

SAEVA INDIGNATIO IN DONNE, HALL AND MARSTON

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

The formal satire of the late English Renaissance is a complex phenomenon, modelled upon the classical genre but also profoundly influenced by medieval homily and Complaint. It is connected with other literary vehicles for social criticism and is a means of protesting against change, embodying the struggle between hierarchy and mobility that marks the period. Types are represented in a realistic manner and assigned parts in miniature dramas unified by the presence of a narrator, by imagery and often by a thesis statement. Critical theories about the derivation of the term "satire" and the nature of the genre helped to shape the form, tone and organization of these poems.

This study focuses on the major writers of Elizabethan formal satire, Donne, Hall and Marston, and examines their relative merits. Donne is easily the most complex and the greatest poet, but the problem of which is the most effective satirist has yet to be resolved. Donne creates "humourous" and brilliantly sardonic portraits of types and with exhaustive detail localizes the satiric scene in Elizabethan London. However, his satires are a kind of metaphysical poetry, concerned with first principles and the narrator's psychological processes.

Intense subjectivity and metaphysical subtlety are perhaps better suited to lyric and devotional verse than to social satire, in spite of the poet's mastery of the art of caricature. Hall's style, lending an Augustan quality to Virgidemiae, is the measure of the differences among the writers. Hall's assimilations of classical sources, modified Neo-Stoicism, intense conservatism and references to a Golden Age and academic retreat fuse together in a witty and amusing satiric creation marked by the quiet insult, the polite sneer, contempt for the targets. Marston's use of language foreshadows certain important trends in the early Jacobean drama. Although he is sometimes incoherent in his efforts to combine satirical rage and the pose of the malcontent with moral exhortation, Marston produces an impressive, ultimately unified structure and vision of man dominated by his animal nature.

In conclusion, Donne is the superior poet, Hall the most effective satirist, while Marston writes the most dramatic works, and only his lack of artistic control prevents him from surpassing his contemporaries' satire.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Joseph Hall's Virgidemiae (1597) and John Marston's Certaine Satyres, published with The Metamorphosis of Pigmaliions Image (1598), are, apart from Thomas Lodge's A Fig for Momus (1595) and John Donne's unpublished satires, the first formal verse satires in English. This study will attempt to differentiate between classical verse satire and the Elizabethan mode, to analyze the vogue for formal satire in the last decade of the sixteenth century and, lastly, to examine Donne, Hall and Marston in relation to one another and so determine their purposes, techniques and achievements. In order to do this, a critical standard must be formulated to distinguish satire from other literary genres and to evaluate the literary worth of satirical writing.

Satire is motivated, at least by implication, by a set of abstract values, a conception of existence that the satiric world does not satisfy. The literary creation need not

explicitly affirm a moral standard, a criterion, but its very grotesqueness suggests that it is a deviation from a norm in the reader's mind and in the author's consciousness against which the values presented in the text are measured. Therefore, the particular criteria of Donne, Hall and Marston will be considered.

The dramatic speaker and his tone and manner are examined, since they are major elements in the satiric impact. The analysis of image patterns attempts to arrive at a definition of the nature of evil and of the particular satiric targets in these poems. The metaphors for vice and folly, the dominant images in each satirist, will be discussed, since in them is compressed the essential satiric effect. Finally, since, of all arts, satire is perhaps the most concerned with social questions, something of a historical dimension is useful for the understanding of Donne and his contemporaries. For this reason, the initial chapter is devoted to a discussion of certain distinctive characteristics of the Elizabethan age.

## CHAPTER II

## THE SATIRICAL TEMPER OF ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

The satire of the late English Renaissance is not an isolated phenomenon, but a development of the classical and medieval traditions of social criticism. Satire holds up a distorting mirror to nature, her forces, men and their ways, while maintaining that experience is seen and depicted as it is. The satiric world is exaggerated and distorted, yet retains some resemblance to the author's environment. In this way, the satirist emphasizes the immense gap between the society in which he writes and the ideal order. Superstition, prejudice, dogmatism, hypocrisy, personal vice and folly and social abuses are analyzed. The writer of satire often expresses a nostalgia for a lost Golden Age, an idyllic pastoral existence when simplicity and virtue reigned, completely opposed to the grotesque, degenerate satiric world.

Elizabethan "satyre" is given impetus by profound social and economic changes and religious and political conflicts that undermined the medieval world-picture, which even as early as the fifteenth century was losing its cohesion, and provided ample material for the preacher, the moralist, the social economist and the satirist.<sup>1</sup> The satirical temper

<sup>1</sup> Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions, Meaning and Expression (Cambridge [Mass.], 1952), p. 198.



is basically conservative, hostile to change. Thus, the weakening of religious, social and economic hierarchy, the secularization of society and the development of a pragmatic, materialistic philosophy seemed to confirm the idea of the decay and degeneration of man and nature. The increase in foreign trade, agrarian reorganization, the growth of London as a metropolitan market and the emergence of a new class, the bourgeoisie, with the ideas of individualism and free enterprise, represented the forces of mobility, of fluidity and flexibility. The satirist mirrors the older feeling, codified in the sumptuary laws, that man's place in society, his relation to himself and to the universal order, should be defined and permanent<sup>2</sup> and protests against the forces of materialism. Stock satiric targets are increased consumption and display of foreign goods, luxury, blurring of class distinctions, rising prices, monopolies, enclosures, all summed up in the contrast between traditional English manorial culture and Italianate, courtly civilization.

A skeptical attitude towards experience is shown in the satires of Donne and Marston, in the drama of Webster, Marston and in the dark comedies and the tragedies of Shakespeare. The opposition between man's actual condition and his spiritual potentialities, the themes of mutability, the degeneration of man, the decay of the world and its approaching end, combined to create a sombre picture of life and a sardonic, melancholy,

<sup>2</sup> Smith, p. 204.

bitter and satiric spirit in many thoughtful men in the last decade of the sixteenth century. The discovery of change and decay in the formerly apparently incorruptible and immutable heavens and the Copernican astronomy emphasized the patristic and classical assumptions of the degeneracy of man and the almost immediate collapse of the physical universe.<sup>3</sup>

The strong moral and didactic strain of English literature appears in forms borrowed largely from the classical authors, for example, epigrams, satires, Characters, epistles, meditations and essays. English formal verse satire usually takes the form of a monologue or dialogue written in decasyllabic couplets, enclosed within a fairly rigid rhetorical and structural framework. This design involves a satiric observer and often an adversary, a setting, however vaguely sketched, and a thesis, the examination of some aspect of man's irrational behaviour. The satirist uses innumerable devices, small dramas, proverbs, metaphors, fables, anecdotes, brief sermons, debates, apostrophes, slang, to illustrate his subject.<sup>4</sup> Attempts to reproduce direct, colloquial speech as closely as possible are contrasted with learned words and references. The juxtaposition

<sup>3</sup> See L. C. Knights, "Seventeenth Century Melancholy," The Criterion, XIII (1933), 97-112; George Williamson, "Mutability, Decay, and Seventeenth-century Melancholy," ELH, II. (1935), 133; Don Cameron Allen, "The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism," Studies in Philology, XXXV (1938), 212.

<sup>4</sup> M. C. Randolph, "The Structural Design of the Formal Verse Satire," Philological Quarterly, XXI (1942), 373.

of unlike things is a tactic to shock and surprise, not to excite laughter but to compel attention. A dramatic character, the "persona," serves as the author's mask, and either narrates or plays a leading role in the poem, which is often very like a series of dramatic scenes. Figures incarnating the abuse that is being attacked are introduced with identifying detail, shown in characteristic action and finally exposed and judged. Thus, formal verse satire is connected with drama and with formal dialectic. It sometimes resembles a kind of Socratic dialogue, either a conversation between two persons or a monologue where the second actor is present but allows the protagonist to speak for him, or it may be simply a monologue. Formal satire is also related to the Cynic diatribe, a discourse castigating vice, and to the English tradition of the "flyting," a spirited exchange of invective, the speakers appearing to improvise their arguments as the situation develops.

S. H. Henderson feels that the Renaissance satirists are not only trying to preserve the old order where possible, but are moralists who preach a strict code of ethics, for the most part strongly rooted in orthodox Christianity, but which borrowed much from the pagan writers.<sup>5</sup> Stoic doctrine, adapted by men like Guillaume du Vair, Antoine Muret and Justus Lipsius to the needs of Christians, was of all the classical philosophies the most acceptable to the English cultural and

<sup>5</sup> "Neo-Stoic Influence on Elizabethan Formal Verse Satire," Studies in English Renaissance Literature, ed. W. F. McNeir (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1962), p. 58.

religious heritage. It emphasizes personal responsibility and moral preaching, inward fortitude and outward striving in the search for the good life.<sup>6</sup> The Roman formal verse satirists were sources of Stoic thought, most obvious in Juvenal and Persius, and the Juvenalian indignant, ferocious, scathing attacks on abuses and the earnestness and seriousness of Persius are closer to the tone of English Renaissance satire than is the urbanity of Horace, with the possible exceptions of Wyatt and Lodge. The Elizabethans adopt the pose of the Cynic philosopher or preacher, since it allows freedom and license in expression, or that of the Stoic satirist, since it stresses moral rebuke. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the Cynic-Stoic tradition of satire and diatribe, the "flyting" and the native preaching tradition combine to form a sharp instrument which purports to arraign man for his vices and follies.

