt, vulnerable hearts masked by the hard crust of
stiff costumes, a personal device, jewel or statuette . . . .
And under all the tremendous apparatus of surface
reality . . . there remains that ambiguity, an
uncertainty about what—if anything—constitutes the
essence of reality." 22

In fact, one picture (Ritratta di Giovane Uomo) has a
remarkable similarity to the Lothian portrait—even to the
'melancholy' hat. But what is more significant is that
Bronzino does not probe beyond the surface: he sees it deliberately
as the 'face' the sitter is wearing and "with him the face
is obviously not the mirror of the soul, but its mask, and
the portrait is an art form that conceals as well as reveals."23

Now with Donne something of the same process is at work.
He strikes the pose of the witty, raffish, intellectual not
to mirror his soul but, like a mask or portrait, to present
an aspect of himself to himself as a means of identification.
In this first group of Songs and Sonnets, we see him as cynic
("Goe, and catche a falling starre"), rake ("Communitie"),
misogynist ("Curse"), and wit ("Flea") but above all, and
subsuming these minor roles, we see him as the manipulative
mind arranging and contrasting thoughts and feelings as a form
of creative self-interpretation. This idea may be amplified
by referring it to the Mannerist concept of disegno interno
whereby the artist was ascribed almost divine rights "to
create, invent and manipulate even wilfully" the materials
of his art.24 Michelangelo, for example,
'talks of the inward image which the beauty of the visible world arouses in his mind.' The idea of beauty [comments Blunt] set up in this way is superior to material beauty, for the mind refines the images which it receives, and makes them approach more nearly the Ideas which exist in it by direct transfusion from God. 25

In other words, the artist's will is the ultimate force in the creative process and his idea is 'truer' than what he sees. Reference, therefore, to the natural or artificial worlds, is governed by the sort of use the artist can make of them at any given moment. In Donne's case, we have the self-aware artist mastering his medium and imposing on it the shape of his 'idea,' and as we have already argued that the controlling idea for Donne was his concept of self, we may now see how in giving shape to the Songs and Sonnets, he was actively defining himself. Montaigne had said the same thing earlier: "Je n'ai plus fait mon livre que mon livre m'a fait!" 26

In the poems themselves we notice the techniques he used to this end, such as those through which he plays out the intellectual's role. Leishman has written that "many of the Songs and Sonnets are not really love poems at all, but simply ingenious or outrageous paradoxes, disquisitions or what Donne himself called 'evaporations' on the subject of love." 27 "Loves Deities," for example, with its chiming combinations of 'love' in the last line in each stanza, and "The Computation" with its mathematical precision are little more than "word-
and-idea games, lightly intended, a form of clever diversion designed simply to make the reader jump with surprise.\textsuperscript{28}

A much more complex example, however, is supplied by "The Flea" wherein we get a brilliant demonstration of what Eliot described as Donne's habit of not pursuing the meaning of an idea, but of arresting it "to play catlike with it, to develop it dialectically."\textsuperscript{29}

The initial idea of the flea joining their two bloods is immediately examined for its rhetorical possibilities as the innocent bite is made the basis of a moral lien on his mistress. Then from that forced analogy, the poet regrets that his mistress is not persuaded by his logic. The dialectic has begun. But what is happening is that Donne cannot take anything that seriously—-not even the dialectic: even the rules of the 'game' are being reworked as logical progression is twisted by the necessities of persuasive success. Thus to argue that because a flea bite "cannot be said/a sinne, or shame, or losse of maidenhead," (ll. 5-6) \textit{therefore} it would not be a sin for them to 'enjoy' before they 'woo' is a logical license that, to judge by Donne's "alas" was noticed by his hard-headed mistress.

In the second stanza the matter is approached from a different angle—an appeal to the sanctity of life, couched in an \textit{a fortiori} argument: if one life is taken, how much worse if three. But the ploy fails and the flea is killed. Tactically, however, the death is useful for it allows the seducer to gain the upper hand with all the weight of righteous indignation behind him:
Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since
Purpled thy nailes, in blood of innocence? (11. 20-21)

Yet at this peak of authority he has such supreme confidence
that he can explode all his pretensions to moral superiority
by returning with dramatic suddenness to the driving logic of

'Tis true, then learne how false, feares bee;
Just so much honor, when thou yeeld'st to mee,
Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee: (11. 25-27)

a mode he had earlier abandoned for the rhetorical. The
movement of the poem is at once progressive and disjunct for
while the line of persuasion is never lost, the handling of
the argument is contorted. A lack of cohesion may be expected
but because Donne's "main preoccupation is with the whole
effect," the dislocations do not appear as defects for

the unit is not the line, as in many sonneteers, and
not even the stanza, but the entire poem in its
serpentine swerving from one excitement to another.
Donne's technique stands in the same relation to the
average technique of Renaissance poetry, as that of
Mannerist to that of Renaissance painting. 30

The mention of "serpentine swerving" suggests the
characteristic Mannerist technique of the figura serpentinata
which Shearman has spoken of as posing "the purely aesthetic
problem of incorporating the maximum of torsion and variety
in the human figure within a limited space."31 To adapt the
idea, we can see that in "The Flea" the discipline of three
nine-line stanzas has contained the complexities of the
argument and how, in fact, the intensity of the adjustments
requires a rigid framework to work against. Perhaps the
concept can be best explained with reference to the plastic arts and Giovanni Bologna's Rape of the Sabine Women for which, Borghini tells us, Bologna had no thought of any didactic or moral purpose:

put on his mettle by a jibe he 'decided to show the world that he knew how to make not just ordinary marble statues, but also multiple ones of the most difficult kind possible in which one would see the whole art of making nude figures (exemplifying wasted old age, robust youth and feminine delicacy); and thus he made, solely to show his excellence in art, and without having any subject in mind, a bold youth who snatches a most beautiful girl from an old man.' 32

In other words, the statue is a technical tour de force in which difficulta is overcome by virtu, and at which the spectator marvels at the intricacy of form, made more incredible for its being figurative. Not only is the figura serpentinata expressed in the old man, but each figure spirals around its own axis creating figura serpentinata in triplicate, while the whole statue is itself contained within a spiralling flame-like movement that suggests aspiration without ever hinting at what the goal may be. What is more, the spiral effect is maintained from any angle so that the "revolving view" is encouraged and the spectator is left with no sense of a preferred focus. Indeed, despite its masterly facility the statue is slightly discomforting. As we are led round by the sweeping rhythms it is as though we are being led to a climactic view, a clinching focus to which the whole significance of the work tends, but this expectancy is momently frustrated, as curving thigh of
one leads into thigh of another, through torso to head of the third and thence is left to sweep off into infinity. Each line sets up such anticipations which fail to materialise and we are brought back to where we began with nothing but a sense of marvel at the ingenuity of the work. There is an uneasy restlessness about it which indicates a reluctance to be committed to a fixed point of view, a sustained equivocation that finds an outlet in constant yet aimless movement held together simply by an overwhelming fascination for its own sinuous possibilities. Significantly, Bologna gave the piece no title and the one we use today, the Rape of the Sabine Women was arbitrarily assigned by Borghini.33

Similarly in "The Flea," we notice a coolness that dissociates it from any serious attempt at seduction. Though he is addressing his mistress, the dialectical tone is not perhaps the best mode to induce a loving response and the mistress is more likely to be impressed by his cleverness than persuaded by his argument. It is easier to think of the mistress as a figment—the imagined butt of a rhetorical game in which the aim is solely to demonstrate his ingenuity. In this light, the volte face at the end (11. 25-27) appears both as the final twist that rounds off the spiralling argument, but also as the exhibitionist flourish of the virtuoso in executing a difficult turn perfectly. The matter of the twist ending is not an isolated feature: Clay Hunt has written that
one of Donne's favourite strategic maneuvers in many of these poems . . . is to reverse his course suddenly in the middle or at the end of a poem, so that just as soon as the reader is sure that he knows what Donne is saying, or what the tone of a poem is, and has begun to settle comfortably into understanding where this poem is headed, Donne jerks him around and heads off in the opposite direction. 34

We see it in "Goe, and catche a falling starre" where the rarity of a "woman true, and faire" is developed by likening her existence to probabilities as remote as impossibilities. But, he argues, "if thou findst one, let mee know, [for] such a Pilgrimage were sweet." (11. 19-20) Then with a sudden cynicism more destructive of the idea of a virtuous woman than any "strange wonders" he brands all women promiscuous. The movement is abrupt and final. After the modulated "such a Pilgrimage were sweet," the qualifying "yet" which introduces the next line, curt with monosyllables, and leads to the emphatic

Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three, (11. 25-27)

is typical of the deliberately controlled adjustments he makes. And it is not as though there is internal justification for the shift—it is an imposed thing, almost formulaic—wherein "Donne swings from one moral or emotional pole to another, not modulating his attitudes but swerving, as it were, irresponsibly from one excitement to another. . . . His reversals occur . . . capriciously, casually, without logic or necessity." 35 One explanation for this "irresponsibility" is to think of Donne
as a sort of intellectual impresario, "more interested in ideas themselves as objects than in the truth of ideas." 36

Certainly there is nothing in "The Indifferent," to make one suspect otherwise. The whole poem is conceived of as an ingenious diversion on a stock theme. In the Amores 37 Ovid says how his love is unsatisfied by any one type, how in fact all women have something to offer and that he will therefore pursue them all. His tone is flippant and licentious, his style narrative. From this starting point, Donne spins a jeu d'esprit whose success relies almost entirely on its devising, for as C.S. Lewis said, Donne's complexity is all on the surface— an intellectual and fully conscious complexity that we soon come to an end of. Beneath this we find nothing but a limited series of 'passions'— explicit, mutually exclusive passions which can be instantly labelled as such. 38

So here, above the 'passion' of generalised sensuality, Donne has created a formally delightful piece. The accumulation of antitheses is mock scholastic as though evidence is being compiled for a solemn conclusion. The argument proceeds by opposition, till a conclusion is reached: "I can love any" which, with its sensual overtones is amusing enough when set against the austere methodology, but the joke is to be refined in the rider where, in "so she be not true," Donne collapses the whole progression by his arch reversal of the usual virtuous platitude about virtue being above beauty. The argumentative scaffolding is broken by a twist and the trick is done. Then, to show his versatility there is a quick scene change between
stanzas and the poet assumes the role of superior male condescending to correct the misguided, as logician yields to rhetorician. The rhetorical questions, though, are amusing less on account of their browbeating tone than because of the use to which they are being put, for the tradition of rhetoric never lost sight of the contributions of Cicero and Quintillian. For the former the perfect orator was the perfect man; for the latter "the entire mental and moral development of the student" was central to the art. To catch these overtones and subvert them by reference to conventionally immoral ends is to produce the kind of intellectual frisson that is characteristic of Mannerism. "When a Mannerist artist breaks rules he does so on the basis of knowledge and not of ignorance" writes Shearman and in bending, breaking or transforming the rules he created the particular kind of satisfaction that goes with the ability to hold different levels of significance simultaneously in mind.

To compare small things with great, the techniques used in this slight poem are analogous to those in one of Michelangelo's greatest works--the Laurentiana. Michelangelo designed the building with a complete understanding of the Renaissance architectural canon which stood then as a powerful ordering force, with a tradition reaching back into antiquity. Yet the result, while acknowledging this influence, indeed while deriving energy from departing from it, creates a new style which a Renaissance vocabulary is unable to appreciate. For example, the tabernacles appear both to accept and reject precedence. At first sight a simple pediment, resting on pillars,
together house a plinth to support some relic or decoration. However, the pillars visually (and physically?) underplay their supporting role by tapering towards the base and then by leading into slender mouldings, mouldings which almost parody the architecturally sound bases and capitals of the Renaissance. Furthermore, the plinth is set in such a narrow recess that its presence is really a formality, while the brackets under the shafts are "unmistakably reminiscent of triglyphs that belong to the top of an order." We see, therefore, how Michelangelo stands in a peculiar relation to received practice. Accepting its forms, he changes the idiom, and impressed by its authority, he prefers his own. In other words, there is a constant interplay between hallowed norms and private abstractions which never allows itself the luxury of commitment. Thus, we can say that both Donne and Michelangelo self-consciously manipulate styles to their own ends and "self-conscious stylisation," Shearman tells us, "is the common denominator of all Mannerist works of art." In the poems just considered we get a strong impression of the conjuror selecting items from his repertoire for the delight and amazement of all. "The Flea" is the tour de force and the way in which Donne moves from the idea of flea as flea, to the idea of flea sanctified as temple and as symbol of unity, (ll. 10-14) is remarkably ingenious and calls to mind a comment
by Shearman that "Mannerist works of art are conceived in the spirit of virtuoso-performances." But not all ingenuity is Mannerist. The tortuous verbal complexities of the late Elizabethan sonneteers, for example, whose dense punning and structural modifications are so involved, cannot be called Mannerist because they lack what Castiglione called sprezzatura, or "the effortless resolution of all difficulties." Difficulty was a hypnotic concept in Renaissance theory and as the Renaissance yielded to Mannerism, feats of technical brilliance tended to be executed for their own sake and what distinguished the good from the bad was the degree of facilita with which they were done. Vasari is representative of this style and for him "painting had ceased to be the intensely serious intellectual pursuit that it had been for the artists of the High Renaissance. It had become a game of skill, appealing to a love of ingenuity and leaving the rational faculties undisturbed." In his autobiography, he boasted that he worked "with incredible facility and without effort." Now there is in "The Flea" the same sort of legerdemain that performs the impossible as though it were the entirely probable by concealing its techniques under plausible glosses. In the example we are considering, the gloss is the semblance of logic: the technique is the juxtaposition of levels of meaning. Thus in the line, "where wee almost, nay more than maryed are," (1. 11) 'almost' relates to the sphere of human relationships and betrothal and 'more than maryed' relates to the joining of bloods--one flesh--
in the flea. These two levels do not meet, they are forcibly abutted, and to complicate matters further, given the choice of either as the starting point for his next development, the poet chooses the more conceited level because of its possibilities for greater outrage. As J.C. Ransom has said, a conceit is a metaphor taken literally, and in assuming the phrase "more than maryed are" to be literally true, Donne is able to move quite 'reasonably' to the place of consummation—the marriage bed (1. 13). Marriage is sacred, therefore so is the place where it is consummated. And where was it consummated? In the sacred flea, of course. The success of this syllogistic puzzle is explained by Donne's skill in juggling the literal and figurative levels of language, and is judged by his sprezzatura, his marvellous ability to devise an art to conceal his art. Thus when Una Nelly asks, "what prevents his poems from becoming mere pyro-technic displays of wit, or verbal battles in pseudo-logic?" we may say that this is exactly what some early poems are, but without feeling the need to deplore their lack of depth, 'sincerity' or 'meaning.' That the sort of aesthetic existed which supported such virtuosity is rather remarkably shown by Vasari's admiration for Michelangelo's Last Judgement. To subsequent eras, the painting has been seen as an immensely powerful, disturbed and emotional piece, expressive of Michelangelo's spiritual agonies and symptomatic of the Renaissance crisis. Vasari, however, Michelangelo's contemporary, though he refers to the painting as "that so much
but never sufficiently extolled Judgment," finds its chief excellence as an "exemplar in foreshortenings and all the other difficulties of art." In other words, "an academic exercise in trick drawing . . . while its emotional significance is not spoken of at all." The admiration, then, given to the spectacular and marvellous largely accounts for the popularity of 'set-pages' in the applied arts, with their elaborately decorated fireplaces and door-ways; of staircases that took on an artistic life independent of their function; of gardens that achieve "the impossible, the contrived or the unexpected;" and even of the 'wetting sports' that drenched Emperor Charles V. It was the intermezzi, for example, that "showed the qualities of surprise, variety, ostentatious ingenuity and expertise emblematic of Mannerism, and, at the receiving end, that insatiable appetite for the spectacular which made Mannerism possible."