The outburst of satire seemed to lead so inevitably to "flytings" and libels that the authorities attempted to suppress it. The Order of Conflagration, an edict issued by the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, the censors of the letter-press, and entered in the Stationers' Registers on June 1, 1599, reaffirmed and strengthened existing restrictions on the press. It stipulated that Hall's Satyres, Pigmalion with certaine other Satyres, The Scourge

<sup>6</sup> Henderson, p. 62.

of Villanye, Sixe Snarling Satyres, Caltha Poetarum, Davies' Epigrams, Marlowe's Elegyes, of marriage and wyvinge, The XV loyes of marriage, and the books of the Nashe-Harvey controversy were to be called in and burnt. No satires or epigrams were to be printed in the future, while the printing of English histories and plays was dependent upon the authority of the Privy Council. However, according to the entry in the Registers for June 4, 1599, Hall's Satyres and Caltha Poetarum were spared. The authorities were attempting to discourage erotic literature and to check libelous topical references. The edict was not intended to regulate artistic expression, but simply to curb subversive and immoral literature. In Elizabethan England discipline within the church and state was expected and accepted by most citizens. Furthermore, censorship, as in all societies, could never have complete effectiveness, as it relies on the vigilance and thoroughness of censors and the cooperation of readers. Patronage by nobles and wealthy merchants was no doubt a more direct inducement for conformity of opinion among authors than any official regulations.<sup>7</sup> The edict was, however, perhaps one reason for the channeling of satire into dramas like Marston's The Malcontent, The Fawne, What you Will, The Dutch Curtezan, Jonson's "humour" plays, Volpone, The Alchemist, Shakespeare's As You Like It, Twelfth Night,

<sup>7</sup> E. H. Miller, The Professional Writer in Elizabethan England: A Study of Nondramatic Literature, (Cambridge [Mass.], 1959), p. 182.

Measure for Measure and Troilus and Cressida and the works of Webster and Dekker. Hall and Donne both wrote prose Characters which contain satiric elements. A strong satirical mood pervades Donne's Elegies, epithalamions and lyrics. The Elizabethans saw the satiric in the shadow of the pastoral, in the obverse of the heroic and in the extravagance of love poetry.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the vehicles for the realistic and "humourous" spirit that informs much of late Elizabethan literature--prose satire, verse satire, "humour" comedy, prose Character--have a fundamental resemblance. Behind them all is the allegorical and realistic representation of the Seven Deadly Sins and their followers which is as old as the medieval pulpit and the medieval homily.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Elizabethan Poetry, p. 207.

<sup>9</sup> J. B. Leishman, ed. The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601) (London, 1949), p. 45.

## CHAPTER III

## ELIZABETHAN FORMAL SATIRE

The differences between Elizabethan and classical formal satire are largely the result of the homiletic and preaching tradition that was emphasized in the second chapter. "Complaint" employs the technique of direct rebuke.<sup>1</sup> The complainant is the spokesman for a particular ethos, Christianity, which modifies his awareness of life by religious faith and the spirit of corrective chastisement, producing a moral earnestness, sometimes severity, and an impersonal point of view. He deliberately avoids provocative, direct allusions. Complaint often expresses itself in conceptual and allegorical terms because it is concerned with representatives of groups, organization types, the abuse rather than the abuser, in short, with man's perennial frailties. Man is a fallen being who must and can work out his salvation. This mode takes the form of ballads, dramas and narratives. Excluding its manifestations in allegory, it is relatively direct, simple and loosely structured.<sup>2</sup> The emphasis is on a didactic purpose, the

<sup>1</sup> Raymond MacDonald Alden, The Rise of Formal Satire in England Under Classical Influence, in University of Pennsylvania Series in Philology, Literature and Archaeology, VII, No.2 ([Philadelphia,] 1899, reprinted 1962), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> John Peter, Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature (Oxford, 1956), pp. 9-10, 59.

correction of vice. Thus, Elizabethan writing assumes curative as well as punitive attitudes, a tone of reprobation as well as occasionally one of reflection. Complaint is suited to the principal subjects of Elizabethan satire, religious and political concerns, the body politic made up of various "estates."

Let us examine the stylistic "decorum" of Elizabethan "satyre." Two obvious characteristics are a certain amount of deliberate obscurity and harshness of diction, grammar and metre. The convention that satire is obscure, whether or not actually obeyed, is related to the Elizabethan rhetorical tradition, to the classical satirical tradition as understood by English writers, and to the literary influences of the period. Rhetoricians, such as Puttenham in his Arte of Poesie, consider that an obscure style is to be reserved for weighty matters since it demands and challenges the reader's full powers of concentration. The first English critics, however, do not concern themselves much with the question of dark writing.<sup>3</sup>

Because of its extreme allusiveness, satire is one of the most quickly out-dated literary forms. In order to protect himself when striking at powerful figures or institutions, the satirist has found it necessary to use deliberate ambiguity, commenting on abuses whenever he has the opportunity, whether

<sup>3</sup> A. Stein, "Donne's Obscurity and the Elizabethan Tradition," ELH, XIII (June, 1946), . 98.



or not his digressions make the basic train of thought obscure.<sup>4</sup> In the period with which this paper is concerned, the medieval tradition of semi-allegorical types, while still in evidence, was giving way to the presentation of figures familiar to the satirist's contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> However, the intellectual climate of the 1590's fostered the attitude that the best literature is "dark," appreciated by only the most learned and acute readers, a chosen few. "Coterie literature," circulating in manuscript form, was a manifestation of this disdain of popular taste and a reaction to the dissemination and cheapening of the moods and idiom of Petrarchan poetry brought about by the invention of printing and the growth of the reading audience.

Base subject matter demands a base style, as Spenser remarks in Mother Hubberds Tale (43-44). Thus, the nature of the satiric persona in Elizabethan formal satire is an important reason for the genre's harshness and obscurity. The doctrines of Scaliger and Donatus, deriving the term "satire" from the mythological wood god, half-goat, half-man, the rude, simple and frank observer who comments upon the degeneration of mankind, and connecting the form with the vigorous, abusive spirit of the early Greek comedy, are the basis for nearly all Elizabethan theories of satire.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Arnold Davenport, ed. The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall (Liverpool, 1949), p. xxv.

<sup>5</sup> Peter, p. 113.

<sup>6</sup> Oscar James Campbell, Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida (San Marino, California, 1938), pp. 5-6, 24-34.

It suggests a semi-dramatic setting, an uncouth, perhaps rustic and obscene, narrative style. Any alternate derivations only affirm the concept of satire as a development of an archetypal form in which satyrs recited verses of rebuke. Drant derives the term from various sources apart from "satyr": an Arabic word for a glaive or sharp cutting instrument, the sullen and melancholy god, Saturn, and the Latin adjective "satura," "satiated." Harsh metre and coarse diction are appropriate to the satyr's nature, since he is "a distorted lens to bring man's moral ugliness into true focus."<sup>7</sup> Abrupt transitions of thought and between speakers are means of expressing "gall," or contempt for society. The Piers Plowman tradition, while not involving obscurity, also encourages a rough and harsh style, embodying simple truth and rugged honesty rather than polished wit.<sup>8</sup> The characteristic persona in Elizabethan satire, however, is no longer a plain, modest straightforward chider of vices, but an arrogant, often ostentatious and erratic figure. The complainant's disgust and despair with the world continues, but is no longer necessarily informed by the Christian ethos of charity and humility. The narrator is often saturnine, under the domination of the planet

<sup>7</sup> Alvin Kernan, The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance (New Haven, 1959), p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, Elizabethan Poetry, p. 216.

with power for evil and to spread incurable disease. Hall and Marston both invoke "Melancholy" as their muse. The satiric persona, for example, that of Marston, sometimes exhibits characteristics of the malcontent, one who was popularly believed to be afflicted with "melancholy adust," a mental and physiological condition traditionally associated with Saturn.<sup>9</sup>

The satirist's attitude towards his subject is reflected, particularly in Hall and Marston, in medical and punitive imagery. The speaker is a whipper, a scourger, an executioner, a surgeon or a physician. His object is to mutilate, destroy or purge a victim, criminal or patient.<sup>10</sup> Generally, such imagery is a metaphor for philosophical abstractions, but sometimes, again in Marston, it suggests a vengeful or sadistic pleasure in using satire to do physical harm, reflecting traces of a primitive belief in the power of incantational and magical verse, as Rosalind in As You Like It refers to the folk-belief in the Irish practice of rhyming rats to death (III.ii.186-188). Such an attitude finds a nebulous position somewhere between scorn and moral earnestness.

The satirists insist that their art is realistic.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Babb, The Elizabethan Malady: A Study of Melancholia in English Literature from 1580 to 1642 (East Lansing, 1951), p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> M. C. Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory: Its Possible Relationships and Implications," Studies in Philology, XXXVIII (1941), 148.

<sup>11</sup> Campbell, Comicall Satyre, p. 31.

Their lack of stylistic ornamentation corresponds to Attic, Senecan or anti-Ciceronian prose and late Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic blank verse, all reflecting the Baconian concepts of experiment, direct observation, and the need for accurate communication of immediate individual experience rather than expression of general ideas. Leishman remarks that "in the Elizabethan satirists generalization is almost completely absent, and we have page after page of detailed, realistic descriptions of particular follies and 'abuses' and of the perpetrators thereof. On those occasions when, without any particular object before him, an Elizabethan satirist indulges in general invective, he nearly always gabbles like a thing most brutish, unable to endow his purposes with words."<sup>12</sup>

To conclude this chapter, are the imitations of classical satirists and epigrammatists, the development of realistic writing about London life, the self-conscious break with the immediate literary past expressed in burlesques or parodies of older forms, simply techniques used by a coterie of dilettantes and by ambitious young men to amuse their friends and impress the court with their brilliance and unconventionality?<sup>13</sup> Or are they an exercise in a classical literary convention? These possibilities both seem to conflict

<sup>12</sup> Leishman, ed. The Three Parnassus Plays, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> John Wilcox, "Informal Publication of Late Sixteenth Century Verse Satire," Huntington Library Quarterly, XIII (1950), 196.

with the idea of socio-economic protest, reflection and serious discontent with the age. Inconsistencies in the satires are caused by a sometimes imperfect fusion of classical and native English elements. Homiletic elements are assimilated in Donne's "Satyres," which do not claim to effect correction of abuses. Hall and Marston, on the other hand, at various points in their work affirm a didactic intention. But are these statements merely lip-service to the tradition of moral reprobation or do they indicate an aim that is seriously pursued? Is the motivation for satire that which the writers claim? Is Elizabethan "satyre" "satire" or is it invective? These questions have, I think, meaningful answers only in connection with examinations of the individual satirists.