Perhaps the work that comes closest to Donne's early style is Rosso's Mars and Venus of which it has been said that what it stimulates positively is not belief in a narrative, not the evocation of something real outside itself, but fascination in itself, in its complexities, its visual jokes, its 'tours de force' of manipulation and technique, and its accumulated demonstration of artistic capacity. 53

What more precise summary could be given of "The Flea"?
CHAPTER TWO

Earlier I spoke of the persona element in Donne's work. I would now like to take this idea a stage further and see how it underpins the frequently noted dramatic tone and how, above all, it reveals certain characteristics of Mannerism.

It is generally thought that when Gosse looked for biographical information in the Songs and Sonnets he was on very shaky ground, for modern critics tend to regard the structuring of certain poems as a clue to their essentially dramatic nature and conclude that the "characters" involved represent projections of a part of Donne's character. Louis Martz, for example, speaks of Donne's lifelong practice of "adopting dramatic postures, in many different attitudes, [as being] his way of constantly creating fictional roles out of aspects of his personality." Sypher remarks that "however private his feelings may be in quality, Donne exploits them to gain a dramatic effect," while Legouis writes of "Donne's ability to express the feelings of others, and allow us to surmise that even when the speaker is a man he need not be the poet's own self." If, then, we can accept that "the complex personality that we call 'Donne' is created by means of a continually shifting series of dramatic moments," where are these "moments" found and how are they expressed?
There is much truth in C.S. Lewis' remark that the peculiar character of "most of the Songs and Sonets is that they are dramatic in the sense of being addressed to an imaginary hearer in the heat of an imagined conversation." The four valedictions, for example, are all addressed to a loved woman. The fact that the women do not reply is not important. There is, indeed, no actual dialogue in Donne, but the sense of a person spoken to is caught in the colloquial phrasing of, "I'll tell thee now (deare Love) what thou shalt doe/to anger destiny, as she doth us," or "Let me powre forth/my teares before thy face, whil'st I stay here." If in this last poem the conversational soon yields to the ratiocinative, it is not to the exclusion of dramatic power. In fact, it increases it. A Shakespeare sonnet, such as "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day...?" has a similar addressive opening and then proceeds to build a statement of adoration by favourably comparing his mistress with things most beautiful--"a summer's day," "the darling buds of May," "the eye of heaven" and so on. The effect is accumulative, the tone consistent. Donne is quite different. He begins with a tender expression of grief which has the tones of a verbatim conversation in the bedroom. The mood is trusting and intimate and the expectation is, by analogy with the Shakespearian pattern, for the grief of parting to be elaborated so as better to come to terms with it. What happens, though, is that the overt emotionalism is rapidly changed into a different mode as the mind breaks in and
begins to be excited by the possibilities of complexity. The "teares" (l. 2) become less a symbol of grief than an image for examination. The poet is no longer standing crying before his mistress but is, on the instant, abstracted and curious about the possibilities of verbal extension in the tear emblem: and there follows an intricate development of ideas based on figurative and literal levels in the language. Suddenly bored with the obvious, that grief causes tears, Donne searches for an interesting figure and finds the idea of coinage sufficiently remote to tease and sufficiently accurate to satisfy the mind, for, 'to coin' suggests the steady production of tears and also, of course, their value. If, then, they are coined, so may they also be stamped, and though the literal sense of a stamped tear is ridiculous, the emotional sense of each tear reflecting his mistress' image is of close intimacy. But the verbal play works hard on the surface at this point and the level of overt feeling evoked by the first four lines is suppressed by choice of "mintage" with its mechanical associations and its valences with coins and stamps, which indicate that it was chosen primarily for its appropriateness in the developing conceit. Then, suddenly again, the tone shifts dramatically, the intellectual strain is dropped and in two quiet lines we revert to the initial mood: "For thus they be/pregnant of thee" (ll. 5, 6). The tone is less than conversational as "pregnant"
is being used figuratively, but its associations are poignantly appropriate to the situation, for as each tear, swollen with her image, drops, it shatters the bond between them and in a remote way forebodes his departure—"fruits of much grievfe they are, emblemes of more." The stanza ends sombrely as the new image of a "divers shore" is introduced to extend the separation that the falling tears had started and to draw out the grief to despair: "so thou and I are nothing then."

I said earlier that the drama increases at the line of disjunction but the processes I have described, by interrupting the progressive climax, may seem to contradict that. Something of what I mean, however, is caught in Yeats' comment on Donne when he remarks that there is no lingering between spirit and sense "but only a change upon the instant, and it is by the perception of a change . . . that passion creates its most violent sensation."7 In other words, the momentary straining to make and appreciate the connection between, in our case, the ingenuous emotional tones of the first two lines and the self-conscious intellectual control of the next two, induces an intensity that heightens the overall response to the poem. The technique is similar to the Jacobean dramatists' juxtaposition of irreconcilable moral positions for purely theatrical effect. The Duke's hideous death, for example, in the Revenger's Tragedy is theatrically horrific and therefore effective within that convention. But to have his face eaten away by poison, his tongue pinned to the table and his heart
stabbed while he is watching his wife incestuously involved with his bastard son is morally incommensurate with his own crime of killing Vindice's mistress. Here too, in the reader, there is a straining towards a reconciliation of incompatibilities, but it is a mark of Jacobean drama that the contradictions remain unresolved or, as Sypher says, "The Jacobean playwrights have a psychological dis-continuity more intense than the earlier anatomy of passion [of Elizabethan drama and] accept two or three different scales of value at the same time."8 Such discontinuities are not isolated, nor are they imperfections—they are a part of a recognizable style for

in Mannerist painting, drama and poetry conflicting or unrelated modes of feeling and conduct are brought together side by side and left unreconciled, as if one phase of activity had nothing to do whatever with another phase of activity in which the same persons take part. Thus the Mannerist composition employs a kind of "para-psychology," an adjustment by disrelationship.9

We see it vividly in El Greco's Burial of Count Orgaz where not only is there a physical line of faces dividing the picture in two and separating the spiritual from the temporal with unusual emphasis, but in the details the picture does not cohere as would a Renaissance painting. The grandees do not form a group of mourners unless they mourn a private grief, for each is self-wrapt and oblivious to his surroundings. The dead Count does not touch them; they cannot penetrate the spiritual dimension (it is literally at another level), and they do not even recognise each other: they are discrete and
psychologically inscrutable. Similarly, the pose of the monk at left is so mechanical that he could be taken out of the picture and put in a new context without being more incongruous; and what of the swirling vision of heaven? What is the attenuated figure urging before Christ with an eloquence that finds no motive in the picture? Surely not for the soul of the Count that rises unnoticed by anyone. And what of the Virgin’s pose--slouched and melancholic before Christ’s brilliance? Certainly the picture is fragmented if viewed from a 'classical' standpoint and relies for its power, therefore, on its ability to excite a state of mind appreciative of unresolved tension. The reason why this is not absurd is that disjunction provides a satisfying correlative to the Mannerist sensibility wherein profound disorientation had undermined confidence in harmonious orders, and as a result "the strangeness and power of Mannerist art are in its intervals and discontinuities--not in its co-ordinations."¹⁰ Thus to return to "A Valediction: Of Weeping" we can see what Johnson saw, but in a new light. He said of the Metaphysicals that they were "wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to . . . uniformity of sentiment."¹¹ For example, the conceit of the second stanza which develops an image of a "workman" constructing a globe and therefore giving meaning to what before was "nothing," is a non sequitur in terms of the expectations aroused in the first stanza: it is as though, as Simon says, "Donne preferred
the bizarre and unusual deliberately to puzzle or shock his readers.¹ It is also likely that Johnson was so puzzled and shocked that he refused to go the next step and discover that there is an underlying uniformity; just as in El Greco the discrete parts are held together by his visionary energy, in Tourneur the moral oppositions are fused by dramatic expediency, so in Donne the successive blocks to our expectations are finally justified by the freshness with which we are able to grasp his meaning. Thus in the remaining lines of the stanza, Donne plays with a parallel construction as if aware of the levels at which he is operating. He develops equivalences between the "round ball" of the cartographer and the "teare" of the lover such that as the "round ball" is laid with "an Europe, Afrique, and an Asia," so the "teare" is imprinted with his mistress' image, and as the mapping makes "that which was nothing, all," so her picture becomes the all significant emblem of grief—so powerful indeed that with dramatic intensity, it expands the sense of "this world" from a reference to his tears to include the world of the conceit and thus, in a flash, links the intellectual to the emotional: the controlled separation of them to this point, of course, contributing greatly to the impact of this moment, for now grief is universalised and hope discouraged—"my heaven dissolved so." The final stanza similarly employs a new image extravagantly conceived—of moon and tides—but it, too, is turned to account as it picks up the earlier
foreboding of death by drowning, and therefore finely intensifies the valediction.

"The Apparition" is often cited as a dramatic poem but in so far as it presents a tableau vivant with no development of action and no real sense of dialogue it is not representative of Donne's skill in this mode at its best. A much better example is "The Canonisation" which, despite its single explicit voice and dense argument, is intensely theatrical. It opens with a colloquial expletive that appears to be addressed to a male friend who has just mentioned something to the effect that 'love is all very well but it's not going to get you anywhere in the world, you know.' Impatient of small-mindedness the lover erupts in a tirade, inviting criticism of his worldly deficiencies, and suggesting his friend look to improving his; anything but anything,"so you will let me love." The scene is delightful—crisp, energetic and convincing and lacks nothing but a mise en scène. At this point we would expect the friend to counter, and indeed he does, by asking the unrecorded question 'You're not doing yourself any good' but, and this is the point, not only is the actual question suppressed but the identity of the speaker is too, for at no time is he made more than a voice off stage and if off stage, then where? It becomes apparent rather suddenly that it is in fact we as audience that are being addressed, we who are intruding and being so petty and materialistic, and the effect of this
realization is to shatter the comfortable dramatic illusion whereby we are insulated against life's problems by seeing them removed from us, conventionalised by drama and enacted for our entertainment, and we are instantaneously jolted into a relationship with the speaker which involves us wholly. But because our role is not made explicit we can never be sure so we are made uncomfortable. The construct of aesthetic distance that allows us, for example, to see *King Lear* without going mad, here fluctuates maddeningly until the very basis of our stance, the nature of our reality is called in question. Thus, the effect is to make us involve ourselves in the essentially serious discussion of love that the poem presents, both by reading the poem as statement and by being in the poem as character.

In the same way we find the peculiarly Mannerist characteristic of the Sprecher inducing the same state of response in certain paintings. Hauser said that

Mannerism permits—and often actually calls for—occasional interruptions of the illusion of art and return to it at pleasure. Play with different aspects and attitudes, with fictitious feelings and 'deliberate self-deception' is in Mannerism, so clearly associated with artistic appreciation as to seem to be totally irreconcilable with the conceptions of classical aesthetics.

Many such "interruptions of the illusion of art" can be cited: the unnerving stare of the middle woman in Pontormo's *Visitation*, that ignores the greeting between Mary and Elizabeth, upstaging them by holding our eye; the realisation in
Velasquez' Maids of Honour that we are in the same place as the king and queen, that it is us being painted or at least at whom Velasquez is looking; in Tintoretto's Presentation of the Virgin, where the man in the lower left corner runs at us, his hand outstretched to pull us along, yet simultaneously twists his head back to see the Virgin. The effect is for our attention to be fixed on his impetus out of the picture, yet to be directed also to the focal point within the picture. "The planes of reality," to use Sypher's phrase, shift and we are left in somewhat uncertain relation to the painting. Perhaps the clearest example is to be found in El Greco's Burial of Count Orgaz again. Here the doleful page is unique in his absorption, for all the other characters, equally self-possessed, remain impenetrable; his thoughts, though, are on us as he catches our eye and points to the Count as if to reduce our psychological distance and evoke our immediate sympathy. This surely is closely analogous to what Donne is doing in "The Canonisation" where, to return to our analysis, we find that the technique of the anonymous interrogator effectively, if tentatively, draws us into the action of the poem. At the end of the second stanza, for example, after a barrage of questions, the pause of the "inter-stanza"^{14} is filled by a derogatory remark and it is we that make it. The fact that the lover does not rise to it is beside the point—"call us what you will" he says, and continues to
describe his love. What is to the point is that we are disoriented by being both inside and outside the poem, our relation to objective material becomes uncertain, fluid, we might say, in a way that reflects the much broader dislocations that Hauser describes when he says of Bruno that

he extends the principle of relativity to space, time, and gravity... according to which everything depends on the observer's standpoint... Just as the horizon moves with the observer, and every other point in space is relative to the observer's position, so does the universe look different, depending on whether it is observed from the earth, the moon, or any other heavenly body... Once more he is expressing the fundamental Mannerist feeling that there is no firm ground anywhere under one's feet. 15

Such uncertainty leads us into another sphere of Mannerist consciousness, typified by Sypher as being akin to the Jesuit practice of casuistry whereby "the uncertainties and flexibilities in the Mannerist world, which required a pliable and provisional law of pro and contra, like the agile logic in Donne,"16 are submitted to an individual conscience operating in the light of the particular, not general, circumstances: "the Mannerist conscience accepts a principle of indetermination, for all ratios and proportions become provisional,"17 the expedient justifies the motive, the means the end. This is to say that where absolute concepts have lost their authority, a mode of thought emerges that constructs an order by reference to contingencies; that resists chaos by its agility in presenting plausible patterns; that salves conscience by opportunism. That this has an artistic counterpart can be seen very clearly.
in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure which E.K. Chambers saw as an expression of "the poet's shifting outlook upon humanity."\(^{16}\) And in the shifting, the balances that contain As You Like It, for example, are upset. The ideal of absolute justice is parodied by the action. Though Angelo may say,"It is the law, not I, condemns your brother,"\(^{19}\) we know the law is inconsistent by reference to the Duke's lax regime, we know it is pliable by reference to Angelo's own double standards that can excuse himself and convict Claudio for comparable behaviour; so we know, therefore, that his speech is nothing more than a verbal adjustment to evade a moral issue and uphold a façade of legality. The façade is necessary too, for Angelo has no other standards of justice—he is morally adrift—so he clutches at the appearance of justice to satisfy the demands of the moment. What mitigates his callousness, though, is that his actions are of a piece with the moral ethos of the play. The 'good' Duke is no less inconsistent and even more cowardly, for his shuttling disguises, his evasion of responsibility and his almost incredible remission of Angelo's sentence to satisfy a whim, reflect a personal vision of justice that has little to do with a systematic morality—it has to do with caprice, face-saving, hypocrisy and conciliation.

The character of Isabella, more than any other, personifies the Mannerist art of accommodation for she is so devious as to convince herself that she is virtuous. For though she says she would like "a more strict restraint/upon the sisters"
of St. Clare (I: 4, 4-5), what she does is to marry the Duke whose, "so bring us to our palace" (V: 1, 535) at the end opens out the prospect of a worldly existence for his Duchess, a prospect she accepts without question. In fact, her religious vocation is silently dropped from thought as she busies herself in the world. Her mission is indeed noble—to intercede for her brother's life—but what of her commission? On her first interview with Angelo she makes subtle distinctions between the sin and the sinner (II: 2, 34-36) which having been properly rejected, she prepares to leave and forsake her brother's cause. Her seemingly ingenuous faith in Justice at this point is nothing less than lack of resolve, for, urged by Lucio, she soon shows a grasp of alternative arguments (II: 2, 48-50). We begin to feel that her chief interest is in preserving appearances—of charity, and later of chastity—to the exclusion of overall consistency and for her own protection. Thus when she appeals to Angelo that in upholding a principle of law he is "too cold" (II: 2, 56), that he should apply mercy (II: 2, 63) and pity (II: 2, 100), she is speaking according to the principles of Christian charity. Yet when her own chastity is threatened she is able to adjust these values so competently that when she says she would rather die than yield to Angelo (II: 4, 99-103), we are tempted to believe her. It is not until we realise that the very virtues she had pleaded so eloquently for are the first to be
discarded (when it is she who is in jeopardy) that we see her as a shrewd prig in thus casting off Claudio:

Then, Isabel live chaste, and brother, die; More than our brother is our chastity. (II: 4, 183-184)

If we add to this her lies in the name of revenge (V:1, 104), and her ingenious argument that effectively promotes Angelo's innocence, we are unable to believe that Isabella is the true saint, the upholder of Christian values in a decadent world. She is expedient and cunning and so well adapted to a universe where values contradict without resolution that she is able to accommodate them all and turn them to her advantage.