## CHAPTER IV.

## DONNE

The satires of Donne are a series of "humourous" and brilliantly sardonic portraits of types. The marked Horatian element in this poet,<sup>1</sup> the urbane detachment and sense of the absurd, shown, for example, in the lightness of touch with which he describes the bore in the fourth "Satyre" and analyzes man's perverse industry in striving for useless or evil ends, conflicts with a habit of intense introspection, a sense of disintegration, doubts and questionings. Donne combines the techniques of direct rebuke and reflection. His characteristic creative mood appears to be the reflective state of mind, evolving towards Stoic self-knowledge, but it is a restless and dynamic condition rather than a static and serene one. He is influenced strongly by the medieval allegorical and homiletic traditions with their emphasis on transcendent, metaphysical values, yet the narrator of the "Satyres" exhibits a compromising, non-dogmatic curiosity towards the world of experience, particularly in "Satyre III," a search for the true religion and a history of man's spiritual strivings which almost ceases to be satire except for the caricatures

<sup>1</sup> This point is disputed by E. G. Lewis, The Times Literary Supplement, Sept. 27, 1934, p. 655.

illustrating the theme.

The emphasis on skepticism implies a suspicion of rational processes. It is not the mind, however, that Donne attacks, but the misdirected use of the mind. The approaches and attitudes of the skeptic are methods to expose conventions and corrupt practices that hinder the realization of the truth. Melancholy is aroused by religious doubts, by the new astronomy, seeming to confirm the theory of the world's decay and degeneration, by an ambivalent attitude towards sex, relieved by abusing love, the beloved, and the lover in himself, by frustration of hopes of advancement and by the need for action, to have an important role to play in the world. Vigorous external expression of dissatisfaction through reproof and ridicule is a relief for discontent and artistic irritation. Skepticism, however, seems only to increase the poet's spiritual unrest:

. . . . On a huge hill,  
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will  
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;  
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so;  
Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,<sup>2</sup>  
Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night.

The characteristic virtues and vices of the "Satyres" are those of much of Donne's work. He applies the irregular, contorted rhythms of Elizabethan satire to some of his love lyrics, for example, "A Ieat Ring Sent," although the satires are the most obviously rough of his poetry.

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of John Donne, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1912), I, 157. Subsequent citations from Donne in my text will be to this edition.

They are the first English formal satires written in decasyllabic or "heroic" couplets. These poems circulating in manuscript were perhaps influential in forming the patterns of obscurity and metrical harshness characteristic of Elizabethan formal satire. Donne is a conscious master of harshness, especially in "Satyres" IV and V, which is suited to the genre in that it implies a social comment and an attitude of "contemptus mundi." An assumed carelessness for the external form of these verses expresses contempt for superficialities. Donne also avoids parallelism and monotonous regularity in order to gratify a personal taste for discordant effects and abrupt rhythms.<sup>3</sup> The technique, in addition, advertises the poet's acquaintance with the classical satirists, particularly Persius. One is made aware of the presence of an individualistic, highly perceptive personality in the "Satyres" through the use of abrupt syntax, irregular metre, startling analogies and a dramatic, rhetorical structure.

Sound may give opportunities for irony by evoking certain attitudes. Structures of sound in the "Satyres" by their very lack of conventional aesthetic appeal usually reinforce the emphasis on ideas and on visually perceived images that denote a rationally perceived object or concept. Donne hardly ever uses sound to imitate the sense. Rather, meaning is paramount and the conflict between sound and sense

<sup>3</sup> A. Stein, "Donne and the Couplet," PMLA, LVII (1942), 686.



generally results in the accenting of the sense, stressing the weight and importance of the subject. It is almost as if Donne has attempted to create poetry where "thought itself may stand out unadorned by fantasy," that is, by superfluous ornament.<sup>4</sup> Donne shares Bacon's dislike of Ciceronian eloquence, words rather than matter, "delicate learning." He attempts to convey accurately the flux of thought and feeling. Thus, the demands of logic and customary pronunciation wrench the metre and modulate the basic pattern, the five-stress decasyllabic line. Diction is generally harsh and concrete, colloquial but low-pitched. Rhythms frequently mirror the natural manner of everyday speech and also suggest the erratic processes of thought. The poet sometimes writes in a compressed, asymmetrical manner (iii.75-88); at other times he uses a loose, intimate style or combines the two manners (v.35-63). Syntactical variations are part of the attempt to create a sense of the spontaneous flow of ideas, a form of expression closer to actual experience than that of the sonneteers and poet-lawyer of "Satyre II." Dialogue is a frequent device (i.95-104; iv.73-87, 143-144). The "Satyres" are built upon the unit of the verse paragraph, rather than upon the couplet, elaborate stanzas shaped by the tones and rhythms of direct conversation.

Donne's prosody is the chief means by which he creates broken, unbalanced structures. Difficulties in scansion

<sup>4</sup> Anon., "The Oxford Donne," TLS, Feb.6, 1930, p. 96.

challenge the reader, for the meaning often depends upon metrical variations.<sup>5</sup> Two unstressed syllables sometimes come together.<sup>6</sup> The chief prosodic innovation is the frequent use of stress-shift in the fifth foot, thus providing a feminine rhyme which is invariably matched with a masculine.<sup>7</sup> The systematic introduction of stress-shifts speeds up the rhythm and emphasizes the satirist's meaning. The rhythm is reversed; a new rhythm is set up by attraction.<sup>8</sup> Harsh combinations of consonants occur. Elisions are another device. Many elidable combinations are very lightly articulated; others receive enough stress to be considered extra syllables. Dramatic extra syllables show the influence of Elizabethan dramatic blank verse, and add to the air of direct speech. Other additional syllables are attracted by stress-shifts. Trochaic rhythms and runover lines are cultivated.

A tendency to be difficult to understand at times, particularly in the "Satyres," results in part from an extreme compression of word, thought and syntax. Concise and economical expression is achieved when one metaphor does the work of several images and by the use of parenthetical remarks. The poet habitually avoids gradual logical transitions and on

<sup>5</sup> Stein, PMLA, LVII (1942), 676-696.

<sup>6</sup> See ii.63, 91; iii.42, 86; iv.190-191, 223.

<sup>7</sup> See i.57; v.17, 88.

<sup>8</sup> See i.69; ii.39; iii.88, 92; iv.231; v.185.

occasion separates subject and verb. Yet the poems are based on a rigid logical structure, showing the pervading influence of formal dialectic (iii), scholastic logic ("Elegie XI") and legal training (ii.49-57). This tight rational control by concentrating emotion makes it more intense.

Furthermore, Donne does not write for impatient minds. His work is coterie literature, addressed only to "witty" and learned readers. "Wit" in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean eras is dependent upon formal and conceptual brilliance in seeking and co-ordinating hidden likenesses among disparate phenomena. Dr. Johnson's criticism of metaphysical poetry is that "heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together," that a fusion does not occur.<sup>9</sup> This remark, of course, applies to all incoherent and disunified writing, not only to the excesses of the metaphysical school. Verbal ingenuity is not incompatible with the most serious purpose. Donne is a master of the metaphysical conceit, which at its best expresses emotion through intellectual images and fuses intense passion and wide-reaching thought in the union of apparently incongruous images or ideas. His intellectual play is part of his emotional experience. When T. S. Eliot speaks of "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling,"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Johnson, "Cowley," Lives of the English Poets, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1905), I, 20.

<sup>10</sup> T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays, new ed. (New York, 1950), p. 246.

he means that separate and isolated fragments of existence are seen as parts of a whole. Imaginative experience for Donne has its source and foundation in the intellect and abstract ideas are perceived in concrete terms. "Wit" is allied to profound seriousness, thereby intensifying a poem's impact.<sup>11</sup> It exercises a critical function upon the emotions and gives detachment to the feelings expressed in the poetry.<sup>12</sup> Donne does not segregate the sublime from the commonplace. In his poetry trivial affairs are recognized as parts of the same experience as love and death. Contrasting elements occurring close together fuse into a single effect in order to express a particular mood, which may be infinitely complex (i.7-8). All of the poet's many moods are implicit in any one, and so find their natural expression in paradox. In the "Satyres," however, the style is more irregular with fewer sharply contrasting elements producing a single effect, "dissonance," than in Donne's other works because of the degree of habitual roughness and tendency towards levelling of stresses that was mentioned earlier.<sup>13</sup>

The Petrarchan tradition of idealization and extravagant

<sup>11</sup> See iii.16, 60, 68-69; iv.1-4, 201-203; v.9-12, 57-63, 75-76.

<sup>12</sup> George Williamson, "Donne and the Poetry of Today," A Garland for John Donne, 1631-1931, ed. Theodore Spencer (Cambridge [Mass.], 1931), p. 162.

<sup>13</sup> J. B. Douds, "Donne's Technique of Dissonance," PMLA, LIII (Dec. 1937), 1052.

adoration of the beloved, with its diction, imagery and metrical techniques, is rejected (ii.17). The satirist revolts against superficiality, facility, and an inflated literary style, especially when used for subjects exalted above their proper condition, and mocks attitudes, tastes and conventions that have become empty patterns without true artistic vitality. He, for example, is a leader in the movement against mythology. A conventional element is introduced, perhaps from pastoral or Petrarchan love poetry, but is then rapidly and violently modified by a discordant association or conclusion. A reference to the Greek sage Heraclitus furthers the satiric purpose (iv.197). "Macrine" must be very ridiculous indeed to cause the weeping philosopher to laugh. The myth of Circe is applied to the effect of the sinister "Makeron" upon the narrator (iv.129-131). "Satyre V" begins with the traditional invocation to the Muse, applied to the satirist's apprehension of decay and death. The "Satyres" abound in realistic detail and acute analysis of men's motives. Donne's reflective tendency translates the abstract into the particular, although satire, while it is realistic, characteristically also appears objective, concerned with the external world, that is, society organized and distorted by the writer's concept of life, rather than with the satirist's own psychological processes. It focuses outward rather than inward. Donne makes poetic capital out of interests of his own time, defining emotions by intellectual parallels from astronomy, geometry, chemistry and geography and expressing

ideas in philosophical, theological and scientific terms. Allusions to events<sup>14</sup> and political issues of the day, such as the granting of monopolies to court favourites (iv.105-107) occur. The Latin form of the type names, some of which are possible personal references (v.87), is the only departure from the localization of the scene in Elizabethan London.

A remarkably consistent dramatic character is developed in these poems. His sympathies are with a minority group under "the Statutes curse"(iv.10), Roman Catholics in late sixteenth-century England. He is a melancholic scholar, indignant at society and the individuals within it. This isolated figure<sup>15</sup> broods about human life in general and morbidly dissects its ugliest aspects, putrefaction, excrement, worms and dust:<sup>16</sup>

All men are dust;  
How much worse are Suiters, who to mens lust  
Are made preyes? O worse then dust, or wormes meat,  
For they do eate you now, whose selves wormes shall  
eate. (v.19-22)

The speaker must appear the opposite of the pride and hypocrisy he condemns. He is not a total skeptic, but maintains virtue as a goal towards which man must strive (iii.5,79-81). He is the frank, unassuming man of the Piers Plowman tradition (iv.242).

<sup>14</sup> See i.80-82; ii.59-60; iii.17-24; iv.189-190; v.85.

<sup>15</sup> See i.1-12, 47-48; iv.67-68, 155-159.

<sup>16</sup> See ii.25-30, 41; iii.35-40; iv.104-105, 109-110, 134-135, 168, 201-203, 222.

In his search for stabilizing self-knowledge he turns within himself, like the Stoic "vir bonus" (iii.175-179). Introspection, however, merely encourages anatomizing of the world and himself (iv.156-157), not a measured, serene attitude.

The narrator has no illusions about the power of satire to change a man's conduct. He does not have any corrective purpose or ability.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, satire is a noble and lofty art. His works have "knowne merit," and some "wise man" may esteem them "Canonicall" (iv.241-244). "Satyre V," addressed to Donne's employer, the Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton, is a petition for reform and, like "Satyre III," an exhortation to virtue. It treats "all who in extreme/Are wreched or wicked"(5-6).

Each satire is a miniature drama with a setting, plot, characters and action. The dramatic situations, satiric pose, diction and imagery all emphasize the contrast between sacred and profane values. Each poem treats one aspect of this theme, satirizing a particular aspect of society and thus illuminating the other four vignettes. The constancy of the protagonist is opposed to the inconstancy of his antagonists, swayed by materialistic standards, varying slightly from poem to poem, enslaved by fashion (i), lechery (i, ii, iii), love of gain and position (ii, iv, v) and a corrupt Court (iv).

Imagery reinforces the contrast between eternal and

<sup>17</sup> See ii.109-111; iii.1-4; iv.69-70, 237-241.

transient values. Motifs recur within individual satires and from satire to satire. The images are highly concrete; the abstract and the grossly material, especially in the last three "Satyres," are interlinked in visual metaphors. The sensual is seen as a bridge to the spiritual. Religions in the satiric world are merely different "lecherous humors" (iii.53). Donne makes vice repulsive by introducing coarse, physical details. Man's bestiality may lead to sin and the misuse of reason. Water has both a pictorial and a spiritual significance. It is life-giving at "the rough streames calme head" (iii.104), but drowns "Soules, which more chuse mens unjust / Power from God claym'd, then God himselfe to trust" (iii.109-110). Images are drawn from the offences with which the satirist is concerned, fashions, prostitution, fraud, and applied to religious and philosophical concepts (v.68-75).

In the first "Satyre" realistic detail predominates over sheer wit. It is interspersed with references to the snobbery, lust and vanity that the satirist condemns in Court and London life. The speaker is a retiring scholar who is occasionally persuaded to venture out of his study to observe the conditions that arouse his indignation. He begins by apostrophizing a person who embodies all that is satirized. The "fondling motley humorist" (1), the "fond" or foolish sycophant and flatterer of rich and powerful men, attired in the fool's "motley," judges men by appearance (27-32).



But the scholar, anxious to give good advice, evokes an age in which virtue was simple, bare and unchanging:

Mans first blest state was naked, when by sinne  
Hee lost that, yet hee was cloath'd but in beasts  
skin, (45-46)

Deliberately fusing the metaphorical and literal meanings of "naked," he associates satirical comment on fashions with condemnation of the morals of the time and of the lechery of this particular gallant (37-40). The satiric pose of the crabbed, bitter critic of society, set apart from the rest of mankind, is assumed when the narrator says "And in this coarse attire, which I now weare, / With God, and with the Muses I conferre" (47-48). There is a suggestion of the shaggy satyr, or at least of the roughly clad hermit or carelessly dressed melancholic. Pompous figures are conjured up, an elaborately armed "Captaine" and profiteer (17-18), "a briske perfum'd piert Courtier" (19) and "a velvet Justice" (21), a grotesque, motley throng. To judge people on the basis of appearances is a form of superstition, shared by over-precise, hypercritical "puritans" (27), a term which is ironic in this context, suggesting lack of purity, superficiality, emptiness and essential selfishness.

The second part of "Satyre I" is a fast-moving, vivid, panoramic and dramatic view of Elizabethan London, the environment that in the person of the "humorist" penetrates to

the scholar in his study. The dialogue (83-104) that breaks up the oration adds to the intensity and immediacy of the situation. The narrator, by the very fact of his presence in this world, has sinned (65-66). The walk is simultaneously a survey of civilized society and a Dantean underworld journey (67-112). Satiric asides earlier were directed at lust, impoverished nobles marrying city heiresses, merchants' daughters (57-58), and astrology. The first and last of these targets are associated with the extravagant dress of "subtlet-witted antique youths" (62). The whole is applied to the underlying drama of the scholar and the "humorist." Flattery and patronage at court are joined with another allusion to fashions. A reference to the habit, newly introduced to London in Donne's time, of smoking exaggerates foppery (87-88). The fool is attracted to "silken painted" fops (72) and indifferent to "grave" men (79).

The "Satyre" begins and ends with images of restraint, the need for control over the passions. The "wise politique horse," the "Elephant" and the "Ape" (80-81) are not only animals performing or exhibited in London about the time the poem was written but bestial metaphors for the sensual man. The spiritual man, on the other hand, has a pastoral role (93). He knows that the young man will not heed his counsel (53-64), but accompanies him in any case, eager to strengthen him (100). The fop deserts the narrator (107), as the latter had anticipated

(15), only to return abjectly (111).

Ironically, the "humorist," earlier opposed to the "constant company" (11), after having been thrown out the door (110) by his mistress's new lovers, "constantly a while must keepe his bed" (111). But the continence of this state, as well as its duration, is enforced, and therefore no sign of virtue. The satiric hero has not been influenced by the advocate of truth and simplicity.

"Satyre II" is basically directed against poets and lawyers. Distortions of language are equated with moral aberrations. The satiric commentator's hate towards "all this towne" (2) is modified by an ambiguous "Pitty" (4). He satirizes the extravagances of love poetry, particularly the fashion for sonnet sequences, the drama, with its mechanical writers and actors, and plagiarism. The structure is rigidly logical. After condemning all poor writing, associated with famine and invasions, pestilence (6-7), a condemned man (11) and witchcraft (17), and bemoaning the presence of a host of prolific scribblers (23-24), the satire is focussed upon the worse and more specific sin of plagiarism (25-26). Paradoxically, stolen poetic craft becomes the thief's own:

For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne  
The meate was mine, th' excrement is his owne:  
(29-30)

Donne moves to the discussion of a specific figure, "Coscus," the lawyer-poet who alone arouses the speaker's "just offence" (40). The narrator claims to forego moral

rebuke of grave sins and to concentrate upon a "humourous" character. But his attitude is not simply "almost light-hearted tolerance of Sin."<sup>18</sup> The growth of the satiric target is like putrefaction, the progress of a disease and animal development (41-42). Speech for him is like "nets, or lime-twigs" (46), a means of securing his prey. The chaotic effect of the legal jargon suggests the disorder of this world (57-60).

Then, by an abrupt transition, the speaker addresses "Coscus," "When sicke with Poëtrie, and possest with muse / Thou wast, and mad, I hop'd" (61-62). But men who practice law only for gain, who combine legal practice with usury to cheat prodigal heirs out of their estates (79-80), are worse than "imbrothel'd strumpets" (64). The images of prostitution, attacking those who sell their souls for secular gain, are applicable to both roles of the adversary, as a poet, one of those "who write to Lords, rewards to get" (21), and as a lawyer. A series of his actions shows that fraud, a compound and spiritual sin based on the desire for wealth and power, is a more serious vice than <sup>that</sup> of "carted whores" (73), "Bastardy," "Symonie" or "Sodomy" (74-75), which are recognized as evil, and indeed, are their own punishment (39). "Coscus" uses speech for immoral purposes. He talks idly, like prisoners who swear that they are only kept in jail for "suretiship" (68), lies to his clients and to the judge. A modification of

<sup>18</sup> Peter, Complaint and Satire, p. 135.

Grierson's reading of lines 71-72 suggests that as the "wedge" or ingot must shape itself to the mould or "blocke," the dishonest lawyer must strain or "wring" the meaning of his words to make his case acceptable to the "barre," the court. If the hyphen is dropped between "bearing" and "like," a metaphor comparing the target to beasts of burden appears.<sup>19</sup>

In his world, "Coscus" thrives, satanic (80) and dominant:

Shortly (as the sea) hee will compasse all our land;  
From Scots, to Wight; from Mount, to Dover strand.  
(77-78)

Legal procedure and terminology are used to consolidate his advances. The length of his "parchments" is stressed by comparison with other voluminous writings (87-96). The word, the vehicle for justice and learning, is perverted (97-102). Although in the first two poems there is much condemnation of vice and little portrayal of virtue, the speaker upholds the values of simplicity, tradition and constancy. In the closing passage of "Satyre II" he laments the decline of the rich man's sense of duty, the breakdown of a stable, stratified society. For him, moderation in the use of possessions, a sufficiency but not a superfluity of all material things, is the basis for a good life. This ideal, however, is only a forlorn hope in a society ruled by "Coscus," even if the narrator is not

<sup>19</sup> L. S. Cobb, "Donne's 'Satyre II,' 71-72," Explicator, XIV (March 1956), 40.

endangered by "th' huge statute lawes" (111-112). There remains the possibility of his own words being twisted and misinterpreted.