And so to Donne. "The Canonisation" was probably written during the period between Donne's marriage (1601), and 1605 when he moved to Mitcham and began to work for Morton. It was a time of seclusion, Helen Gardner surmises, and a time of intensive reading when he is certain to have thought long about the nature of love, a love that in practical terms had so recently ruined his chances of worldly success and in intellectual terms had been stimulated by his readings in the Neo-platonists. Underlying all his thinking, of course, was Christian teaching on love with its complex patterns of transcendence, asceticism, sacrifice and worship against which his Latin readings in Ovid and Propertius sorted oddly. The matter was overwhelmingly complicated; yet, to the extent that he had to come to terms with it in
order to make major decisions about the course and direction of his life, it was pressingly urgent that he should try to resolve the conflicts that presented themselves. The fundamental conflict appeared as the traditional opposition between material and spiritual, temporal and eternal, earthly and divine claims, for Donne could not allow the evidence of his senses to be annulled by the schoolmen's misogyny, nor exercises of his soul to be explained away by sensuality--different truths existed, they often appeared contradictory: his creative role was to attempt a reconciliation. It is against this background that I think "The Canonisation" must be set if it is to be understood, for it is, despite its witty slickness, its colloquialisms and initial bluster, an intensely serious poem that attempts to face and unite different concepts of love. The later poems require that we go beyond Mario Praz' comment that Donne uses imagery purely as a "'barrister's special pleading, [for] . . . practical rather than speculative reasons, such reasons as displaying an exercise of wit . . . at using and showing his dialectical skill.'"23 This remains true of "The Flea" but in "The Canonisation" other concerns become apparent.

If, then, we take the polarity of material and spiritual values to define the poem's extremes, how does Donne accommodate them within forty-five lines?

The poem, as we have seen, begins boisterously with a demand for privacy so that the speaker can love without
interference. We judge the love to be romantic and physical by the passionate vigour of the expostulation which runs through the verse without pause until the semi-colon after "contemplate," and then it is as though he only stops to draw breath for a final exasperated dismissal--"what you will, approve,/so you will let me love." The verse gives an immediate sense of spontaneity as though the pressure of thought created a form most suitable to its demands: the dramatic outburst in the first line whose three rhythmic stresses on "Godsake," "tongue," and "love" dominate the line and make traditional scansion seem pedantic; the short sarcastic phrases that follow with their random mention of physical disabilities give a sense of quick invention, and the short sentences--"take you a course,/get you a place"--are syntactically underplayed by being run on with only a comma between them to give the effect of snorts of derision, rather than grammatically correct and coolly issued advice. Thus, thought and form are one in rebuffing the worldly interest that tries to counsel illicit love into more acceptable channels, and in so strenuously defending his position, the lover makes it quite clear how superior he considers his love to the crass values suggested by "a course," "a place," court attendance and subjection to those two rulers, King and coin (l. 17). Indeed, the mood of "The Sunne Rising" is caught in his complete rejection of all things external to his love:
"She is all States, and all Princes, I, / Nothing else is."

And not only does he repudiate the world but shows his independence of religious values in the initial blasphemy and in his sardonic use of "contemplate" (l. 8) to describe the courtier's progress, when in the seventeenth century it had such clear religious associations. It is part of Donne's art to have foreshadowed the religious element of the latter half of the poem in such an antithetical way, for there we are encouraged to value the religious imagery, here to devalue it, so that the sense of extreme positions is constantly stimulated.

The second stanza further intrenches his isolationism, reinforcing his defense of perhaps the same bedroom where even the sun was a busy intruder ("The Sunne Rising") and the room "an everywhere" ("The Good-Morrow"). His attitude to the Petrarchan clichés is essentially cynical and by mocking their extravagance he strengthens the reality of his own love, "What merchant ships have my sighs drown'd?"

And put like that it is impossible not to agree with him that his love is harmless enough. Thus we see that the first two stanzas establish firmly the sense of a man vehemently defending his right to love a woman and, though it is not explicit, the busybody interlocutor and the "heats" and "colds" suggest that the love is also illicit, in which case he is also defending his right to break social conventions when love is his guide. Generally, the tone is consistent, the
love physical, the style vigorous. So far there is no more
than the slightest adumbration of later changes, and we are
prepared to accept the poem as a eulogy of earth-bound
love, in the same way as we accept "The Sunne Rising." It
is in the third stanza, though, that a process of transformation
begins which manoeuvres the poem around till the celebration
of the terrestrial (and immoral) is sanctified by reference
to the celestial—till, that is, Donne has brought together
the two extremes and by the most ingenious adjustments
has apparently reconciled them. Thus, the speaker, after
shrugging off the interlocutor (l. 19), presents a run of
images to express the nature of his love. The first, that
of the "flye" was "to the Renaissance mind the . . .
standard example of both ephemerality and unbridled sexuality,"\(^{25}\)
and to that extent it coincides with the tone of the first
two stanzas. The second image, too, pursues that line, for
the taper consumes itself in its own fire as the lovers
"die" by passion. The effectiveness of the image requires
the pun on "die" which in seventeenth-century usage meant
sexual orgasm, each instance of which shortened life by a day.
Thus the lovers consummate their love at their own "cost"—a
word used with nice irony as it borrows the language of the
materialistic enquirer but is turned to the speaker's own
emotional uses. However, despite the clear relation of this
line (l. 21) to what has gone before, in small ways it shows
signs of the transition: the taper that is consumed in its
own fire anticipates the phoenix image which follows and the difference between the two is instructive, for the resurrective powers of the phoenix sets off the purely destructive function of the taper so that while an image of vigour, it is made by implication, also an image of incompleton. Physical love is not everything: the lover has been saying it is. The shift has begun. Furthermore, these seeds of uncertainty throw a new emphasis on "die" (l. 21) and we see it for a moment in its stark and simple sense. The lovers approach death; what then? Is their earthly bliss sufficient to give them confidence in the face of death? By placing the word, as if humorously, in this line he is, in fact, beginning a serious analysis of death in relation to life and love. Thus, in summing up the Phoenix image he writes, "wee dye and rise the same, and prove/mysterious by this love." Here again "dye and rise" can be taken sexually but it is a forced pun for sexuality has been effectively neutralised in the preceding line ("one neutral thing") and the conventional seriousness of the Phoenix emblem makes it an unlikely reading. It was "for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance . . . an emblem of Christ and of the doctrine of the Resurrection," and so the phrase relies most heavily on this sense, especially as the love that the Phoenix embodies is "mysterious," like the mystery of the Resurrection. What is more, a shift in tone is indicated by his handling of the images.
The second stanza plays with the Petrarchan metaphors as though they are worn-out tags suitable only to express his scorn. The images of "eagle" and "dove", though, are set in an uncomplicated clause that merely states a fact. The straightforwardness and the complementary balance provided by strength (eagle) and tenderness (dove) give the impression of a deliberative mind at work as opposed to the rhodomontade of the earlier verses. Similarly, in the Phoenix image, when the two lovers become "one" (l. 24) and "so, to one neutrall thing both sexes fit" (l. 25), the associations include the world of Neo-platonic philosophy wherein souls combine in an ecstasy of intimacy. It is sufficient only to make that allusion to realise that the frame of reference of the poem is subtly broadening and deepening away from the original worldly setting, and we are entering an area of thought where religion and philosophy set the tone. Thus, when the fourth stanza begins "wee can dye by it, if not live by love" (l. 28), the contrast with "live" clearly indicates cessation of life as the primary reading, a sense which "tombes," "hearse," "urne," and "ashes" reinforce by establishing a gravity of subject and tone. Despite the fact that building "sonnets" in "pretty roomes" puns on the Italian for room (stanza), a pun is no disqualification of seriousness in Donne--"when thou has done, thou has not done,/for I have more" he writes in the "Hymne to God the
Father," one of his last devotional pieces. Rather, the somewhat far-fetched nature of the "roomes" pun effectively attunes the mind to the intellectual attention that the stanza requires of it, for complexities of the transformation process are here considerable. The lover, to paraphrase, says that if the history of their love affair is unfit for an epitaph it will at least make the subject of a sonnet. However, he speaks very fastidiously, for he makes a distinction between types of histories, such as the "legend" or saint's life, and the "chronicle," or record of historical events. To this point, despite the gradual deepening of references, there has been no suggestion that the lovers are anything but earthly lovers who, in their highest moments experience a kind of ecstasy (Phoenix image). Now, though, by pointing out this distinction, and also by juxtaposing the pompous "half-acre tombes" (with all their associations of worldly vanity), against the "well wroughte urne" (with its suggestions of the engraved vessel for a saint's relics), Donne is allowing the reader the appearance of choice. It is as though the lovers' history may be recorded in either sacred or secular verse, and the reader is free to think in terms of either, as his response to the first three stanzas will guide him. In this way the polar tension is maintained and the reader is made to feel as though he is in a position to judge freely. But this disarming manoeuvre is immensely
skilful for it permits the poet, in that moment of good faith, to manipulate a pattern of words that force the issue. Thus, beneath the neat parallelism of "legen/chronicle," "urne/tombe," we see another metamorphosis emerging as "verse" (l. 30) is re-phrased as "sonnets" (l. 32). Now, sonnets in Donne's time freely meant songs, and songs anticipate the "hymnes" of line 35. Possibly even the fact that hymns are often sung in canon distantly anticipates, at a purely verbal level, the imminent canonisation, but certainly the specifically religious association of the hymn is felt. What is more, by reading the "urne" as synonymous with the "sonnets," we notice a further reinforcement of the transition process in that the "ashes" confer sanctity upon the "urne" (i.e. sonnets/hymns) by being both saintly relics and by referring us back to the Phoenix. Thus to move from the singing of hymns that praise the dead lovers, to an acceptance of their canonical status comes as no great shock as hymns and saints are of a kind. Quite clearly we had no option but to come to this conclusion although we would have thought it impossible from the first two stanzas. The success of the manoeuvre relies on partially concealed correspondences between different senses of words which accumulate sufficient influence to support what would else be extravagant. The mode of persuasion is not logical; it is associative and we are convinced of a reconciliation of opposites largely by our inability to refute the . fusion. But there is, however, a residual
uneasiness about the process that has to do with its slickness, its verbal legerdemain. It is the same reservation we hold when the conjuror's stooge is cut in half with such reality. We hesitate to discredit our eyes but we know we must, for we know that appearances are being manipulated for effect. And just as in Measure for Measure we saw how Isabella saved appearances and sought momentary rather than permanent resolutions to her dilemmas, so here Donne is in the process of doing the impossible by deft adjustments of language, which for the moment bring together the earthly and divine poles of love.

It is, however, part of Donne's technique not to allow us time to prepare objections, for having successfully introduced the idea of religious love he hastens to exploit it. Thus after the period closes the fourth stanza, he begins the fifth with the co-ordinating conjunction "and" as though "thus invoke us" were a main clause balancing the "all shall approve . . ." clause. There is structural enjambement, therefore, that overrides the end-stopped punctuation and effectively sweeps the argument through to the invocation, which proceeds as though the matter of religious love has never been in question. In other words, the speaker cleverly accepts his own plausible conclusions in order to consolidate his success in establishing a religious reference. He continues then, with complete confidence
that our credibility is unshaken, to broaden the base of religious association. The lovers are now dead and we allude back to line 28 ("Wee can dye by it, if not live by love"), to realise that in the light of the intervening lines this death has taken on the glories of martyrdom, as voluntary death for love is the martyr's hope.

Thus, martyrs and saints, the lovers are invoked in prayer. At this point the delicate transitional work has been done and the prayer parallels the first two stanzas in being unambiguous in tone: it assumes Platonic love in its strictest sense whereby they love each other, not for themselves alone but for God in them (l. 37, 38), and sets their blissful union against the rage and decay of earth-bound love (l. 39). It then commends their insight which saw in epitome the quintessential nature of the world (l. 40-44), and ends by imploring the lovers to beg of God that He reveal to men as a paradigm to emulate, that ideal pattern incarnated by the lovers. This prose statement shows how unified is the voice and how consistent the reference in the last stanza: we are in a religious setting ("reverent," "hermitage," the prayer) and Neo-platonism appears as the theological/philosophical base. 28

Our discussion so far has given every indication that the accommodation process is successfully completed, but there are signs that it is not so—that the balance of the poem set up by two verses earthly, and two verses transitional, demands two verses Divine. The attempt to make up by compression
what is lost by length leads to obscurity, especially as the form his "spontaneous" outburst (verse one) prescribed is very demanding. Not only does "love" begin and end each verse, but it rhymes within each verse as well. Thus, where love is A, we have A b b A c c c A A. Once established, the triple rhyming c's and the changing octosyllabic and decasyllabic lines form a rigid pattern to maintain and while fulfilled schematically, the final verse shows signs of considerable compression. The first four lines proceed fluently, but the conceit of the "worlds soule" driven into the lovers' eyes slowly founders. The energy released in "drove" is checked by "so" which means here, "which in this way" were "made such mirrors, and such spies" (l. 42).

In the same line (42), the strong caesura after "mirrors" again arrests the flow which should have the confident movement of a dramatic monologue sweeping to a convincing conclusion, but it seems to falter. The following line, "that they did all to you epitomize," in presenting a run of monosyllables, does not easily resolve into a rhythmic pattern, especially as the placing of both the direct and indirect objects before the verb is momentarily distracting. Though it may be argued that the displacing "all" draws attention to it and therefore emphasises its sense of the All, the Universe,²⁹ (which is important in fulfilling the epitome image), it does leave the grammatical function of "Countries, Townes, Courts" in temporary doubt as, being nouns in opposition,
they are separated from their reference, which is awkward. As if aware of his crabbed style at this stage Donne abruptly stops the image, without, I think, making his point as clearly as he wished and without having the space to expand. What he is saying is that the lovers, in being sanctified, hallow all they look upon. Thus as the world appears in epitome, or in microcosm as an image in their eyeballs, so that world as macrocosm is blessed. Furthermore, as the eyeball is itself a globe its reception of the "worlds soule" confers an essential spiritual value to that other globe—the world at large. Even a prose enlargement is densely packed and the reduction still further into Donne's four lines is almost reduction to the absurd. That Donne felt the constriction is shown in the gasp for air one has to take at the colon after "Courts," and in the way in which "Beg from above/a patterne of your love" follows in a rush after the explosive "B" (of Beg) and exhausts itself quickly in an exclamation point.

However, despite the artistic inadequacy of these lines it is quite clear what Donne was attempting to do in the last stanza—to consolidate the spiritual condition to which the lovers had attained and thereby to forge a link between love temporal and love eternal—to bridge a gap between the irreconcilable. If we refer back to what I said earlier about the biographical circumstances of this poem (as far as they can be known) and their indications that it should be read
as a serious attempt to resolve these oppositions, then we can see that by casting the poem into a dramatic mold, and by using us as a participating audience, he is able to test the effectiveness of his persuasion. If we are unconvinced the reconciliation is defective. Thus the lover (a Donne persona) must compel by his suasive argument, for he has invested every subtlety into fusing the two poles. As we have seen though, that while appearances are saved, an examination and a recognition of his manipulative skill go to show that the problem is not finally resolved. There remains a polar tension and all we can say (to paraphrase Sypher) is that the strain within the mannerist conscience and in Donne's sensibility is reduced by his wit, his juggling with contraries, his "taking advantage of the doubt in the elliptical, shuttling system of things" and his accommodations, but he is unable to affirm a splendid marriage of heaven and earth.
CHAPTER THREE

In reading Elizabethan songs and sonnets, we may note their diversity; how Wyatt's "plain style"\(^1\) differs from the aureate manner of Spenser's *Amoretti*; how the insistent alliterations and rambling poulter's measures in *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1575) contrast with the finely controlled verbal music of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*; and how the convention of the idealised woman can elicit from Spenser, sonnet LXIV and from Shakespeare, sonnet CXXX; but on the whole we are more impressed by a sameness in the lyric voice as the melody changes but the harmony stays the same. I do not wish to labour the metaphor but in so far as it implies a unifying element that holds the various voices together, its sense is important, for Elizabethan verse, at least until the 1590's, is characterised by fundamentally similar assumptions, some account of which should be given.