"Satyre III" would seem to be a product of the period in Donne's life between 1593 and 1599 when he was investigating the rival claims of the Roman Catholic Church and the various Protestant churches to be closest to the primitive Church. Unrest in this poem apparently has nothing to do with the shattering effects of scientific discoveries about the nature of the universe, but is the manifestation of a personal skepticism caused partly by the attempt to recapture a vanished spiritual unity and partly by the attempt to decide which, if any, of the contending religious factions represented the true Church. The poet doubts human knowledge with its uncertainty, concern with the material, shifting values and the disintegration of accepted spiritual beliefs. The search for religious certainty leads him, in the framework of an essentially historical, factual, controversial conception of religion, carefully to compare the various doctrines.

This "Satyre" is central in theme. It is not a satire in the Elizabethan tradition, but is, rather, a hortatory epistle. The religious problem is shown as it appears to an honest quester of the truth. The poem is one of the earliest appeals for tolerance and candid scrutiny of religious differences. The reflective, moralizing strain predominates.

Unlike the other "Satyres," this poem is a soliloquy in meditative isolation, with a change in attitude, not satiric exposure of the grotesque and the ridiculous, as its final goal. The protagonist counsels with himself, not attempting to correct abuses, but exploring his own mind in an effort to resolve a spiritual conflict. The poem's action is the evolution of the writer's thought, a dialectical process in the course of which certain revelations are made and a ceaseless search for order through the multiple aspects of experience is pursued. Donne's "wit" becomes the instrument of a discussion of the ultimate purpose in human life. Satiric touches come from the caricatures of those who refuse to leave "easie wayes and neare" (14) to reach religious truth, or who make a choice on narrow, sectarian lines (43-67).

Structural unity is achieved by the working out of the theme, the character of the narrator, and the consistency of tone. There is an intense eagerness to reach the truth upon which the soul's salvation depends, a deep contempt for indifference, in this "Satyre." The satiric orator's emotion is complex, for his pity checks his "spleene," yet "brave scorn" (1) prevents him from showing compassion for worldly men. He can neither laugh, nor weep, and doubts that "railing" is an effective medicine (4). He sets himself a series of questions (5-15) and then answers them, distinguishing between secular "courage of straw" (28) and spiritual courage. The first "blinded," or pagan, age (7) espoused virtue for the sake of

"earth's honour" (9). Ironically, Christians, with an opportunity to reach "heaven's joys" (8), may lose them to pagans of "strict life" (12-13) if they do not learn to fear the foes of mankind, "the foule Devill" (33), the world, since it is in a state of degeneration (37-39), the flesh (40) and its joys, which without the "faire goodly soule" (41), that man loathes, are the companion of death. To fear damnation "great courage, and high valour is" (16). As in the previous "Satyres," Donne elaborates on statements with exhaustive detail. Sea-voyages, perhaps referring to the Cadiz expedition and the Islands voyage on which the poet sailed, merely expose one to "leaders rage, to stormes, to shot, to dearth" (19). To "ayd mutinous Dutch" (17), to "dive seas, and dungeons of the earth" (20), to explore the "frozen North" (22) and to bear the "fires of Spaine, and the line" (24) are customarily regarded as brave, and are undertaken "for gaine" (26). But all these acts, as well as the pugnacious insistence that all the world defer to the beloved (26-28) and suicide, as a denial of the obligation to grapple with moral problems on earth, are cowardly. God made man to "stand / Sentinell in his worlds garrison" (30-31). His task, therefore, is to seek "true religion" (43).

The narrator examines the possible places where the "true religion" may be found. He moves through a series of negative possibilities, discovering only a confused variety of



warring creeds. Religious adherence is determined in the satiric environment by circumstances and caprices. The imagery is alrgely sexual, based on an extended conceit, the comparison of man's love of God to various "Lecherous humors" (53). The Roman Catholic searches for his faith at Rome because he knows that "shee was there a thousand yeares agoe," like a ragged woman who is beloved because she was splendid at an earlier time (43-48). The men of Geneva, Dutch Schismatics, Calvinists, see the true religion as a woman who is plain and devoid of ornament (49-54). Some uphold the established religion because of the influence of authority (55-62), like an obedient ward who accepts the wife of his guardians' choice; atheists are like cynics who, seeing that some women are impure, reject all marriage (62-64); the man accepting all creeds, like the lecher, has eclectic tastes (65-68).

Religious truth must constantly be pursued:

. . . unmoved thou  
Of force must one, and forc'd but one allow;  
And the right . . . (69-71)

The basic appeal is to tradition, to history, to the precedent of one's forebears (71-73). Yet this attitude seems to contradict the possibility of paternal advice causing damnation (11-15) and unthinking conformity (55-62). The salvation of man's immortal soul is, by implication, more important than the vices attacked in the other "Satyres." The narrator refuses to consider

the non-essential differences among religious sects, but bases his judgments on the metaphysical abstraction of absolute "truth," the one transcendant reality as opposed to the incidental trappings of religion that bind those he satirizes. Man, above all, must exercise reason and persistence in a painful quest for "truth" (86-88):

Hee's not of none, nor worst, that seekes the best.  
 To adore, or scorne an image, or protest,  
 May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way  
 To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;  
 To sleepe, or runne wrong, is. On a huge hill,  
 Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will  
 Reach her, about must, and about must goe;  
 And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so;  
 Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,  
 Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night.  
(75-84)

The involved grammar and slow, labouring rhythms express the immense effort necessary to reach truth. Donne translates abstractions into concrete terms in an attempt to establish something permanent, and unified behind the shifting and dissolving world of appearances, a violent extracting of order from the diverse elements of experience (67-68). "Truth" is a subjective thing, a state of mind. Since no system is certain, the speaker can use doubt constructively in his search for truth. It is approached in the devious ways (81) made necessary by the imperfections of human reason. The metaphorical description of the approach to truth, in the allegorical

tradition, localized on "a huge hill" (79), shows a keen awareness of man's psychological processes. It is a means of accurately expressing at the same time the skeptic despair of knowledge and the belief in doubt as a valuable technique. The narrator is convinced that truth is to be found, but fears that men will cease struggling and sleep on the side of the hill (83-85). Dualism and paradox are inevitable:

. . . in strange way  
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;  
(77-78)

Similarly, one learns that

. . . mysteries  
Are like the Sunne, dazzling, yet plaine to all eyes.  
(87-88)

There is in this poem no ultimate reconciliation between the flesh and the spirit. The emphasis is on the eternal war between the bestial and angelic elements of human nature. The desire to know is an unrelenting agony, for the poet cannot base his choice on any of the trivial reasons of the satiric characters. He tries to resolve by intellectual means a spiritual dilemma, the relationship between reason and faith, and between the spiritual and secular powers. Man's laws must not hinder the soul's free search for religious truth (93-95). One cannot rely for salvation upon the dicta of "a Philip, or a Gregory, / A Harry, or a Martin" (96-97), a

neat antithesis between Roman Catholic and Protestant kings and spiritual leaders. God's law must be followed, even if it conflicts with human legal codes. Material and secular power is a potential threat and temptation that blinds men to constant and immutable spiritual values, causing them, like "Coscus" (ii) and like the officers of "Satyre V," to use human law in order to gratify their own desires and to ignore the supremacy of divine law (100-102).

The water imagery in the closing passage (103-110) looks forward to the last two "Satyres," and acts as a focal point for all five poems. Earlier in "Satyre III" water imagery occurs (1-2, 20-22). The final section expands on a conceit comparing secular power to a rough stream issuing from the "calme head" (104) of spiritual truth. Flowers thrive, like men, at the peaceful source. But if men abandon the height for the "tyrannous rage" (106) of secular desires and torments, they are destroyed:

So perish Soules, which more chuse mens unjust  
Power from God claym'd, then God himselfe to trust.  
(109-110)

Thus, the sense of urgency, all the arguments, only lead back to the situation which gave rise to them. By its very nature, the question cannot be resolved. Perfection, the certain knowledge of "true religion" and the comprehension of divine truth, cannot be achieved in a finite world.

Frustration, non-satisfaction, is inevitable. The chief decisions that are reached are in favour of continued indecision. The poem, nevertheless, is in no sense a failure. It expresses through imagery, metre, diction and dialectic a state of mind and analyzes an individual intellectual and emotional reaction from every angle. "Satyre III" also establishes a criterion that can be applied to Donne's other works.

"Satyre IV," the longest and roughest in versification of the formal satires, is linked to the third "Satyre" by a reference to "Mistresse Truth" (163). If the poem has any clear plan or dominant, unifying idea, it is the grotesque language and dress of travellers and courtiers, intertwined with the motif of the informer and sycophant. The setting is a "Purgatorie, such as fear'd hell is" (3). The speaker is doing penance for a great sin. He has gone to Court, although he was not motivated by pride, desire to see or to be seen; neither, he puns, had he "suit there, nor new suite to shew"(7). He refers to the fines imposed on Roman Catholics (8-10), incurred by one who, like the narrator, attended a ceremony for a jest:

. . . So 'it pleas'd my destinie  
 (Guilty of my sin of going,) to thinke me  
 As prone to all ill, and of good as forget-  
 full, as proud, as lustfull, and as much in debt,  
 As vaine, as witlesse, and as false as they  
 Which dwell at Court, for once going that way.  
 (11-16)

His torments in the company of the bore are a punishment for this sin (50-51, 137-140). The Court itself, however, is a prison, a kind of hell where "the great chamber" is hung with "the seaven deadly sinnes" (232), secular desires and accomplishments, from which the narrator finally manages to escape.

The antagonist is a caricature of the Gallicized or Italianate Englishman (84), a man who "hath travail'd, and saith, speakes all tongues" (35). His appearance is outlandish, stranger than animals bred by the sun on the Nile's slime, than anything in "Noahs Arke," than anything Adam named, than any object of antiquarian research, than the famed "Africks Monsters" or Sir Walter Raleigh's description of "Guianaes rarities." His conversation is more unbearable than "Pedants motley tongue, souldiers bumbast, / Mountebankes drugtongue" or "the termes of law" (40-41). Like his jerkin, this person's speech has disintegrated. It is "no language" (38), only "complement" (44), stranger than "strange meats." The food metaphor debases the faculty that separates men from beasts. Language is used to cheat and deceive, to

. . . win widdowes, and pay scores,  
 Make men speak treason, cosen subtlest whores,  
 Out-flatter favorites, or outlie either  
 Jovius, or Surius, or both together. (45-48)

When the gift of tongues is thus abused, one is no longer a man, but a "thing" (18, 20, 35).

In the course of the "humourous" dialogue, the protagonist, like "Hamlet" with "Osric," mocks the court follower's affected speech at every turn, but the object of ridicule is either too obtuse and self-centred to understand, or, because of his desire to ensnare the protagonist, unwilling to take offence. For instance, the double-edged compliment upon the bore's linguistic skill labels it as an anachronism, useful to the builders of the tower of Babel. When the adversary chatters about his love of court life and wants to talk of kings (74), perhaps to ascertain the narrator's attitude towards the government, the speaker refers him to the keeper of the tombs at Westminster Abbey, another man who profits by talking (74-80). This advice inspires a pseudo-sophisticated protest about the "base, Mechanique, coarse" (81) conversation of Englishmen. The colloquial but affected use of "your" is deliberately misinterpreted by the narrator.

Refusing to leave, the sycophant changes the subject and rehearses news of various scandals in a mechanical manner:

He takes my hand, and as a Still, which staies  
A Sembrieffe, 'twixt each drop, he nigardly,  
As loth to enrich mee, so tells many a lye. (94-96)

Stock complaints, such as the use of cosmetics (108), lechery (101, 128), extravagance (127) and corruption in government (101-102, 121), are mingled with references to monopolies (103-107), the Armada, the "losse of Amyens" (114), the conduct

of the wars (122), the granting of offices in perpetuity (123-125) and officials' cooperation with pirates for gain (125-126). The "thing" is no longer like an itch or a blunt instrument, but like a sore or a razor-sharp object. He forcibly administers medicine which sickens his "Patient" (109-110). The discourse, like the "parchments" of "Coscus" (ii.87), is of an unnatural length (111-114). Like Circe's charms, it has an evil, hypnotic effect, turning men into beasts (129-130). The spy or traitor who has turned informer on suspected Roman Catholics carries the pox with him:

. . . mee thought I saw  
 One of our Giant Statutes ope his jaw  
 To sucke me in; for hearing him, I found  
 That as burnt venome Leachers do grow sound  
 By giving others their soares, I might growe  
 Guilty, and he free . . . (131-136)

The satiric commentator rids himself of his "crosse" (140), this creature's company and conversation, by lending a crown (150), but he cannot forget the horrors of the Court, greater and more numerous than those of hell (157-160).

In the passage in which the narrator recollects his experiences "in wholesome solitarinesse" (155) and weighs their significance, he disengages himself from the forces of corruption that dominate the satiric world and reasserts that his mistress is "Truth" (160-164), attempting to rid himself of "Low feare" (160). The tone becomes grimmer. The Court is like the artificial wax gardens exhibited by Italian puppeteers



(169-173), like a bladder "puft" (164) and swollen with vanity (167-168) and like the stage, where "all are players" (185). The bore of the first half of the poem is the "naturall" product of this unnatural environment (173-174). The lover of truth refuses to carp, as the bore does and as dull writers do, on "triviall household trash" (98). Earlier in the poem, reasons are given for this attitude:

To teach by painting drunkards, doth not last  
Now; Aretines pictures have made few chaste;  
No more can Princes courts, though there be few  
Better pictures of vice, teach me vertue; (69-72)

Although the "Satyre" glances at the usual targets, "rais'd men" (162), frivolous pursuits, gluttony, lechery (175-176), extravagant dress (180-181), flattery (182), the gallant (197-218) and the bully (219-228), it is not a detailed document of abuses:

. . . who e'r lookes  
(For themselves dare not goe) o'r Cheapside books,  
Shall finde their wardrops Inventory. . . . (185-187)

In this atmosphere, everything is false. Beauty and wit are bought (191-194). Courtship becomes a ritual equated with piracy and hunting (188-190, 195). Worldly and sacred considerations are completely confused; thus, religious imagery is applied to preparation for an appearance at Court (199-203). The perfect symmetry of the circle is reflected in physical details, not in any spiritual awareness (204-208). Finally,

the reader overhears the speech of courtiers, a series of meaningless "protests" (212) or "ill words" (223). "Glorius," like a professional fool, plaguing others with his jests, "commands like law" at Court (228), from which the satiric observer retreats, trembling like "a spyed Spie" (237).

The water of "Satyre III" reappears in the preachers who are "Seas of Wit and Arts" (238), compared to "the bladder of our court" (168), bursting with vanity. The narrator appeals to eloquent divines to preach against the vices and follies he has seen, for his own words are not capable of drowning the sins of the Court. He is "but a scarce brooke" (240), capable only of washing the stains away. The last few lines, curiously enough, seem to contradict the preceding statement. The speaker claims that his modesty causes him to disparage his writings, which he hopes will have scriptural authority for perceptive readers. Two elements of the satiric personality are in conflict, but the very ambiguity of the narrator's position emphasizes the confusion of a world controlled by the words of the "thing" and the babble of the Court, an Inferno that terrifies the bold dramatic speaker.

The fifth and last is the least brilliant of the "Satyres," but in it Donne exhibits the nervous and angry temper which might have made him a superlative satirist.<sup>20</sup> The theme, as in "Satyre II," is the law, in this case officers

<sup>20</sup> Grierson, ed. The Poems of John Donne, II, xi.

who take advantage of suitors rather than lawyers who defraud their clients. The satiric narrator first addresses his Muse, then "Suiters, who to mens lust / Are made preyes" (20-21), next, the "greatest and fairest Empresse" (28), Sir Thomas Egerton, who as Lord Keeper was concerned with the abuses connected with the Clerkship of the Star Chamber (31), again, suitors (38-78), and lastly, an unnamed man who has fruitlessly bribed corrupt officials. None of these persons interrupt the tirade. They are simply objects at which the commentator can direct his reflections. The speaker establishes the mood. He will not be writing in jest, but with indignation:

What is hee  
 Who Officers rage, and Suiters misery  
 Can write, and jest? (7-9)

His subject is a most "enormous sinne" (34).

The protagonist's anger is directed more toward the officers than toward the wretched suitors. The metaphor of seas and streams for power, both temporal and divine, resumes the image pattern of the third and fourth "Satyres." The central conceit is based on the contrast between the microcosm and the macrocosm:

. . . man is a world; in which, Officers  
 Are the vast ravishing seas; and Suiters,  
 Springs; now full, now shallow, now drye; which, to  
 That which drownes them, run: These selfe reasons do  
 Prove the world a man, in which, officers  
 Are the devouring stomacke, and Suiters  
 The excrements, which they voyd. . . (13-19)

God's law dwells at the stream's head, but officials who abuse the power delegated to them by God or by the "greatest and fairest Empresse" (28), who is ignorant of her servants' behaviour, such and drown those who appeal to higher courts:

. . . powre of the Courts below  
Flow from the first maine head, and these can throw  
Thee, if they sucke thee in, to misery,  
To fetters, halters. . . (45-48)

Suitors can swim against the stream by complaining and exhaust themselves in vain (48-53), until they are forced to bridge the seas with fees and bribes (53-55). But the gold is swallowed up with no advantage to the suitor (55, 90-91).

The images of excrement and dust form a second recurring pattern. Metaphors of prostitution are still another link in the chain:

. . . Oh, ne'r may  
Faire lawes white reverend name be strumpeted,  
(68-69)

But when this fervent plea is made, law has already been degraded:

Shee is all faire, but yet hath foule long nailles,  
With which she scracheth Suiters; In bodies  
Of men, so in law, nailles are th' extremities,  
So Officers stretch to more then Law can doe,  
As our nailles reach what no else part comes to.  
(74-78)

The money used for ineffectual bribery was itself obtained by questionable means. After having taken money from others,

the suitor is himself tricked (79-85).

Thus, the standard of law and justice is not questioned, but in this world it is completely distorted. In the "Satyres" the righteous ideal is constantly contrasted with its perversion by man's folly and greed for material wealth and power. There is an opposition between law and her instruments. The conceit of the "Angels" (57-63) emphasizes the difference between divine and human justice. God's justice is free; although his angels mediate between himself and mankind, suppliants do not pay fees. Earthly metallic "Angels" are not meant by God to have a role different from that of the spiritual beings. But once more there is no hint that non-material values will become established in the world of the "Satyres."

At this point, the criteria for satire should be applied to Donne. Has he written unalloyed invective, or possibly simply philosophical broodings? Does he achieve the satirist's degree of detachment and create a state of mind balanced between amusement and contempt? Much criticism praises Donne's formal satires very highly. R. M. Alden remarks that Donne writes in a compact, allusive style which is, if not distinctly imitative, more like that of classical satire than that of any earlier English writing.<sup>21</sup> Arnold Stein, on the contrary, does not think that classical parallels show Juvenalian spirit and tone.<sup>22</sup> Alvin Kernan

<sup>21</sup> Alden, Rise of Formal Satire, p. 88.

<sup>22</sup> A. Stein, "Donne and the Satiric Spirit," ELH, XI (Dec: 1944), 266-282.

believes the "Satyres" to be the most consistent and ordered of the Elizabethan formal satires,<sup>23</sup> and John Peter considers that Donne approaches Pope's clarity and incisive wit more closely than any pre-Augustan except Dryden.<sup>24</sup>

The presence of the speaker, in each satire defending the spiritual values of simplicity, truth and constancy, creates a degree of organic unity and provides a standard against which the worth of the satiric environment can be judged. The "Satyres" are built, to a large extent, on a single thematic principle of organization, the dominance of temporal values and the opposition between the material and the spiritual.<sup>25</sup> The satiric persona shows himself conservative, as he laments the passing of the old order in which each man had his divinely appointed place.

In these poems Donne embodies in vivid language a sardonic disdain for the follies and crimes of humanity. Using mockery, the satiric orator expresses disillusionment at man's failure to realize his spiritual potentialities. Moreover, the dramatic (i) and dialectical (iii) qualities culminate in an effect of imaginative brilliance and intellectual energy, sheer exuberance in experimenting with verbal effects. In spite of sharp condemnation of social and individual vices,

<sup>23</sup> Kernan, The Cankered Muse, p.118.