It was, as C.S. Lewis puts it, the "Golden Age"\(^2\) of the English Renaissance wherein the ideal of an ordered universe was powerfully upheld for the last time before the eighteenth century. "One can say dogmatically," says E.M.W. Tillyard, "that it was still solidly theocentric,"\(^3\) and though less dogmatically, one can say geocentric too. The great models
of the Middle Ages—the Chain of Being, the Correspondence of Planes, and the Dance of the Universe—still held powerful emotional influences on the way people thought: above all, order stood as the key concept in their world view. Without order there would be chaos which to the Elizabethan mind meant "the cosmic anarchy before creation and . . . wholesale dissolution." \(^4\) Thus we find in the literature a didactic and stylistic insistence on degree, harmony and balance. We see it given full expression in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* where Ulysses speaks of

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The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree priority and place
Insisture course proportion season form
Office and custom, in all line of order;
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
In noble eminence enthron'd and spher'd
Amidst the other, whose meddlesome eye
Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil
And posts like the commandment of a King,
Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
Commotion in the winds, frights changes horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture . . .
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows. Each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
And make a sop of this solid globe.
Strength should be lord to imbecility,
And the rude son should strike the father dead.
This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
Follows the choking. (I: 3, 85-126)
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Spenser's *Hymn of Love* described creation when God took the warring elements and
tempering goodly well
Their contrary dislikes with loved means,
Did place them all in order to compel
To keep themselves within their sundry reigns
Together linkt with adamantine chains;
Yet so as that in every living wight
They mix themselves and show their kindly might. (ll. 85-91)

And, as Salinger points out, Hooker's definition of law is the last statement to base human law on natural law:

Now, if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether though it were but for a while the observation of her own laws . . . what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?

Such a view of cosmic orderliness (with its special application to man as the universe in microcosm) provides something of the \textit{zeitgeist} in which Sidney and Spenser were working. While Spenser develops the moral implications of this condition most fully in the \textit{Faerie Queen}, it is Sir Philip Sidney, that "best English example of the Renaissance ideal," who most completely fulfilled the virtues of a Christian humanist, for both in his life and writings he upheld the exemplary--his life was courteous: his writing: decorous.

If we consider \textit{Astrophil and Stella} we are struck by a pervasive sense of symmetry and balance, even though Sidney was still experimenting with the sonnet form. The mere choice of the sonnet to record his passions suggests a need to submit his feelings to a firm discipline and the meticulous craftsmanship of the sequence is evidence of his "rage for order"--in fact, of the one hundred and eight sonnets, fifty-
nine have an abba abba cdcd ee pattern. And then again, although the series has no obvious framework such as the monthly progression in Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar, it is unified. If we overlook, as C.S.Lewis urges us to do, the biographical narrative that earlier scholars stressed, we still are left with an outline which Nashe curtly summarised as "the argument cruel chastities the Prologue hope, the Epilogue dispaire." Ringler has expressed its pattern more fully when he writes that "in general there is an orderly progression of mood, the focus of attention remains fixed upon Astrophil as the lover of Stella, no irrelevances are allowed to intrude, and the courtship is presented as having a beginning, a middle, and an end." That is, the sonnets, in representing a sustained analysis of what it is like to be in love, are arranged "to provide a narrative and psychological progression, and so produce a sequence that is more dramatic and highly ordered than any other in the Renaissance." How they are ordered may be seen in the following analysis of both sequence and poems.

The poet begins by examining his art and precedents (Sonnets 1, 3) and by setting out the terms by which his love is to be understood: it is in terms of "vertue" and "love," where "vertue" represents the highest moral aspirations and "Love," together with "Gupid," personifies Desire. The state of being in love is then explored for its moral and emotional possibilities, as a slow but shapely narrative allows each incident to be developed. Thus, after Astrophil
declares his love and is met with "disdain" (Sonnet 12), Stella begins to show signs that the attraction is mutual and looks favourably on his tournament (Sonnet 41); she gives her heart, though conditionally (Sonnet 69); he steals a kiss (Song 2) and all promises well in a "new-found Paradise" (Sonnet 81). But then she suddenly leaves and he has to come to terms with his loss, including the fact that other women can attract him. (Sonnet 85). However, he rises above temptation to sublimate his love in the natural world (Sonnets 99, 100, 102): this point marks the final ascendancy of "vertue" over "desire" as, through the process of self-examination, he has emerged with strength and dignity (Sonnet 107), though without attaining the spiritual assurance that the later sonnet "Leave me o love . . ." records. There is, then, an unhurried "psychological progression" which, in tracing "vertue's" growing power to resist Desire's cry "Give me some food" (Sonnet 71), binds and orders the poems to produce a simulacrum of the morally structured world.

However, it is not until we consider the particular poems that Sidney's organisational discipline is most apparent. For example, the structure of Sonnet 52 has all the symmetry of debate. The competition between "vertue" and "love" for Stella is at first presented (ll. 1-2). Love then claims his title to "her eyes, her lips, her all" (1. 3) only to be answered by "vertue's" claim to Stella's "soule, sure
heire of heav'nly blisse" (l. 7). The conflict is then elaborated. At this point, the poet mediates authoritatively in the language of cool reason. "And therefore," he says, let "vertue" have her share (i.e. Stella's "selfe") and let "love" have his ("her beauty and her grace") and all will be well. In fact, despite the alternating argument, the witty effect caused by the poet siding with "love" in the last line, "... but that body grant to us," introduces a bias that finally disturbs the balance.

This is not true, however, of the Sonnet "Charita" which Theodore Spencer has praised for "its monosyllabic simplicity of diction ... and the flawless movement of rhetoric. The poem[he says] is a perfectly drawn circle, ending most contentedly where it began."¹² We can see something of this by noting its decorum, how style impeccably suits the matter, for in recording the stability of a love where affections are exchanged, the poem itself remains in a state of equipoise. Such balance can be demonstrated, for not only does the whole poem move with a steady iambic pulse and conform to a flawless abab cdcd efef gg rhyme scheme but in verse one, for example, the three strong caesuras (l. 1-3) act as fulcra about which the lines turn. "My true love hath my hart, and I have his" present two simple main clauses on either side of the caesura which correspond stylistically with the idea of the line—the equal exchange of love.
The pivotal effect is sustained through the third line where again the change from "I hold his deare" turns on the caesura before "and myne he cannot misse." The fourth line, in being a simple sentence without pause, stabilises the movement and clinches the stanza: "There never was a better bargain driv'ne." Furthermore, the opposition set up between "his" and "mine," "me" and "him" continues through the poem and we see how the lines,

His hart his wound receaved from my sight  
My hart was wounded, with his wounded hart, (ll. 9-10)

in echoing,

His hart in me, keepes me and him in one  
My hart in him, his thoughtes and sense guides, (ll. 5-6)

formally reinforces the counter-balanced nature of the argument. Even the rhetorical figures, so often elaborately self-conscious (viz. Euphuess) unobtrusively support the harmonious effect. The repetition mentioned above ("anaphora") is a case in point, while the amplification in lines 11 and 12 of lines 9 and 10 ("prolepsis") creates a pleasing parallelism. The word "wound" in lines 9 and 10, in occurring only in the fourth and eighth stress points, has a regular bell-like quality in its re-iteration ("ploee") that modulates the movement of the lines. And then finally, of course, to end the celebration of "blisse" it is fitting to perpetuate the state and by repeating the first line, the poem comes full circle. There is no more to be said: unlike the figures on Keats' "Grecian Urn" who are
caught in uneasy motion—

What men what gods are these? What maidens loath?
What made pursuit? What struggles to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?—

Sidney’s lovers have achieved stasis and the poem itself becomes the symbol of their perfect harmony.

At this point, I would like to clarify my intentions somewhat. By using Sidney as a paradigm, I am trying to set down certain general principles of the English literary Renaissance as they affect the lyric tradition. So far, I have argued that the early Elizabethan cosmology inherited from the Mediaeval world-view to make the thought of irregularity abhorrent and that this passion for order is manifested in the poetry. What I would like to do now is to narrow the topic a little and discuss one aspect of an ordered world—convention, and specifically Renaissance Petrarchanism, for it is against the tide of the Petrarchan tradition that Donne defined his own voice.

To this end we may begin with a comment by Theodore Spencer on Sir Philip Sidney where he writes that

to find his own voice, to discover his own poetic idiom and his own rhythm, is the main business of a poet . . . . But there is one constant fact which is true of all poets at all times; the discovery of oneself depends on an act of submission. For the poet, as for the human being, to lose one’s life is to find it . . . .

In the sixteenth century, this saving loss of personality, this discovery of self through submission to an 'other', could be accomplished to a considerable extent through convention. Convention is to the poet in an age of belief what the persona is to the poet in an age of bewilderment. By submission to either the poet acquires authority . . . in both cases he has taken the first step toward universality.
The point to draw from this is that for the sixteenth century, literary values were strongly traditional and it was considered a mark of excellence to emulate previous manners. Thus "from Petrarch through the Quattrocento writers and the poets of the Pleiades to Ronsard and Tasso and the Elizabethans, the stream of self-expression broadened down from precedent to precedent," and each writer absorbed the tradition in order to be able to speak with authority. There was no sense then of "profuse strains of unpremeditated art" because for each poet of the Renaissance, the power to be himself had been delegated: each one imitated to be original. "It was [says Lever] in the traditional patterns of thought and feeling that the distinctive personality of the poet became integrated with society's estimate of the individual." As a result the three hundred and eight canzoniere of Petrarch became the touchstone of lyric excellence for the next two hundred years. Many of Wyatt's poems were little more than Petrarch Englished, while for Surrey, Petrarch "must have seemed in many ways the modern Virgil, a master of sweet, sonorous and strong speech" to be studied and copied. It is in this tradition that Sidney is to be set, for it was Astrophil and Stella that "earned him the title of 'English Petrarch.'" Of course, Sidney was innovative. He does not idealize Stella so that she becomes the demi-god that Laura is. She is indeed irresistible but is not above a blush (Sonnet 66), sickness (Sonnet 101),
and is even riddlingly brought down to earth by being identified as Lady Rich (Sonnet 37). In fact, we may say that one of the great differences between the two sequences is that Sidney never lets his idealism belie his experience—there is always the sense of actuality behind the poems which prevents the lady's remoteness from becoming abstract. For Petrarch, "feeling centers in the conception of love as a type of religious worship, and at this point it joins Platonic philosophy [which sees love as] a cosmic force drawing the amorist to contemplate universal ideas of goodness and beauty."20 But for Sidney the absolutes of love are always qualified by reference to his own feelings.21 And then again, there is a new note in Sidney which is to appear later in Donne and Shakespeare as parody and satire. In the Sidney sequence though, it is shown by the sort of irony which can write, "whence hast thou Ivorie, Rubies, pearle and gold,/to shew her skin, lips, teeth and head so well?" (Sonnet 32) with complete conventional decorum, but can also in Sonnet 18 appear bitter about Stella's demands or in Sonnet 69 undercut a concession that she has offered with a worldly afterthought—"No kings be crowned, but they some covenants make" (l. 14). It is the quality described by Montgomery as the "apparently haphazard lumping together of Petrarchan clichés and arresting ironies,"22 that indicates that Sidney is working at the end of a tradition and that his innovations eventually work the downfall of the convention.
If then Sidney contributes something novel to the Petrarchan sonnet sequence it must be stressed how indebted he was to its traditions. He mentions Petrarch specifically as a source of information (Sonnet 15) and in the early sonnets when he is preparing the ground, as it were, to sing Stella's praises he tells how he studied "inventions fine, . . . oft turning others' leaves" (Sonnet 17) to find the means to express his love. Ostensibly disappointed in this he turns elsewhere and is guided by his Muse who says "looke in thy heart and write" (Sonnet 1). Love then becomes its own tutor and, "inspired with Stella's kisse" (Sonnet 74), his thoughts flow "with so smooth an ease" (Sonnet 74) and the words "flow in verse" (74). It was not until Sidney Lee in 1904 that critics began to realise that "hardly any of [Sidney's] poetic ideas, and few of his "swelling phrases" are primarily of his own invention," and that even, as Mario Praz has put it more recently, "notwithstanding his protests of independent inspiration, [Sidney] was rehearsing most of the hackneyed tropes of the Continental sonneteers, nay at the very moment he claimed to be no pickpurse of another's brain, he was deriving from Du Bellay's ode "Contre le Petrarquistes." Thus, even Sidney's "sincerity" is put along with all the paraphernalia of Cupids, Oxymorons, "sugred sentences," Personification, and prostration that is in direct lineage from Petrarch.
The extent of Sidney's borrowing has been explored by Janet Scott, who finds numerous similarities between his work and that of Chariteo, Séraphin, Fontano, Scève Ronsard and the Pléiades, but she admits that as direct sources go, the case is "très indécises." There is no doubt, however, that "sa plus grande dette en a coup sur envers Pétrarque" and she goes on to document specific instances such as the comparison of Stella's head to a building. The example occurs in "Canzone" 25:

Muri eran d'alabastro e tello d'oro
D'avorio uscio, e fenetre di zaffiro.

Sidney writes:

Hath his front built of Alabaster pure,
Gold is the covering of the stately place.

And then again Sonnet 71 opens:

Who will in fairest book of Nature know,
How Vertue may best lodg'd in beautie be.
Let him but learne of Love to reade in thee.

This, she says, derives from Petrarch's Sonnet 210:

Chi vuol veder quantumque può natura
e 'l ciel tra noi, venga a mirar costei . . .
Vedra, s'arriva a tempo, ogni vertute,
ogni bellezza, ogni real costume
guinti in un corpo con mirabil tempre. 27

To sum up we may say that Sidney belonged to and identified with a powerful literary convention through which he was able to find his own voice. He accepted that his individuality was most fulfilled by submitting it to a body of experience that stretched back to Petrarch and was, by accretion, more authoritative than his own. This was
fitting, for it was Petrarch himself who said that "a poet's business is to be like a bee, accumulating and ordering excellences from every conceivable literary source to turn into his own honey."28

I have thought it necessary in giving some account of the period immediately previous to Donne to stress the sense of order and convention that prevailed, so as to provide a basis for the following discussion, for it is Walter Friedläender who, in Mannerism and Anti-Mannerism in Italian Painting, insists that the Mannerist style is not to be understood except in relation to what he terms a "classic" style: that is a style in Italian painting that has "definite rules and norms" and generally incorporates the principles of harmony and order we have been speaking of. Thus, he says,

there arose an 'ideal art' which, however, . . . laid claims on nature, indeed in a strikingly canonical sense. Only what this artistic attitude set up as right and proper in proportions and the like counted as beautiful and, even more than that, as the only thing truly natural. On the basis of this idealized and normative objectivization, the individual object of the classic style . . . was removed formally, in its organization, and psychically, in its gestures and expression, from any subjective, purely optical, impression. It was no longer exposed to the more subjective whim of the individual artist, but was heightened and idealized to something objective and regular. 29

This essentially is the aesthetic of Sir Philip Sidney.

Now Friedläender continues: "Sharply opposed in many and basic elements to this high, idealistic, normative attitude . . . stands the attitude of the anti-classical style, normally
called Mannerism. It remains, then, to characterize the nature of the 'opposition;' to identify the criteria by which Donne is to be assessed. In the first place, says Friedlander, "what is decisive is the changed relationship of this new artistic outlook to the artistically observed object." That is, instead of a conformist attitude on the part of the artist, he now relies upon a "fantastica idea non appogiata all'imitazione—an imaginative idea unsupported by imitation" and this we can see will have far reaching effects on form. For instead of working within the Renaissance canon the artist came to reject "the normative and the natural through an almost exclusive employment of rhythmic feeling." As one result, symmetry become "dislodged or more or less broken up," and even "in extreme cases ... thrust and dissonance are hazarded." The key point is that

the whole bent of anti-classic art is basically subjective, since it would construct and individually reconstruct from the inside out, from the subjective outward, freely, according to the rhythmic feeling present in the artist, while classic art, socially oriented, seeks to crystallize the object for eternity by working out from the regular, from what is valid for everyone.