<sup>24</sup> Peter, Complaint and Satire, p. 134.

<sup>25</sup> N. J. C. Andreasen, "Theme and Structure in Donne's Satyres," Studies in English Literature, III (1963), p. 59.

there is a marked delight in fanciful play with words, rapid movement and vivid, intellectual humour. Metaphysical "wit" is the instrument for satiric comment on life. Occasionally one finds "wit" in the sense of a detached enjoyment of the ridiculous, perhaps most in evidence in the satiric sketches of the first and the fourth "Satyres." The satirist infallibly singles out and exaggerates the most absurd characteristic of his target, leaving the reader to fill in the outlines. For example, the fopling (i.67-78), is described in an easy, natural, restrained and objective manner. One is hardly aware of the subtle satiric thrust, the deft insertion of social criticism (i.57-58). Illustrations are sometimes genial and comic, meant to arouse laughter rather than indignation (i.83-86).<sup>26</sup> Most often they are brilliant and shocking (ii.63-73), and they are always pertinent (iv.69-72, 88-90). Thus, to a large extent, Donne avoids invective and maintains a certain degree of aesthetic distance. A furiously angry man could not write these verses:

. . . Towards me did runne  
 A thing more strange, then on Niles slime, the Sunne  
 E'r bred; or all which into Noahs Arke came;  
 A thing, which would have pos'd Adam to name;  
 Stranger then seaven Antiquaries studies,  
 Then Africks Monsters, Guianaes rarities.  
 Stranger then strangers . . . (iv.17-23)

Nevertheless, intense subjectivity and metaphysical

<sup>26</sup> Stein, "Donne and the Satiric Spirit," ELH, XI (Dec. 1944), 270.

subtlety are perhaps better suited to the lyric and devotional verse than to satire. although social types are objectively drawn. The ingenious comparisons and involuted phrases refer back to the satirist's personality instead of radiating outward to illuminate a social world created by the poet's vision. In these works the creative process seems to be one of contraction rather than expansion, or more precisely, an ambiguous alternation of both. Hallett Smith considers that the author of the "Satyres" is too impressed imaginatively with the degeneration of the world to make much of an art of satirizing it.<sup>27</sup> Leishman, I think, is nearer the essential characteristic of the formal satires when he says that Donne is playing a dramatic role, associated with detachment and fundamental skepticism, in an attempt to escape from melancholy and depression.<sup>28</sup> Although Donne's imagination is obsessed with the idea of the world's decay, this subjective orientation does not, contrary to C. L. Lewis's opinion, deprive the "Satyres" of fitful glimpses of "cheerful normality" and "occasional grandeur."<sup>29</sup> Grierson notes both the skeptical spirit and the search for absolute principles:

<sup>27</sup>Elizabethan Poetry, p. 227.

<sup>28</sup>The Monarch of Wit: An Analytical and Comparative Study of John Donne (London, 1951), p. 39.



Alike in his poetry and in his prose, Donne's mind seems to want the high seriousness which comes from a conviction that truth is, and is to be found. A spirit of scepticism and paradox plays through and disturbs almost everything he wrote, except at moments when an intense mood of feeling, whether love or devotion, begets faith, and silences the sceptical and destructive wit by the power of vision rather than by intellectual conviction.<sup>30</sup>

"Satyre III," in my opinion, is an example of one of these moments, not of the transcending of skepticism, but of the union of doubt with an assurance of the ultimate reality of absolute truth. Donne's lofty idealism, which appears even in the four portrayals of an irrational satiric world, is part of an other-worldly attitude concerned primarily with spiritual rather than mundane life, related to the medieval preaching tradition. These works, however, are much too individual in tone to be classed in any particular literary category.

<sup>29</sup> C. S. Lewis, English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama, The Oxford History of English Literature, Vol. III (Oxford, 1954), p. 469.

<sup>30</sup> Grierson, II, x.

## CHAPTER V

## HALL

Hall's extensive borrowing from other authors and his "bookish" imagination usually produce assimilations of classical and other sources; he remarks

. . .now my rimes relish of the Ferule still,  
Some nose-wise Pedant saith . . .<sup>1</sup>

He fuses references to classical myth in an effort to give his readers puzzles to solve. The author of Virgidemiarvm, Sixe Bookes claims to be the first English satirist, that is, the first English writer of Juvenalian formal satire ("Prologue": 1.1-4), although Lodge and Donne already had written in the classical form. Hall, however, combined smoothness and vigour to a greater degree than any earlier English satirist.<sup>2</sup> His humour, which is rare, is largely based on exaggeration and disproportion. For example, the braggart "lastly to sealevp all that he hath spoke, / Quaffes a whole Tunnell of Tabacco smoke" (IV.iv.40-41). His "wit"

<sup>1</sup> The Collected Poems of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and Norwich, ed. A. Davenport (Liverpool, 1949) p. 54. Subsequent citations from Hall in my text will be to this edition.

<sup>2</sup> Alden, Rise of Formal Satire, p. 101.

is restrained, almost Augustan, rather than metaphysical. Indeed, Pope called Virgidemiae "the best poetry and truest satire in the English language."<sup>3</sup>

The style is, on the whole, smooth and polished. The couplets are usually end-stopped, a technique which tends to discipline and refine the impact of the satiric attack, and thus give it a certain detached air. Hall states in A Post-script to the Reader that he avoids verse that "as it maie well afford a pleasing harmony to the eare, so can it yeeld nothing but a flashy and loose conceyt to the iudgement" (75-77). The style is usually marked by an absence of Elizabethan conceits and by a tendency to use concrete words wherever possible, working from particular images and examples to general conclusions. It is allusive, indirect, involving abrupt dramatic shifts and elliptical apostrophes. The rhythm is occasionally broken by incomplete lines. Archaic verb-endings in "-en" and participle formations with "y" create a faint impression of crudeness and rusticity, but not of obscurity.

To satisfy those who conceive of satire as necessarily rough, the satirist pens the first diatribe of book four, modelled upon "the soure and crabbed face of Iuuenals." The idea of satire as a rude, harsh and "darkesome" criticism

<sup>3</sup> John Nichols, Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century (London, 1812), V, 654.

of humanity delivered by goat-men is introduced in "His  
Defiance to Enuie":

The ruder Satyre should goe rag'd and bare:  
And show his rougher and his hairy hide:  
Tho mine be smooth, and deckt in carelesse pride.  
(76-78)

Virgidemiae has an exalted mission:

And if thou canst not thine high flight remit,  
So as it mought a lowly Satyre fit,  
Let lowly Satyres rise aloft to thee:  
Truth be thy speed, and Truth thy Patron bee.  
("Prologue": I.21-24)

The Post-script, appended to the "byting Satyres," explains that "it is not for euery one to rellish a true and naturall Satyre, being of it selfe besides the natiue and in-bred bitternes and tartnes of particulers, both hard of conceipt, and harsh of stile" (1-3). First, the speaker dares "boldly auouch that the English is not altogether so naturall to a Satyre as the Latin" (59-60). Furthermore, readers will not trouble themselves to interpret matter phrased in an obscure fashion (79-82). Lastly, the satiric purpose is "a further good," causing the work to be "plaine, with hope of profit, rather than purposely obscure onely for a bare names sake" (86-89). Thus, Virgidemiae is described as "rude, and recklesse" (DE 30), but it is also called "smooth" (DE 78). The satyrs cannot achieve the heights of the "Roman ancients" (II.vii.14):

Some say my Satyrs ouer-loosely flow,  
 Nor hide their gall inough from open show:  
 Not riddle-like obscuring their intent:  
 But packe-staffe plaine vttring what thing they ment:  
 ("Prologue": III.1-4)

The evils exposed, the narrator remarks, "deserue a keener stile" than his (V.i.16):

The Satyre should be like the Porcupine,  
 That shoots sharpe quills out in each angry line,  
 And wounds the blushing cheeke, and fiery eye,  
 Of him that heares, and readeth guiltily.  
 (V.iii.1-4)

The first three books, Of Tooth-lesse Satyres, are concerned with literary, academic and moral abuses. The byting Satyres deal with more serious evils in a stronger tone of invective. They are presented as a reaction to criticism of the earlier poems as too academic. The speaker laments that his "sixe Cords beene of too loose a twine" and begs his audience to be patient:

Stay till my beard shall sweepe myne aged brest,  
 Then shall I seeme an awfull Satyrist: (IV.i.168-169)

"The Conclusion of all" announces that the last three books are to be violent and vigourous in style, written in "crabbed oke-tree rinde." These satires are mysteries the reader must decipher in order to unearth a "secret meaning." As in the "Prologues" to the Tooth-lesse Satyrs, the satiric observer establishes himself as a link in the literary

tradition:

. . . from the ashes of my quiet stile  
Hence forth may rise some raging rough Lucile,  
That may with Eschylus both find and leese  
The snaky tresses of th' Eumenides:  
Meane while, sufficeth mee, the world may say  
That I these vises loath'd another day,  
(V.iii.13-18)

Hall enlarges and adapts passages from the classics to the needs of his time. The only later satiric sources mentioned are the works of Ariosto and the "base french Satyre" referred to in the Post-script. Complexity of literary allusion is the distinguishing characteristic of this poetic technique. The machinery of classical mythology takes on a metaphorical significance in that it allows the poet simultaneously to emphasize the continuity between his world and the past and to judge the satiric targets by juxtaposing them with the heroes and villains of antiquity. Hall has been accused of simply paraphrasing Latin models,<sup>4</sup> but any such conception ignores the significance of the doctrine of "imitation." The use of classical philosophers is defended in his Characters (1608):

As one therefore that in worthy examples hold  
imitation better than invention, I have trod  
in their paths, but with an higher & wider

<sup>4</sup> Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne, Dean of St. Pauls (London, 1899), I, 36.

step; and out of their Tablets have drawn these larger portraitures of both sorts.<sup>5</sup>

The beginning of Virgidemiae III.iv is the most artificial. Nevertheless, after the author has created a specifically Roman atmosphere, he proceeds to draw a vivid picture of the English scene. There are a number of sustained, deliberate imitations, but only in a few cases are classical adaptations the essential framework of a poem.