To exemplify this we may look at "that overwhelming paradigm of Mannerism," Michelangelo's Last Judgement. Sir Anthony Blunt said of it, that "the most fundamental principle of the High Renaissance seems here to have been neglected, for there is little reconstruction of the real world, no real space, no perspective, no typical proportions."
The artist is intent only on conveying his particular kind of idea." We notice how, for example, the painting is disposed into pockets of action that have a life of their own almost independent of the total action. Certainly, if the trumpeters of the apocalypse were seen in isolation they would appear complete and discrete, unlike, say, the trumpeters in Fra Bartolommeo's *Last Judgement* where their position and the angles of their trumpets as they triangulate up to the Christ they are heralding, have an inseparable function in the painting. And then again, in the absence of any dominant focus, it is impossible to explain Michelangelo's handling of size by perspective alone and we must assume an artistic autonomy whose criteria are subjective—"it is, as Shearman puts it, as though Michelangelo was "imposing an all-powerful artistic will on forms of classical derivation." We can see this quite clearly if we adopt Christ as a focal point, and notice the circle of figures that surrounds him. The condensed and foreshortened figures above Christ are wilfully executed because the effect is inconsequential, if not contradictory. They have nowhere to recede to and in any case they strain against the movement of bodies that encircle Christ on a flat plane. And then why is the figure of Peter so much larger than that of Jacob, as they are both on the same perimeter? If it is replied that Peter has symbolic magnitude why is he larger than Christ? The answer has to do with the Mannerist vision which is guided
less by prescriptive rules than by a feeling for, as Friedlander says, "the rhythm of an idea." If we look at Peter we see that his twisting, unbalanced stance, athletic build and aggressive jaw fulfill an idiosyncratic idea of the church so effectively that his spatial relation with Christ becomes of less importance than his independent existence. Thus Michelangelo's vision of him, his subjective view, challenges the traditional decorum with which Peter should be treated. Perhaps this point may also be amplified by Michelangelo's idiosyncratic treatment of Church dogma: it is surely a reflection of his individuality that the dead should be rising with such reluctance and that the Virgin, Paragon of compassion, should be either coy or unmoved beside Christ's angry hand when neither is traditionally appropriate. Michelangelo, then, is re-interpreting the received opinions of his time, submitting them to his own creative intelligence and in the process is creating a distinctive style (or at least contributes to its emergence). In the remainder of this chapter I hope to draw attention to the fact that Donne, like Michelangelo, responds to an old order by taking its component parts and by re-working them into a new style; that he, too, works "from the inside out," and thereby declares himself Mannerist.

It is a commonplace of criticism that Donne is startlingly different and that after Tottel, Spenser or Sidney, to pick up the Songs and Sonnets and meet with "For Godsake hold your
tongue and let me love" or "I wonder by my troth . . . " is
to enter into a new world. Certainly, precedents can be
found for the declamatory opening, Sidney's "Fly, fly,
my friends, I have my death wound; fly" (Sonnet 20), for instance,
but scattered examples cannot compare with the unique effect
of the Songs and Sonnets as a collection. Thus, from Carew's
comment on Donne that

The Muses garden with Pendentique weedes
O'erspred, was pug'd by thee; The lazie seeds
Of servile imitation throwne away;
And fresh invention planted . . . ; 40
to Courthope's remark that "this fine Platonic edifice
[of courtly/Petrarchan love] is ruthlessly demolished in the
poetry of Donne,"\textsuperscript{41} to Montgomery's "Donne . . . felt the
necessity of an explicit reaction against the Petrarchan
manner,"\textsuperscript{42} we have what amounts to a stock critical response--
that Donne has radically broken with the old style. Such
a view has recently been modified by Donald Guss who makes
the point that there are in fact two modes of Petrarchanism.
One, which he calls humanistic, "aims at universal truths,
external emotions, and neo-classical decorousness: it is
elegant, idyllic and sentimental. . . . Donne, however,
writes in the other Petrarchan mode--that characterised
by fantastic arguments, emotional extravagance and peregrin
comparisons."\textsuperscript{43} But even he goes on to say that "Donne's
originality . . . is primarily a conscious novelty in conceit
Indeed, the extravagant Petrarchanism he speaks of is a continental variety which is arguably Mannerist anyway, and by introducing it to England the same effect of a startling innovation is still produced. But, by emphasising Donne's originality, it is easy to underestimate his reliance on tradition for even though he may have been "cooking snooks at the Petrarchan adoration and Platonic idealism of Spenser and the sonneteers and flouting conventions which he and many of his contemporaries felt to have lasted too long," he was at least using those conventions, albeit in his singular way, and it is a corrective to note that C.S. Lewis stresses a developmental line when he writes that in style Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* are "primarily a development of one of two styles which we find in the world of Donne's immediate predecessors. One of these is the mellifluous, luxurious, 'builded rhyme,' as in Spenser's *Amoretti*; the other is the abrupt, familiar, and consciously 'manly' style in which nearly all Wyatt's lyrics are written." So with Guss' European antecedents and Lewis' English ones, Donne is given an historical context that makes him less of a *lusus naturae* but does not explain away his peculiar contribution.

What this contribution is may be seen by looking at the fundamental difference between Donne and Sir Philip Sidney, a difference which lies in their attitude towards their art. Sidney's imitative debt we have already discussed, but in Donne we find something different. His
voice is idiosyncratic and does not look to convention for its authority; rather it relies on "a finely discriminated fidelity to natural experience. What he pins down ... [says Smith] is not a moral insight or a final truth, or anything directly to do with the transcendental aspiration of the spirit at all; but something with the recognizable feel of common actuality." Then, without losing the immediacy of the experience he ransacks the storehouse of literary tradition to find the means to express it. However, it is the experience that is of first importance, and the conventions are treated with as much respect as is due to their usefulness—they are not otherwise venerated. As a result, we find that in drawing on the Petrarchan convention, Donne has selected elements that further his expressive needs and has given them a novel significance. Something of this may be seen in the Jeat Ring Sente, for example, where the token, instead of denoting a mark of affection as in the token exchange of hearts in Sidney's poem, here becomes the vehicle for a bitter gibe at his mistress' faithlessness. In Serafino (Sonnet 52), a similar black ring is used and is also sent by a mistress to her lover. But in that case, the ring is an integral part of the Petrarchan mode wherein, for example, the poet laments that the ring is removed from such a heaven (the lady) and declares how it was the flames of love that blackened it. In Donne, however, the ring serves a different function as it supports a tone of witty pragmatism. We see in the first verse how, by associating the ring's qualities with the predicaments of Renaissance
logic, Donne overtly refers the reader to a mode of thought that in its ratiocinative emphasis is antipathetic to abject devotion—by giving the lover a mind (vis à vis heart) the idealised woman is reduced to a mere "brittle" heart whose qualities are further impugned when the lover asks why, if their love was valuable, did she only send a jet ring! "Marriage rings are not of this stuffe" so, "Why should ought lesse precious, or less tough/figure our loves?" Then, punning on 'jeter' to throw, he points out that even its name pronounces "I am cheap and nought but fashion, fling me away." The effect is to reduce the whole moral and emotional force that the idealised woman symbolised and to substitute for it the worldly voice of a man who accepts that women are faithless but who yet still finds the experience hurtful. Thus, the discussion appears to lead to the urbane conclusion that "if she is not to be trusted then I will look after you [the ring]," but the smoothness of the progression is broken by an involuntary exclamation, the "Oh" of the last line, which is particularly poignant when set within such a tightly knit context. It is as though a formal exercise is suddenly interrupted by a private memory which rises unbidden. So what we have in this poem is an instance of Donne borrowing a stock image and giving it a distinctive turn by making it his own. But this in itself is not Manneristic for what poet does not feel that he is contributing something to a convention? It does, however,
point up Donne's individualistic bias which, as we have seen in Michelangelo, is an important part of the Mannerist psychology. To explore how this individualism expresses itself two love poems may be compared. One is Spenser's Amoretti XV, the other is Donne's "The Sunne Rising."

The Spenser poem is typically Petrarchan. It begins by elaborating an image of the "tradeful merchants" who scout "both the Indias" in their search for treasure. To the Elizabethans, such a venture was grandly heroic so their failure in this instance is certain sign of impossible odds. Spenser capitalises on the imaginative evocativeness of the image and uses it as a foil for the following hyperbole which is, of course, to define those odds in the form of his lady who is so valuable as to "containe/all this worlds riches." Her value is increased by baffling the adventurers. Once this metaphor has established her as being all "precious things," she is then understood by simple enumeration. For example, "if saphires, loe her eies be Saphires plane/if rubies, loe her lips be rubies sound" and so on through pearls, ivory, gold and silver. This is the device of 'accumulatio' whereby the piling up of sensuous imagery increases the sensuousness of the impression, simply by prolonging the experience. Rosamund Tuve has warned us, however, not to think of the figures as decorations in the sense of a garment put over the sense. They are the sense, she says, and if they appear repetitive it is not the images
that tire us but "it is the purport of these entirely relevant and functional images with which we are dissatisfied; we do not care to hear just how Spenser's lady is beautiful." However we may now respond to such a nose-gay of compliments, it is clear that Spenser's intention was to glorify the physical beauty of his lady, and given the terms of his statement—that whatever has value, that value derives from her—the intention is entirely fulfilled. However, in the best Neo-platonic tradition, Spenser is loth to leave her at the material level and pays her the ultimate compliment of praising her virtue:

But that which fairest is, but few behold,
Her mind adorn'd with vertues manifold. (ll. 13-14)

Thus, beautiful and virtuous, she remains an aspiration, an idealised embodiment of excellence. The form itself contributes to the idea of perfection as the inter-locking pattern of ABAB BCBC CDCD EE is effortlessly fulfilled, and apart from the line "If yuore, her forhead yuory weene" which forces two different rhythmic values on 'ivory,' the metre runs in impeccable iambics.

We may also notice how little the poem relies on argumentative techniques but proceeds by assertive statement, although there is the semblance of a logical pattern. The pattern is briefly this:'My love contains all riches (ll. 5-6), therefore all riches are part of my love (ll. 7-12). Riches
are beautiful but her mind is more beautiful (ll. 13-14).''

Put like this, we see the 'ifs' and 'buts,' the equations and conclusions are merely the properties of a logical vocabulary and do not support a consistent argument. There is a fallacy in assuming that riches are beautiful, and the conclusion that her mind is 'fairest' because her body is fair is a non sequitur, unless, of course, the missing links can be supplied from elsewhere. One way this is done is by bridging the gaps in other ways. The manner in which the treasures are described, for example, emphasises their aesthetic and sensuous qualities so insistently with such epithets as 'sound,' 'pure,' 'round,' 'faire,' 'finest,' and 'sheene,' that there is an associative link made between value and beauty that provides an emotional counterpart to a purely logical progression. The climax, however, is not prepared for in the poem itself and must be understood by reference to a scale of values outside the poem. Spenser shows such complete confidence in these values and in the fact that his audience will share his assumptions that he allows statement to take the place of argument. There is no need to argue the self-evident, is the thought. We can, therefore, deduce certain things about the state of mind that produces a poem like this: it is orderly and this order confidently asserts a greater universal order wherein values are stable and discoverable. It chooses to express itself in a well-established tradition as the tradition is itself.
an imitation of permanence; and when in love, it aspires to move through cupiditas to caritas.\footnote{50}  

Now if we turn to the Donne poem we notice certain similarities. Donne, too, is celebrating his love; he too, uses a central image to set off his mistress (the 'sun' as opposed to the 'merchants'), he coincidentally (?) uses an identical phrase ("both the Indies") and he makes generous use of the hyperbole; but after that it becomes easier to talk of their dissimilarities, as "The Sunne Rising" is clearly going about a similar task very differently.

The first thing to notice is what may be called the 'focus' of the poem. The Amoretti XV constructs a regular framework in which all the elements combine to praise the lady. To use a pictorial metaphor, we may say that within the rigid frame of the poem the lady dominates the central focus, and that the background of merchant ships and the foreground of rich descriptive details are unified by their contribution to the presentation of this figure—the ideal woman. The point of view is analogous to Raphael's The Madonna di Foligno where every feature fulfills the idea of the Madonna and Child. The distant village becomes Nazareth by virtue of the halo-like rainbow above it, while the diminutive sheep foretell Christ's pastoral work. In the foreground the figures of John the Baptist, St. Francis, Moses and the donor all direct our attention to the Virgin
enthroned on clouds of angels. Eyes and gestures lead the
gaze irresistibly up to where she sits surrounded by a
circle and at the apex of a firm triangle whose base is the
four supplicants, whose sides, the lines of their direct
attention. "The Sunne Rising", on the other hand, does
not declare its focus so explicitly. The focus is not,
for example, in his mistress, for although Donne would not
take his eyes off her for a second (ll. 13-14), she has
a decidedly inferior position to him, for, if she is all
States, he is all Princes (l. 21). If, then, the mistress
is not at the centre of the poem, and it is not the sun
as we shall see, then it must be Donne himself. The way,
for example, he has treated the sun image is an indication
of his impatience with anything else that can compete
with his intense subjectivity, or which can symbolise an
alternative focus of attention. We see how in the opening
lines the sun is reduced by the contemptuous outburst—"Busie
old foole, unruly Sunne"—which is given added impact by
the plosive 'b' and emphatic trochee that begin the line.
The sun is cast as a senile voyeur and the insult is given
special force in the choice of the epithet 'unruly' which
with its senses of unregulated and erratic, would have
considerable force to an age just adjusting to Copernican
changes. The tone of scorn is carried through the first verse
and culminates in the couplet:
Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,  
Nor houres, dayes, months, which are the rags of time.  
(ll. 9-10)

The effect here is of assertive superiority which proclaims love to be above time and mocks that instrument of time, the sun, as a mere "sawcy pedantic wretch." But because of the excited declamatory style and the nervous broken rhythms, we feel rather that it is Donne who is the saucy wretch and the sun that becomes his scapegoat. He is spotlit and feels uncomfortable. However, he persists in regarding himself as the centre of the universe for in the last verse we see how the conceit of contraction makes the two lovers one world. The sun is then invited to do its duty (l. 27) and to shine constantly on them. To do this its motion and therefore time must stop and we are left with an image of Donne and mistress on a bed floodlit by the sun's rays, enjoying perpetual happiness: Donne is at the centre not just in time, but for eternity. The full effect of the conceit is realised in the last couplet where the sun's sole function is to shine on the bed, its only influence to warm and illuminate the room: it has been relegated to a peripheral position leaving centre-stage to be filled by the poet under the glare of cosmic floodlights.

Having taken up this position how does Donne express himself? One of the first things we notice is his rejection of any conventional verse form. An anonymous Times Literary Supplement
reviewer has noted that Donne "used forty-six forms of stanza in his lyrics . . . of which forty-two are of his own invention."53 "The Sunne Rising" is one of the latter and it is interesting to note that the first stanza gives the impression of an impromptu outburst. While recognizing that the careful rhyme pattern (ABBA CDCD EE) disqualifies actual spontaneity, a syllable count does reveal an 8 4 10 10 8 8 10 10 10 10 sequence which does not conform to any standard stanzaic pattern. The inference is that the formative impulse behind these lines was not strict obedience to a rule but an internal requirement that helped create its own shape. The length of line is primarily governed, therefore, by psychological determinants. We have spoken of Donne's dramatic intensity, and of his subjective centrality: if we combine the two we would expect to find that the poetic line—here intensely dramatic—corresponded closely with the mental state. Critics have noticed that this is so and have spoken of it variously as "the exact curve of his feeling,"54 or "the rhythm of thought itself."55 The point to be made, then, is that the shape of the poem is determined by two forces: the necessity for pattern and the desire to record the very fluctuations of experience: the one rigid, the other evanescent. Unlike Spenser who disciplines thought till it conforms to the pattern, Donne relies much more on his immediate impulse. We can interpret this in two ways. Either it shows a lack
of confidence in the absolutist world which Spenser's poem upholds, or it argues a growing confidence in the reality of experience. Either way it means that Donne is able to impose his own will on his poem so that by Renaissance standards the results seem arbitrary and unpolished. To think back to Michelangelo's wilfulness in the Sistine Altar painting is to link Donne's sensibility with his. For Michelangelo it was the inner vision, for Donne it is the inner voice that is of paramount importance.

And so, to return to the first verse, we find the rhythm of indignation and scorn caught in the three abrupt phrases that begin the poem, as though the words were little more than grunts and snorts. The querulous question "must to thy motions lovers seasons run?" has the impetuosity of natural speech, while "sawcy pedantic wretch" though metrically awry, nonetheless successfully imitates the emphatic tone of address and aptly stresses "wretch." These, I think, are legitimate inferences to draw from the poem, but it is also possible to argue that it is the mark of Donne's consummate artistry that he is able to give the impression of spontaneity by conscientious attention to his craft—a type of sprezzatura in which the art is to conceal the art. Instead of Sir Philip Sidney disclaiming his sonnets as mere "trifles" we have Donne presenting his art as mere "ejaculations." The sense of spontaneity is a form of the artifice of self-deprecation, as though the poems were actual transcriptions of an emotional
outburst. Such a view is appropriate (it was the courtly manner), but it is not the whole picture when it comes to Donne. Perhaps for Castiglione's courtier, *sprezzatura* is the precise word, but Donne was "rebel and atheist too," and in creating a private vision and in reacting against traditional pressures, a great deal of psychic energy was released which expresses itself through the poetry. Some indication of this can be seen by assuming, for the sake of argument, that the first verse of "The Sunne Rising" is the product of a tension between inner pressure and artistic requirement: the result is a certain stanzaic form that becomes the paradigm for the rest of the poem. From this point, two observations may be made. The first is that having begun with the unusual combination of a tetrametre and dimetre and an initial inversion in the first line (which we have already decided is well designed to carry the inflexions of contempt), he is then hard pressed to repeat the sequence in the second verse where, as a result, an ugly inversion occurs and where the experience of ugliness does not contribute to his meaning. To have dislocated the structure of 'why shouldst thou thinke thy beames [are] so reverend and strong?' by placing object first, adjectival phrase second and subjective clause last as he does in,

Thy beames, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou thinke? (11. 11-12)

argues an attempt to salvage the formal requirement after it had been subjectively fashioned in the first verse. The second
observation is that having set up the rhythmic norm, variations from it become highly significant. Now in the line "Nothing else is," Donne is asserting an extraordinary idea. It is revolutionary, for in three words he has wholly inverted centuries of thought. The line reads with three heavy stresses: "Nothing else is," and each emphasis underlines the momentous idea that apart from the two lovers there is no existence, no Being. While acknowledging the clichéd sense of these lines—that the lovers were blind to the outside world—it is impossible to overlook the philosophical implications in view of the time when it was written. Thus, the line also is to be read as a startling refutation of the Neo-platonic cosmology that stems from the Timaeus wherein the world of Being is the permanent reality, the world of Becoming a changing replica of the same. In Platonic terms the ultimate bliss of lovers is the love, for example, of Dante for Beatrice in the Vita Nuova—the amor rationale. Donne, though, has reversed these values. The world of eternal absolutes is annihilated in favour of the absolutes of experience. Donne has committed himself to the sublunary world and the worldliness of his imagery (States, Kings, Princes) reinforces his earth-bound interest. Instead of an objective reality, he has found a subjective reality and the intensity of this discovery informs the very modulation of the line. It is because his insight historically coincides with a general disintegration of the Platonic edifice that we must remember the iconoclastic
fervour that went with this breakdown, and because he also saw the beginnings of a new vision, we must remember the excitement of discovery. The line is, therefore, emotionally determined and, by opposing / x / / against the norm x / x /, it creates a type of counterpoint that we may read as an index of subjectivity. Another way to express this is to speak of the psychological pressure working against the form which is how Professor Daniells characterises one aspect of Mannerism in *Milton, Mannerism and Baroque*. In discussing *Lycidas* he speaks of the way Milton's "inner experience" strains against conventional forms to produce effects that are inimitable. The versification of the poem, for example, has never been successfully emulated because it expresses the elusive pulse of Milton's own rhythm working against the norm—it shows "the thrust and check of the verse [which] suggest immensely powerful forces working within severe restrictions." Then, after developing the idea, Professor Daniells summarises his argument by saying that in both *Comus* and *Lycidas* "the strongest psychological impulses meet insuperable pressure and resistance— they are denied space in which to expand," and that "their powerful expansiveness points toward liberation only in the transcendental and divine space [ ]" We may see these technical qualities [that he has been discussing] . . . as direct counterparts of their author's inner experience." If we except the idea
of a "transcendental" release, the quotation is equally applicable to the features we have noticed in Donne. Wylie Sypher, too, is repeatedly emphasising the fact that in Mannerism the psychology does not appear to harmonise with the iconography (p. 111), logic (p. 127) or structure (p. 145), and gives Parmigianino as an example, saying that his figures suggest an incomplete control of a sensibility with an 'excessive' or 'shuttling' quality; there are signs of unexplained over-response to unknown stimuli. And above all, the emotional implications are incongruous with the logic of the composition; that is, the iconography does not correspond to the psychology. 60

Or again, "the mannerist churches have a repressed elegance, an ascetic refusal to achieve baroque splendor; in this architecture there is a sign of struggle, but no fulfillment, no conquest--except for a 'tendency to excess within rigid boundaries.'" 61 There is something of the "unexplained over-response to unknown stimuli" that gives to "The Sunne Rising" that "tendency to excess" in its declamatory voice, a straining of emotion against the formal pattern which cause one to hesitate in making this poem a sort of manifesto of romantic love. Such a concept is, of course, anachronistic and I think the historical corrective is to see it as a poem that, with vigorous browbeating intensity, sets up and asserts an alternative vision to the Platonic/Petrarchan world view. It is legitimate to think of it in these terms because Donne's was a conscious attempt to find a new voice and by explicitly countering the current mode he drew energy from the reaction.
But we have also seen signs of hesitation which indicate a reluctance to break cleanly with the past, and we should therefore set the poems somewhere between the poles of old and new and expect the ambiguity that comes from straddling two worlds. That such a context is peculiarly favourable to Mannerism is Hauser's main contention and it helps explain, for instance, not only why "the Mannerist composition [has] a psychological focus, . . . rather than any stated structural focus," but also why there can be no "adequate resolution of forces nor adequate release of energy." There is, furthermore, the implication here that any one poem is an incomplete statement and that it requires the whole group of Songs and Sonnets to give it a broader definition. The idea may be developed as follows. Unlike the Astrophil and Stella sequence which in toto upholds a number of concepts, the Songs and Sonnets explore a number of attitudes; Sidney knows his limits: Donne is looking for his and the collection of Songs and Sonnets represents an attempt to define his attitudes as they relate to love by working out all manner of possible approaches. Louis Martz expresses the idea well when he writes:

Donne's love poems take for their theme the problem of the place of human love in a physical world dominated by change and death. The problem is broached in dozens of different ways, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, sometimes by asserting the immortality of love, sometimes by declaring the futility of love. Thus the Songs and Sonnets hold within themselves every conceivable attitude towards love threatened by change.
The effect, then, is similar to the artist walking around his model, taking different angles and varying his distance in an attempt to record the complete picture. The analogy is useful because, for one thing, it refers us back to the idea of the "revolving view" that was discussed in relation to Bologna, and secondly, it implies that for the artist the task is impossible, for the sort of unity that he can achieve is bound to be fragmentary. Just so with Donne. He hopes to define love by his varying views and while encompassing "every conceivable attitude" there is no fusion of the parts—they remain fragmented visions. That is to say that any one poem of Donne's implies others and that any poem, however discrete it may appear, is in fact enriched by seeing it as a fragment. Another way of expressing this is to use Cleanth Brooks' concept of paradox which sees it as the force of what the poet is not saying working against what he is saying. The sense of awe which is one of the most remarkable qualities of Wordsworth's On Westminster Bridge is, Brooks claims, created most of all by the unspoken fact that it is remarkable that a city should be beautiful at all. The tacit fulfils the explicit. Similarly, the full implications of the "Indifferent" are not realised until "Aire and Angels" is read, of "Twicknam Garden" until the "Canonization" and so on. This is not to suggest a one to one pairing, but it is to say that if the poems are
seen describing the giddy circle of Donne's gyrations in love, then the poems are inevitably opposed yet complementary i.e. the ordering of the Songs and Sonnets is paradoxical. This, I suggest, is one reason why they have proved so difficult to group. Quite apart from the negligible information on their dating, attempts to organize them by themes, style, or chronology have always involved contradictions and boundary disputes because the poems were not conceived of as a linear sequence. The cast of mind that wrote the Songs and Sonnets was, to use this example again, closer to Bologna's than to Sidney's, and when Muriel Bradbrook in the New Statesman resisted Helen Gardner's rearrangement "on instinct," it may well be because she sensed the intentionally shifting outline of this group of poems.
In writing about Mannerism there is always the difficulty of expressing exactly what one means by the term, for scholarly opinion, by emphasising certain inherent characteristics, is capable of producing definitions as various as contrarious. For example, Walter Friedländer's early essay saw anti-classicism as the Mannerist marque; to Dvořák, it was spirituality; an approach developed and refined by Hauser as existentialist tension. Recent writing has taken the later artists more into account and has, like John Shearman, made a point of the formal elaboration, grace and elegance of the Mannerists. At many points in this essay it will have been noticed that my comments have brought out a certain ambiguity in Donne's work—of tone, of convention, of uncertainty in how to read his "accommodations" or his sudden changes of direction. This is not entirely fortuitous, I feel, because it coincides with a number of observations on Mannerism that stress its ambiguous nature, its elusiveness and resistance to definitive judgements. The Mannerist work of art always invites further comment. Reasons for this have been offered by Hauser who sees the great changes of the sixteenth century creating profound epistemological uncertainties:
The age had lost confidence in the unambiguity of facts, had lost the sense of actuality altogether. The boundaries between being and appearance, experience and illusion, objective statement and subjective fantasy, had grown blurred, and it began to be suspected that even the most objective picture of reality was a product of the mind, and therefore partly fiction and illusion, not separated by an abyss from the world of fantasy and dream, masquerading and acting. 5

The Mannerist artists were not only immersed in this flux, "not only aware of the insoluble contradictions of life but they actually emphasised and intensified them; they preferred reiterating and drawing attention to them to screening or concealing them. The fascination that the paradoxical nature and ambiguity of everything exercises over their mind was so strong that they singled out the contradictory qualities of things, cultivated it as artists, and tried to perpetuate it and make it the basic formula of their art." 6 Thus, we are not surprised when we read that in discussing Michelangelo's Ricetto and the Palazzo del Te "both Gembrich and Wirtkower came to the conclusion that it was not intended for the beholder's questions to find a clear-cut answer, that, on the contrary, the artists were striving for ambiguity of form, and consequently also for the beholder's perplexity." 7 Ambiguity, then, is more than an incidental feature of Mannerism; it is a sine qua non of the whole aesthetic wherever critics choose to locate it— in terms of cultural causes (Hauser), artists intentions (Lotz) or
responses to absolutism. This last point is essentially one that has been developed by Roy Daniells. Following Frederick Hartt's essay on the effect of Italian despotism on sixteenth-century artists, Professor Daniells sees in Bacon's *New Atlantis* "a study of varieties of absolutism"--in this case the political absolutism of kingship set against the "inevitably subversive activity of scientific enquiry."^9 Now, as the *New Atlantis* defines its ambiguity by confronting "two incommensurable kinds of power,"^10 the *Songs and Sonnets*, concerned with the absolute nature of love, are found ambiguous in their response to the possible ways in which love can be conceived. But before examining Donne's poetry in this light, it will be helpful to test the idea against the work of an artist who is unquestionably Mannerist, rather in the same way that a scientist would run a 'control' experiment.

In Parmigianino's *Madonna with the Rose* we see a Virgin and Child composition--one in a long tradition of devotional paintings wherein the mother's love for her son, the shepherds' adoration, or Christ's love for man is variously represented. A reference to Giotto's *Madonna and Child Enthroned*, for example, shows how adorable the child Jesus is felt to be, while Leonardo's cartoon for *Madonna and Child with St. Anne* reflects the warmth and humanity with which the subject is imbued. And similar confident expressions abound in Fra Filippo Lippi, Verrochio, Rosselli and so on back through the tradition. But when one looks back at Parmigianino one
is momentarily startled, for expectations schooled in this
tradition of Christian piety are frustrated. As Keith Andrews
has said, Parmigianino's "conception of a religious theme,
which so greatly deviates from the usual devotional picture," forces one to look again. And what one finds, as one commentator
has pointed out, is that Parmigianino appears to borrow "the
Madonna's pose from the Cnidian Venus or the Venus dei Medici,
and that when we look, we are titillated by the thought of
the Rageur marble which is barely concealed by the diaphanous
drapery." He is referring to the suggestive and sensual
discovery of the Virgin's breasts as she sits there, wrapt
in an air of studied ingenuousness. "Never," says Hauser,
"has she been more sensually, more seductively rendered." And neither is it mitigation to argue, as have Hauser and
Andrews, that the picture was originally of Venus and Cupid,
although this reference does open up the whole question of
the tension between the classical and Christian worlds.
Whatever the picture's first intention, one must assume
Parmigianino's final intentions were made explicit in the
adaptation. In that case, why is it that so much of the spirit
of pagan mythology remains in the Madonna: that Hauser called
Christ a "sly Cupid:" that Christ bears such a striking
resemblance to the Cupid of the Amor, and that an "unashamed
sensuality" (Andrews) pervades the picture? To answer this
satisfactorily is to refer to the long discussion in the
Middle Ages between caritas and cupiditas—a discussion that
was to be aggravated through the Renaissance by the delight in the human body found in classical literature. Panofsky has noted a temporary reconciliation in the earlier poets of the *Dolce stil Nuovo*, but come Parmigianino's time, "there was in the air . . . a cultural malaise caused by the realisation of the incompatibility of Mediaeval Christianity and Classicism." It was just such a realisation that prompted the Neo-platonists to try to harmonise the two worlds, to establish a "circuitous spiritualis" wherein all things inclined towards an absolute of Beauty (or God), and where Man, in Pico's phrase, was the "connecting link between God and the World."  

These, then, were the background forces against which the Parmigianino painting is to be seen, but while suggestive they are too broad to shed much light on the picture, to which we now return. The Virgin's self-conscious sensuality has already been noticed. Perhaps more should be made of this observation in respect of Hauser's remark that sex is subjected to ritual to make it the more subtly enjoyable, and a veil is drawn over it, not to conceal but to emphasise it. All concealment emphasises what is concealed, and all prudishness is a sign of bad conscience, but in Mannerism the real purpose of the concealment is to reveal, and prudishness is merely a form of repressed lasciviousness.  

In terms of the Virgin, the idea is shocking—it has the effect of exploding reverence in such a way as to suggest Stephen's profanations in the *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* or, to be more contemporary, to change the theologians' *nuditas virtualis* into *nuditas criminalis*. And if it does this,
what is one to make of the effeminate Christ child whose genitals dominate the lower focus of the picture and whose reclining pose seems more appropriate to a Venus figure. Quite clearly, whatever the ostensible subject of the picture, it is impossible to deny a powerful expression of sensual interest which coincides more closely with the pagan than with the Christian strain. "It took," wrote Panofsky, "the Proto-Renaissance spirit to interpret the nudity of Cupid as a symbol of love's 'spiritual nature.'" Here the Cupid has become Christ but the spirituality is yet to come. To say this is to play the devil's advocate, for the picture is not to be too easily categorised as erotic devotionalism— as painting in the worst possible taste. It has what Professor Daniells calls an "adhesive quality" which deters quick judgement: it has what Keith Andrews describes as "no glimmer of insincerity, theatricality or empty virtuosity," and above all, it has grace, charm and a "volatile mellifluousness." It is these qualities that one must set against the sensuality in order to gauge the painting's essential import, for if the picture persistently hangs in the mind, if Parmigianino was in fact "sincere" and if the grace significantly qualifies the sensuality, then one is faced with a much more complex work of art than cheap religiosity can explain.

It was Vasari who recorded the rumour that Parmigianino was Raphael's reincarnation, and certainly the latter's exquisite sense of form is readily noticed in Parmigianino's
paintings; but whereas Raphael idealised just proportion, Parmigianino attenuates form until the internal conception, the *disegno interno*, assumes greater importance than any 'external' canon. While the *Madonna of the Rose* shows this clearly enough in the gracefully elongated fingers of the Virgin's hand and in the sinuous line moving through the drapery, it is the *Madonna with the Long Neck* that provides its clearest statement. Here, both observation and proportion are subservient to an overwhelming idea of gracefulness—the sort which values quiet understated colours, urbane gestures, elegant mannerisms, restraint and polish. The Virgin's right hand reflects a suave modesty appropriate to the world of Castiglione's *Courtier*. The marble pillars and *raffiné*, cool and delightfully irrelevant. The urn (possibly a symbol of the womb) is exploited more for its shape, for the echoes it raises in thigh and calf, than for its iconographic import. It is, in brief, an almost ethereal world, exclusive and magical into which only the refined may pass. Crudity would shatter the spell. Yet we have already spoken of a level not far removed from crudity. And this is just the point. The sensuality is transfused by beauty into "something rich and strange." It retains all its original properties but they are seen in a much wider context than mere coarseness. It is this peculiar combination of qualities, so frequently kept apart, that imparts to Parmigianino the essential ambiguity of his work.
It seems to me that critics, uneasy about the sensuality, have concentrated on explaining it away in aesthetic or spiritual terms. Thus, Hauser speaks of the "autonomous realm of beauty," Andrews asserts that "in all his works, physical grace equals and explains inner spirituality," while Professor Daniells in an idea he admittedly calls "precarious," suggests that "human gracefulness is an outcome of divine grace" - a view that the Catholic Encyclopaedia reinforces when it speaks of an element of "actual grace" as being "charm [and] gracefulness . . . because charm calls forth benevolent love." However, in view of the fact that Parma was only three days' ride from Florence, that the Florentine Academy was well established in the fifteenth century, and that Botticelli, Raphael and Michelangelo were all influenced by Neo-platonism, it is reasonable to argue that a Neo-platonic interpretation may help account for the contradictions of spirit and flesh in this picture.

According to this school of thought "all natural desires are related to God, both with respect to origin and to end." Love is defined as "a desire for the fruition of beauty" (desiderio di bellezza), while beauty is seen as part of a total religious concept, such that beauty, the direct result of grace, directs man to the love of God. So what we have here is a progression: desire, the appetitus naturalis, inclines to God. God is love. Love is fulfilled in beauty. Beauty points to God. In other words, a circular philosophy that unifies the elements in man (otherwise separated by the Classical-Christian polarity) within a religious framework.
In applying such a pattern to Parmigianino, we find the tensions and antitheses noticed earlier blur and the central ambiguity no longer seems so critical, for here we see beauty and grace, both divinely derived, transmuting the fundamental human delight in the things of the senses into an act of love and worship towards God. This is an attractive reading in that it appears to unify oppositions but it is incomplete because it does not account for the overwhelming impression given by the picture that it is not God that is being celebrated by this beauty. It is precisely because the picture fails to present an unequivocal document of praise to a higher beauty that it remains finally ambiguous.

The ingredients for a Christian/Platonist paean are there: Virgina and Child, angels (?), grace and beauty but they never cohere without a qualification. Why is the prophetic figure with the scroll so quirkish and angular? Why the powerfully Hellenic motifs? Why the Ephebe/Angel staring at the viewer? Why the enigmatic Madonna? The underlying reason why the picture does not stand alone as a religious painting is that it never separates itself from its creator or its viewer. The meaning of the picture requires us to understand it in terms of Parmigianino's psychology—the visible sign of the invisible disegno—for that is where the ambiguity originates. The hypnotic eyes of the attendant youth are an invitation to the viewer to engage with the picture and to check with his own responses in order
to understand. Thus, in a sense, a Mannerist picture is one with no frame, for by implying that the nature of perception is subjective, the art work directs our responses inwards so that we are obliged to adopt an affective critical position because the work demands it—that is part of the way in which it means.

To turn now to Donne's ambiguity towards love is to face a complex matter for, in effect, his whole life and his works record the attempt of one trying to establish priorities between conflicting appeals. The waning Middle Ages still exercised a powerful hold over him, in terms of scholastic method, cosmology and zeitgeist, while, at the same time, he was acutely aware of the spirit of change that derived from the Renaissance and Reformation, while yet again aware of the implications of the new science: "The new philosophy calls all in doubt," he writes in the Anatomy of the World. For example, the hierarchic Chain of Love (Being), so meticulously wrought by the scholastics, had yielded much to humanist pressures that urged man's dignity by appeals, for example, to the body as opposed to the earlier contemptu mundi. The problem, then, of "reconciling Garbonek and Camelot,"26 of human and divine love, became one of great urgency and one to which there were no simple answers for Donne. Although, for instance, he could write the "Hymne to God the Father," with its final resignation and faith in God's love, we also have to reckon with "Elegy XIX"
which enjoys quite a different kind of love. Although the
"Holy Sonnets" are addressed to God, God becomes the ravisher
and his Church a prostitute, and it is quite arguable that
the Songs and Sonnets, in analysing human love, are, after all,
Donne's greatest poems.

What I am saying is that Donne has no systematic philosophy
of love; he is not working in a clear tradition, such as
Petrarchanism, for example, and that, as a result he is
difficult to read—is ambiguous. In this connection,
N.J.C. Andreasen has traced Donne's use of the literary
love conventions and finds that, far from identifying with
them he consciously manipulates the Ovidian strain, parodies
the Petrarchan, or employs the Platonic to suit the
requirements of the moment. The "Extasie," indeed, combines
all three for it "seems to use Ovidian irony to portray
an idolatrous relationship [Petrarch] which masquerades as
Platonic idealism."27 Thus, the uncertainty of never quite
knowing in what way we are to read Donne's use of conventional
figures adds another level of general ambiguity.

To be specific, however, I want now to look at the "Extasie"
in some detail. It is a poem that attracts considerable
disagreement and therefore presents a prima facie case for its
inherently problematic nature. Something of this is seen
in the way scholars have reacted to its essential meaning.
Herbert Grierson, for example, sees the poem as concerning
"the interconnexion and mutual dependence of body and soul,"28
while for E.M.W. Tillyard, Donne's "real interest is . . . man's place in the order of creation." But with regard to the tone there is still greater variety. Some, like J.B. Leishman, see a play of wit as the critical starting point, while George Potter prefers to read Donne as a poet seriously presenting his philosophical opinions. Certainly, Potter deplores Legouis' reading which makes the 'narrator' a "scholastic Don Juan." Others see satire, or drama, while game-playing is suggested by Andreasen—a view supported by Grierson who implies that Donne adopted occasional masks. Clearly it is time to examine what all the contention is about, and since, as Mario Praz has pointed out, the unit of a Donne poem is "not the line, as in many sonneteers, and not even the stanza, but the entire poem in its serpentine swerving from once excitement to another," it is probably best to approach the poem by tracing the progress of thought as it develops through the "dialogue of one."

The speaker, is day-dreaming and musingly addresses his lover, recalling with pleasure a recent intimate occasion when, "one anothers best," they rested on a violet-covered bank, holding hands and gazing into each other's eyes. The picture is sufficiently innocent and restrained to fit easily into some pastoral idyll where shepherd plights troth to his maiden, but arcadia, though, is ill-designed to accommodate this lover's cast of mind for, impatient of timeless wooing,
he seems in no doubt about his intentions. For him the bank is "pregnant" and reminds him of a "pillow:" the heat of passion bring a sweat to their palms, while "looking babies" at each other suggests conception ("get," as in "get with child a mandrake root"), reproduction ("propagation") and all that goes with it. In brief, it appears that the wooing is in a late stage and that its consummation is "devoutly to be wished." Indeed, they begin by sitting (l. 4) but after the brief interruption for a quasi-epic simile, they are rediscovered lying side by side (l. 18). Without doubt, then, the poem begins on a sensual note—the pastoral setting shot through with Ovidian spirit, and our expectation to line 12 is that the situation posed will be wittily resolved to the satisfaction, perhaps, of the readers' least discriminating interests. However, this thread is abruptly broken as we switch conventions and move into the Platonic mode for a period of some thirty-six lines (13-48) in which the lovers are left in a state of petrifaction ("like sepulchral statues") for the duration of the following discourse. The gist of the argument in this section is the standard Platonic one that "the lover gives up his soul to live in another," and that such an act is often "described in terms of religious ecstasy,"^38 Just so here: a qualified observer (l. 23) is invited to sample the "new concoction" of their fused souls and is promised to be the better for it when he leaves, while the lovers themselves, speaking with the privileged insight of ecstasy, recognise and confess that after all "it
was not sexe" that really attracted them, but 'true' love which "interinanimates two soules," (l. 42) which creates an "abler soule" (by fusion), which "defects of loneliness controules" (l. 44) and which makes for immortality (l. 48). Certainly, the argument is impressive and one is tempted to demean the sweaty palms in the light of such elevated philosophy. Impressive it may be but whether persuasive is doubtful, and one is reminded of C.S. Lewis's stricture that love "does not prove itself pure by talking about purity."
The tone set by the first lines, "As 'twixt two equall Armies ..." is formal and distant, the argument tight and uncompromising, the only image that carries any warmth--"a single violet"--coincidentally (?) refers one back to the first twelve lines and their very different connotations, while his use of "Atomies" (l. 47) is incongruous when describing something so immaterial as the soul, for as Austin Warren has noticed, in Donne's time the word had, from Lucretius, a strictly material connotation. Thus, although the ecstasies of spiritual love are lauded far above the physical, one cannot help but feel that the speaker is no more convinced than we are.
Such a view is given fine emphasis in lines 49-50 which begin the third and last section of the poem. At this point, after having 'established' the primacy of the spiritual world, the speaker begins an argument that attempts to reconcile body and soul. Perhaps he need have gone no further than these opening lines:
But 0 alas, so long, so farre
Our bodies why doe wee forbeare? (11. 49-50)

if he really wanted to locate his loyalties, for after the
arid ratiocination of the previous section, the intensity with
which he returns to his physical frustrations speaks more deeply
than all his logical manoeuvring. However, he continues
the debate, arguing with scholastic nicety that although "we
are/the intelligences" (i.e. are soulful beings), we need
our bodies ("the sphere") because they are the "booke"
by which love is read (1. 72). Indeed, while "loves mysteries"
finally reside in the soul (1. 71), "pure lovers soules must
descend/t'affections, and to faculties,/which sense may reach
and apprehend,/else a great Prince in prison lies" (11. 65-68).
This may be scrupulous argument but it is sheer sophistry
and quite unorthodox in the context of the methods he is using,
for traditional scholasticism/Platonism saw no great need to
emphasise the body. Godhead was pure Soul or Being and man
aspired to God-head to the extent that he spiritualised his
existence away from the vegetative, the animal, the human
orders and approximated to the angelic and divine—in other
words ascended the Chain of Being. What the speaker has done
is to manipulate the traditional concepts to serve a purpose
closer to his requirements than theirs. In effect, he has
quietly justified the body while ostensibly extolling the spirit.
It comes, therefore, as less of a surprise than it might when
he declares: "To our bodies turne wee then" (1. 69)— especially
as throughout the length of the discourse, we have been wondering about the two lovers of the opening lines whose mutual attentions were so untimely interrupted.

The extreme subtlety of the speaker's undercutting technique is well shown in the lines immediately following "to our bodies .. . . ." which read: " . . . that/weake men on love reveal'd may looke" (1.68). There is here in "weake men" and "love reveal'd" a clear allusion to Christ's incarnation for the guidance of erring man and its implication in the argument is that the very essence of love, Christ, chose to adopt man's body to do his work. Thus the body is sacred. The point is secure and well taken. However, at an ironic level, the two lovers themselves are part of a parodic exploitation of the incarnation image, for they too are soon to go to their bodies, they will be "love reveal'd" as they expect to be watched by a third party, and they too have their message for "weake men"—that sexual love is little different ("small change") from spiritual love.

And thus the poem ends on this uneasy note. The lovers are about to break their trance and take over where they left off in the face of clear statements that the highest love is the ecstatic fusion of souls above and beyond the limitations of the flesh. If one adds to this, the elusive tonal quality of the poem and also our uncertainty concerning the use of traditional conventions, we must conclude that "the whole problem of the relationship between the soul and body in love is brought to a crises of ambiguity in . . . 'The Ecstasie'."
Mention has been made in this chapter of Neo-platonism and it would seem that something of Donne's attitudes to love could be discovered if his response to this influential school of thought could be gauged. In view of the scarcity of published material on the question, it is necessary first, however, to review the extent to which Donne was aware of Neo-platonism because much of the evidence is circumstantial. Beginning with Grierson's cautious comment that "Donne had probably read Ficino's translation of Plotinus," and Andreasen's "safest speculation" that "he read the Christian Platonists of the Florentine Academy," we may move to Helen Gardner's assertion that "Leone Ebreo's Dialoghi d'Amore was a book which I am convinced Donne knew well." 

Frank Doggett concludes that as well as Christian Platonism from Augustine, Donne knew Ficino and Castiglione, while there is no question but that "Paracelsus, Cusanus, Pico della Mirandola, not to forget "our singular Origen" are repeatedly cited in the writings of Donne."

On evidence such as this and even perhaps on remarks like Walton's, "that this age had brought forth another Picus Mirandula" (i.e. Donne), or more strongly on Donne's special praise for Pico and Franciscus Georgius in his Catalogos Librorum, Helen Gardner concludes that Donne must have "read widely ... [in] the Italian Cabbalists and Neo-platonists." Indeed, she even speculates that it was during the period between 1602 and 1605 when Donne moved
to Pyrford, with no job and bleak prospects, that he wrote
the sonnets that she has grouped as section II of her edition.

In his enforced retirement he

continued his remote reading and, having lost
the world for love, was attracted in authors whose
speculations had already fascinated him by a theory
of love radically different from the naturalistic
view that had been the basis of much of his
earlier love poetry and from the Petrarchan idealization
of frustration. 49

Though critics have objected to the rigidity of Helen Gardner's
classification, 50 none has questioned her basic organization,
so we can say that these poems in her second section were,
with the possibility of a few exceptions, written while
immersed in Neo-platonic thought. On these grounds, we
would expect to find such a poem as "Aire and Angels" working
out these important ideas (rather as Bruno did in the
Eroici Furori) 51 with a view to establishing a poetic counterpart
to the prose treatises; especially as "the roles which matter
and spirit . . . play in human love" are among the central
concerns of the poem. 52 Indeed, the first two lines only
make sense if we understand "thee" (1. 1) as the idea of you
i.e. the Platonic ideal of you as an insubstantial and
perfect form, and from this point the first stanza is,
as Neill says, "reminiscent of the theories of love of
Guinzelli and the Platonism of Bembo . . . and draws the
parallel which is the theme of the poem: the operation of
a spiritual force through a physical medium."53 For example,
in the Courtier, Bembo explains how "love is nothing else but
a certain coveting to enjoy beauty," and that beauty must express itself through the physical world, notably through man.

But speaking of the beauty that we mean, which is onely it, that appeareth in bodies, and especially in the face of man, and moveth this fervent coveting which we call love, we will terme it an influence of the heavenly bountifulnesse, when it findeth out a face well proportioned, and framed with a certaine lively agreement of several colours, and set forth with lights and shadowes, and with an orderly distance and limits of lines, thereinto it distelleth it selfe and appeareth most wel favoured. 55

Bembo hints here that Beauty is derived from God (a point he makes most explict elsewhere) and is therefore to be religiously sought. The fact that beauty is only manifest in the material world leads to the inevitable conclusion that physical love is admirable. A kiss, for instance, becomes "a knitting together both of bodie and soule" wherein a man

hath a delite to joyne his mouth . . . with a kisse: not to stirre him to any dishonest desire, but because hee feeleth that that bonde is the opening of an entrie of the soules, which . . . poure them selves by turne the one into the others body, and bee so mingled together, that each of them hath two soules." Even "the devine lover," Plato, said "that in kissing his soule came as farre as his lippes to depart out of the body (p. 607).

However, it must be understood in this case that the lover is loved for his participation in higher things; "reason" aspires to "understanding" rather than descends to "sense" (p. 593). Bembo is quite clear about the nature of love which is pursued solely to satisfy "the longing of sense" (p. 594)
It leads to vice, "unhonest lusts," and "other greater miseries" (p. 594), and though it may be excused in the young (p. 596), it must be soon left behind or the soul will be permanently "drowned in the earthly prison" (p. 595)—a phrase that might have contributed to Donne's, "else a great Prince in prison lies" ("The Extasie" 1. 68). However, the lover that contemplates the beautiful will take his "love for a stayre (as it were) to climbe up to another farre higher than it" (p. 610), and by ascending will move through the sensible world to "beholde the beautie that is seene with the eyes of the minde" (p. 611), and thence to an awareness of God himself (p. 613). In this journey the soul is progressively purified of gross matter and assumes more and more the nature of Angelic substance: having "no more neede of the discourse of reason" (p. 612), it attains to "understanding," until finally, "the soule kindled in the most holy fire of true heavenly love, fleeth to couple her selfe with the nature of Angels . . . for being changed into an Angell, [sic] she understandeth all things that may be understood" (p. 612).

This, then, is basically the philosophy of love that Donne would have absorbed from Castiglione and which we can see treated in "Aire and Angels". The poem begins with the poet recounting the history of his love, (ostensibly to his mistress though she is dramatically so unimportant that her presence is never felt), and explaining how at first he was in love with love (ll. 1-2), but already had intimations of
how love could be expressed physically by analogy with the way angels communicate through the sensible world (ll. 3-4). However, whenever he tried to realise the ideal pattern, it was certainly seen as something most beautiful but was never anything more than a vision. In terms of the palpable, it was a "nothing" (ll. 5-6). Dissatisfied, he realises that just as the soul takes on a body so must its child, love, or else love would be more ethereal than the soul (ll. 7-10). Therefore, he bids love find a body, and he allows it to live there in "lip, eye, and brow." In specifying 'lip' he can, of course, be repeating a hackneyed phrase, but lip also recalls the passage on kissing in Castiglione in which case he is implying that once love has found its 'form,' physical love will necessarily follow because it leads back to higher things (ll. 11-14). Donne's use of "assume" here, incidentally, reinforces the movement of ideal to material as its theological sense was the taking on of flesh by the Son—the sense of love incarnate. So far, then, Donne has restated the Bemboist position—ideal love is beautiful but it must be translated into sense, into the human form, if it is to be fully known.

The second stanza, too, seems to parallel the philosopher's discourse, for it begins with a condemnation of sensuality i.e. loss of the spiritual ulterior motive. The thought runs as follows: while I thought that by bringing love down to earth I would have gained a more balanced and a steadier
conception of it, it seems that I have gone too far, for I see no more than your physical beauty and find myself in the impossible position of valuing your every hair. There must be another way (ll. 15-20). The impact of this statement is greatly enhanced by the nautical image which carries it, in that a "pinnace," being a reconnaissance craft, aptly captures the spirit of the exploratory tone that characterises the poem and its being over ballasted to the point of sinking expresses the sense of physical satiety that weighs Donne's spirit down. It is possible also that Donne had in mind a double entendre for "pinnace" which, as Murray Prosky has noted was commonly used to describe a prostitute. If this is the case, it is fitting that his love, that goes no further than the body, should be seen as a prostitute. Prosky gives the sense of these lines as follows: "I realised or materialised, the ideal object of my love to such an extent that she looked like a bawd making a vulgar display of her wares. Consequently, the admiration sinks from the ideal object to an object of sensuality and lust." 59

We see then how the two poles of love abstract and sensual, have been fixed and found wanting: "for nor in nothing, nor in things/extreme, and scatt'ring bright, can love inhere" (ll. 21-22). The necessary compromise was found in "lip, eye, and brow" which if properly addressed led, Bembo would say, to "universall beautie." At this point, therefore, one would expect
Donne to conclude his poem with a positive affirmation of love's spiritual influence rather like Bembo's love-kindled soul that "fleeth to couple her selfe with the nature of Angels" (p. 612) and which inspires him to almost religious exhortation:

Let us therefore bind all our force and thoughtes of soule to this most holy light, that sheweth us the way which leadeth to heaven: and after it, putting off the affections we were clad at our coming down, let us climbe up the staires, which at the lowermost steppe have the shadow of sensuall beautie, to the high mansion place where the heavenly, amiable and right beautie dwelleth, which lyeth hidden in the innermost secretes of God. (p. 613)

Indeed, Donne does appeal to the Angels but is unable to sustain an upward flight. It is as though he baulks at a commitment to such an absolute and magnificent concept of love in which the soul can ascend to the very presence of God.

Bembo mounts inexorably to divine heights: Donne weighs, tries and falters. The opportunity to gain angelic insight is not taken, and Donne turns back to work out a rather ungenerous love barter that requires her to love in order that he can love her. Thus in the simile "as an Angell, face, and wings/ of aire, not pure as it, yet pure doth weare" (ll. 23-24), he reverses the upward movement by speaking of an angel's assumption of matter ("aire") as a compromise of its ethereal purity, while at the same time setting up a distinction between degrees of purity which he uses to point the commonplace belief that the male principle was superior to the female (ll. 26-28). Or is it that he wishes to create in the last few lines a
"surprising reversal . . . [that] makes for irony, [where] one attitude is apparently prepared for, and then its opposite given" as Unger would have us believe. Or is Una Nelly right in rejecting Unger and saying "far from being a sudden reversal or a mocking taunt, these lines . . . refer . . . to the metaphysical disparity between the spiritual and material elements present in all human love."? Or perhaps, as Huntley suggests, the distinction is only there to show how close men and women are, how alike angels and air really are? To arbitrate such conflicting views is not the point; the point is to notice that at the very moment when Donne is unable to push through his Neo-platonic discussion to its elevated conclusions, he loses his momentum and the poem closes in endless ambiguities--there is no real resolution. He has turned aside from the visionary path, from celebration of an absolute and universal love to fix his love in the inferior love that a woman can offer. Thus, in "so thy love may be my loves spheare" (1. 25), he is saying, in effect, that his nerve has failed; he has abandoned the ideal because it is "more than his love can manage to attach itself to," and he settles to have his love circumscribed by her "spheare" of grosser love. Even if "spheare" is read as 'element' he still limits himself to a woman's capacity for loving him. To the twentieth-century mind, Donne's values seem amazingly 'enlightened,' but in the first years of the seventeenth century when the
intelligentsia were all au fait with Neo-platonist love theories and when hierarchic absolutism still provided the bedrock structure of thought, Donne's failure to reinforce these patterns argues the sort of hesitation before the absolute that we have found in Parmigianino and which, therefore, we may conclude is characteristically Mannerist.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the course of this thesis we have looked at the Songs and Sonnets from a Mannerist point of view: that is to say, we have attempted to set Donne within the framework of a broad cultural and artistic phenomenon that expressed itself across sixteenth-century Europe. The work of scholars has been freely drawn upon to provide critical principles and insights on which to base an examination of Donne's poems, an examination in which we have found that there is considerable evidence to support the claim that Donne can be profitably approached in this way. For example, Chapter I notices how Donne's subjectivism coincides with the general sense of uncertainty towards the objective world that Mannerist painters reveal, and it develops the concept of the 'persona' to describe Donne's means of coping with the problem.

One remarkable expression of this, is Donne's pose of the witty intellectual which is closely analogous to a Mannerist delight in formal exhibitionism, virtue, and facility, such features as appear in Bologna's Rape of the Sabine Women, for example.

Chapter II extends the theme of the 'persona' and examines Donne's treatment of dramatic techniques only to find them similar in kind to the techniques of accommodation, and the Sprecher which critics see as basic characteristics of Mannerism.

Chapter III works out the implications of Friedländer's thesis that the Mannerist artist can best be recognized
by noticing what he does to the normative tradition that precedes him. By polarising Donne and Sidney, we noticed the same sort of effects in Donne's work that Friedländer noted in Michelangelo's treatment of the Renaissance canon.

And then finally in Chapter IV, we examined the nature of Donne's ambiguity and found that, in common with Parmigianino, it shows an inability to commit itself finally to any absolute position, especially as it shows itself in relation to the claims that, respectively, body and soul lay on Man.

Thus, in many important respects Donne emerges as a Mannerist poet. The implications of this are that we can now release him from the peculiar insularity that the term 'metaphysical' imposes on him, and see him as an English expression of a Continental style. This is not to say that 'metaphysical' is replaced by Mannerism (although 'metaphysical' never was a happy term) but it does mean that perhaps 'metaphysical' can be reserved more for what it means—"speculations of nice philosophy" as Dryden put it—so that it is not over-burdened as an inclusive label for all Donne's characteristics and those of his followers. Mannerism, on the other hand, is beginning to be seen as a systematic and inclusive frame of reference—a complete aesthetic deducible from a wide range of art forms over a period of some sixty years. It has yet to be definitively underwritten as a major theory of style but it has that potential, whereas 'metaphysical' has not.
Another implication of Donne's Mannerism is that it will now be possible to develop fresh comparisons between, say, Donne and Marvell; for any critical approach, if sound, will yield new understandings of the poetry—its methods and meaning—so that new relations may emerge.

Finally, this thesis is not set up either as an apology for the Mannerist approach, or as a thorough-going and systematic statement of a theory of Mannerism. It is, rather, exploratory. It has borrowed ideas freely and eclectically from scholars of widely differing views and has attempted to work them out with specific reference to Donne and his *Songs and Sonnets*. To the extent that these ideas are central to the Mannerist position, and to the extent that their application has been successful, then I think we can conclude that there are very strong grounds for reading the *Songs and Sonnets* as a masterpiece of English Mannerist poetry.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter One


5 Gardner, p. li.

6 Gardner, p. lvii.


10 Grierson, II, 316.

11 Hauser, p. 51. Something of the agoraphobic effect this had may be seen in Rosso's Deposition where the sky is a backdrop without backing—an endless dark recession behind the cross.

12 Hauser, p. 50.


14 Hauser, p. 35.

16 Grierson, II, 2.


22 "Bronzino," Masters Series, No. 82, p. 6.

23 Hauser, p. 199


25 Blunt, p. 63.

26 Hauser, p. 50.

27 Leishman, p. 145.


33 Shearman, Mannerism, p. 162.


41 Shearman, p. 75.

42 Shearman, p. 35.

43 Shearman, p. 81.


45 Blunt, p. 91.

46 Blunt, p. 95.


49 Giorgio Vasari, Vasari’s Lives of the Artists; Biographies of the most Eminent Architects, Painters, and Sculptors of Italy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), IX, 130.

50 Blunt, p. 92.

51 Shearman, p. 125.

52 Shearman, p. 121

53 Shearman, p. 68.

Chapter Two


8. Sypher, p. 146.


10. Sypher, p. 175.


15. Hauser, p. 52.


See Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), p. 16. Contemplation was commonly a mode of mysticism accompanied by a "single viewe of the eternal veritye, without variety of discourses, penetrating it with the light of heaven, with great affections of admiration, and love; unto the which no man arriveth, but by much exercise of meditation, and discourse."

Helen Gardner, p. lix.

Quoted by Legouis, p. 71.

See Louis Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), p. 16. Contemplation was commonly a mode of mysticism accompanied by a "single viewe of the eternal veritye, without variety of discourses, penetrating it with the light of heaven, with great affections of admiration, and love; unto the which no man arriveth, but by much exercise of meditation, and discourse."

Hunt, p. 76.

Hunt, p. 78.


"Pattern" or "form" was technically the Idea in the mind of God according to this school. Hunt, p. 84.

See also The Second Anniversary 1. 5 for this sense of the word.

Sypher, p. 138.

Chapter Three


4 Tillyard, p. 16.


11 Ringler, p. lix.

12 Quoted by Ringler, p. xl.

13 See Montgomery's remark that "the verse most generally typical of the Renaissance deals with love . . . and the most prominent guise of love was Petrarchan." p. 48.


15 Lever, p. 56.

16 Lever, p. 56.

17 For example, "Because I have the still kept from lies and blame," and Petrarch's Sonetto in Vita XLI. Lever, p. 20.


20 Montgomery, p. 50.

21 Lever, p. 71.

22 Montgomery, p. 77.


26 Scott, p. 38.

27 Scott, p. 39.


30 Friedlaender, p. 5.

31 Friedlaender, p. 6.


33 Friedlaender, p. 7.

34 Friedlaender, p. 7.

35 Friedlaender, p. 7.

36 Friedlaender, p. 10. My underlining.

37 Friedlaender, p. 12.

38 Blunt, p. 66.

39 Shearman, Mannerism, p. 75.

40 An Elegie upon the Death of the Deane of St. Pauls, Dr. John Donne, II. 25-28.


42 Montgomery, p. 49.


44 Guss, p. 46.

45 Leishman, p. 148.


47 Smith, p. 53.

48 Rosamund Tuve, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery; Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, [1947]), p. 290.
49 Tuve, p. 64.

50 This derives from the Canzonière which "is built upon the opposition between two kinds of love, cupiditas and caritas, the former urged by passion and the latter by reason (Andreasen, p. 66). Spenser's praise for his mistress' virtue at the end is wholly 'reasonable.'

51 We have already seen how the lady is not in herself important--she is important as a cause of feeling.

52 The fact that the room is at the same time the universe merely increases the significance of Donne's centrality.


54 Tuve, p. 152.

55 Smith, p. 17.

56 Ringler, p. lx.


58 Roy Daniels, Milton, Mannerism and Baroque (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 43.

59 Daniels, p. 47.

60 Sypher, p. 111.

61 Sypher, p. 127.

62 See especially pp. 3-11 and Chapter III.

63 Sypher, p. 145.

64 Daniels, p. 44.

65 Guss, p. 10.

66 Martz, Wit of Love, p. 35.


Chapter Four


5. Hauser, p. 29.


10. See footnote 9.


12. Edward Lucy-Smith, reviewing the Classical Tradition in Western Art by Benjamin Rowland, Jr.


15. Panofsky, p. 137.

17 Panofsky, p. 156.
18 Unpublished Notes.
19 Andrews, p. 5.
21 Hauser, p. 206.
22 Andrews, p. 4.
23 Unpublished Notes.
25 Panofsky, p. 141.
27 Andreasen, p. 76.
28 Grierson, II, 41.
30 Leishman, The Monarch of Wit, p. 148
32 Andreasen, p. 178.
34 Andreasen, p. 7.
36 Ibid., p. 64.
37 The sex of the speaker is not clearly specified in the poem but l. 16 suggests that it is probably male.
38 Andreasen, p. 72.


41 Grierson, II, 42.

42 Andreasen, p. 69.


46 Grierson, II, 2.

47 Gardner, p. lix.

48 Gardner, p. lix.

49 Gardner, p. lxi.


53 K. Neill, Explicator, 6 (Nov. 1947), item 8.


55 Castiglione, p. 593.

56 Castiglione, p. 599.

57 Helen Gardner, Business of Criticism, p. 67.


61 Nelly, p. 119.


63 Unger, p. 43.
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Huntley, F.L. Explicator, 6 (June, 1948), item 53.