The division of Hall's material indicates an awareness of the fallacy in the Stoic view that all sins are of equal importance, as are all virtues, and in the corollary that only two classes of men exist, the good and the evil. Moral indignation aroused by contemporary subjects is expressed in an individual style which at its best involves several elements, not simply the transformed Juvenalian influence but the tendency towards ethical analysis of the English literary tradition, the moral sense of the preacher and the satirical spirit, contempt for the targets.<sup>6</sup> Introducing his "Characterismes of Vices," Hall comments that "the fashions of some evils are besides the odiousnesse, ridiculous;

<sup>5</sup> "A Premonition, of the Title and Vse of Characters," Heaven vpon Earth and Characters of Vertues and Vices, ed. Rudolf Kirk, Rutgers Studies in English, No.6 (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1948), p. 144.

<sup>6</sup> A. Stein, "Joseph Hall's Imitation of Juvenal," Modern Language Review, XLIII (July 1948), 322.

which to repeat, is to seeme bitterly merry."<sup>7</sup> In his "bitterly merry" way, the satirist remains well within the tradition of Complaint. In the satiric world, endurance is the only possible philosophy of life, and so the poet counsels a modified Neo-Stoicism, emphasizing the virtues of restraint and control. It is one answer to the presence of evil in society. Hall, however, is not a philosopher.<sup>8</sup> His Neo-Stoicism is simply a means of reinforcing his Christian heritage. He is the "English" and "Christian Seneca," and the Stoic pride in human reason is not acceptable to a Christian writer. Man's reason is unreliable:

And now when Nature giues another guide,  
To humane kind that in his bosome bides:  
Aboue instinct, his reason and discourse,  
His beeing better, is his life the worse?  
(IV.iii.80-83)

The satirist is sympathetic to the Stoic suppression of the passions, but prefers continence to complete lack of emotion. One must, for example, condemn sin in an environment where wrong has "maistered the right" (II.iii.9) and "damned vice is shrouded quite from shame / And crown'd with Vertues meed, immortall Name" ("Prologue": I.13-14). Hall associates virtue with simplicity and longs for "the time of Gold" (III.1),

<sup>7</sup> Kirk, "Characterismes of Vices," "The Prooeme," p.170.

<sup>8</sup> Audrey Chew, "Joseph Hall and Neo-Stoicism," PMLA, LXV (Dec.1950), 1133.



the ideal that makes the world of Virgidemiae blacker by comparison. Corruption implies a fall from a primeval state when men lived according to Nature's laws of goodness, justice, duty and honour (II.iii.1-6) and without the false trappings of civilization. The divine order was obeyed when "as Nature made the earth, so did it lie" (V.iii.38). Man has become so "depraved" that he has lost the "native vertue" with which "all brute and sencelesse things" are endowed (IV.iii.62-67).<sup>9</sup>

The philosophy of life Hall advocates is basically that of moderate Calvinism. The virtues he espouses are the Stoic ideals of prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance; the vices he lashes are fear, discontent, greed and elation. A strong ascetic element appears in his ideas of personal conduct, yet he satirizes "pinefull penurie" (V.ii.82) as well as luxury. Ripe, mature, self-control is desirable:

Curius is dead, and buried long since,  
And all that loued golden Abstinence:  
(IV.v.7-8)

Hall's purely literary work is mainly satirical. Its dominating theme is the need to abandon fashionable follies and return to the virtuous ways of antiquity, to be content with what one has and is. Virgidemiae upholds tradition and opposes change and enthusiasm. The active life is the

<sup>9</sup> See Kirk, "Of the Unconstant," p. 180.

virtuous life, for work is an instrument for social stability. The conservative moralist emphasizes that only in performing the duties and fulfilling the responsibilities attached to one's allotted station in a stratified society can true peace of spirit be achieved. This view of life results in a stress upon social functions and contempt for individual ambitions (IV.vi.36-49):

I wote not how the world's degenerate,  
That men or know, or like not their estate:  
(IV.vi.1-2)

Man's unhappiness and restlessness spring from his unruly desires (III.i.42-45). Thus, the ideal state is that of indifference to the world. True nobility comes from within:

Brag of thine owne good deeds, for they are thine,  
More than his life, or lands, or golden line.  
(IV.iii.94-95)

Pride in material things is evil. It is useless to try to preserve fame by anything other than virtuous deeds:

Thy monument make thou thy liuing deeds,  
No other tombe then that, true vertue needs.  
(III.ii.13-14)

Virgidemiae attributes faults to possibly identifiable persons under the guise of classical type names, most of which are in the Italo-classical form. The poems also mark the first use in English of blank names or initials

(IV.v; V.ii). Individual references, however, for example, the original of "Labeo,"<sup>10</sup> are absorbed in a context of universal significance. "Labeo" becomes the archetypal prolific and obscene hack writer. The satires are logical analyses of social conditions, concerned with various forms of degeneracy. Their structure is episodic, introducing purely incidental satire to illustrate general sins. The satirist often begins in an impassioned--however conversational--tone, with a question,<sup>11</sup> an apostrophe (II.i) or a wish (IV.v). The theme is enunciated and then dramatized in a number of stock situations. Some of the orations, particularly in the later books, are sustained rhetorical arguments, for example, the advice to "Pontice" to prove his own worth instead of boasting of his ancestors' fame (IV.iii). A final couplet in many cases sums up the satiric criticism.<sup>12</sup> At other times, the conclusion is a particularly extensive portrait (IV.iv; VI.i), a passage of exhortation (II.i), reflection<sup>13</sup> or narrative.<sup>14</sup> Many of the poems, especially in the Tooth-lesse Satyrs, are simply versified Characters (III.vi). The dramatic speaker is present at all times, and

<sup>10</sup> See II.i; IV.i.37-44; IV.iv.14-15; VI.i.1-20.

<sup>11</sup> See II.ii; II.iii; II.v; III.iv; III.vii; IV.i; IV.iii; IV.iv; IV.vii; V.ii.

<sup>12</sup> See I.iii; II.v; III.i; IV.ii; IV.v.

<sup>13</sup> See IV.i; IV.vi.

<sup>14</sup> See II.iii; III.vii; IV.v; V.ii.

he insists in the Post-script that he does not wish to harm individuals. He says, "I . . . may safely professe to be altogether guiltlesse in my selfe to the intention of any guiltie person who might be blemished by the likelihood of my conceiued application, therupon choosing rather to marre mine owne verse than anothers name" (44-49).

He is a scourger and surgeon. On the very title page the image of a scourge appears, since Virgidemiarvm is the genitive form of a Latin word meaning "a harvest of rods." The satiric commentator in the "Prologue" to the second book presents himself as the righteous successor to Diogenes:

Or bene the Manes of that Cynick spright,  
Cloth'd with some stubburn clay & led to light?  
Or do the relique ashes of his graue  
Reuiue and rise from their forsaken caue?  
That so with gall-weet words and speeches rude,  
Controls the maners of the multitude? (1-6)

He is inspired by "scornful rage" and a "scornfull Muse."  
Furthermore, he will indulge his scorn for the most powerful institutions (IV.vii.1-4). The effect of his stinging  
verse gives him pleasure:<sup>15</sup>

Go to then ye my sacred Semones,  
And please me more, the more ye do displease;  
(IV.i.80-81)

The satires are offered as products of the narrator's "hote-

<sup>15</sup> See "The Authors charge to his Satyres"; IV.i.74-75; Postscr. 21-22.

bloodes rage," since he is the agent of Nemesis,

Whose scourge doth follow all that done amisse:  
That scourge I beare, albe in ruder fist,  
And wound, and strike, and pardon whom she list.  
("Prologue": II.10-12)

This personage employs the methods of torture as well as those of sanative castigation. In "The Conclusion of all," he announces that victims are expected to submit willingly to punishment. Yet he does not imply that his diatribes and verbal lashings will effect either general or individual reform. Men are eager to confess the guilt of everyone but themselves:

Who list complaine of wronged faith or fame  
When hee may shift it to anothers name?  
(IV.1.43-44)

The reader is reminded that "silence is safe, when saying stirreth sore / And makes the stirred puddle stinke the more" (VI.1.173-174). The pose of detached superiority results in a protest that the speaker scorns danger or retaliations from the persons he satirizes (IV.1.82-89). The work is prefaced by "His Defiance to Enuie." The tone is highly ironical when he claims that he will confine himself to attacking plebians after making one more allusion to people of importance (IV.iv.10-17). He announces his adherence to the tradition of Juvenal:

Renowmed Aguine, now I follow thee,  
 Farre as I may for feare of ieopardie;  
 And to thy hand yeeld vp the Iuye-mace,  
 From crabbed Persius, and more smooth Horace; (V.i.7-10)

The dramatic speaker, however, has characteristics of the plain man and preacher of the Complaint tradition and of the Stoic "vir bonus" as well as of the satyr and scourger. He is the good man compelled to write satire by the debauchery of a time "when all, saue tooth-lesse age or infancie, / Are summon'd to the Court of Venerie" (IV.i.108-109). He exclaims

Pull out mine eyes, if I shall see no vice,  
 Or let me see it with detesting eyes. (V.i.5-6)

His "spight" is "not vnkindly," that is, not unnatural. Although his poems, it is asserted, tax only the living, not the evil dead, the narrator apologizes for writing satire (V.i.21-22). He has rejected the stock literary themes in favour of satires inspired by "Trueth and holy Rage." Their stated purpose is to unmask "the vgly face of vice" and "in carelesse rymes, / Check the mis-ordred world, and lawlesse times" (I.i.23-24). In the "Prologue" to the first book the narrator denies that he is motivated by envy:

Enuie waits on my backe, Truth on my side:  
 Enuie will be my Page, and Truth my Guide.  
 Enuie the margent holds, and Truth the line:  
 Truth doth approue, but Enuy doth repine. (5-8)

These statements, however, are qualified by the ironic coupling of the speaker's "deuout" loathing of vices with the actions of the hypocrite who "rounds Poules pillers in the eare" (V.iii.20). His aggressive, belligerent stance is somewhat like that of "the Male-content," who "speakes nothing but Satyrs and Libels, and lodgeth no guests in his heart but Rebels."<sup>16</sup>

Virgidemiae closes with an ironic assertion that satire is no longer necessary (VI.1). The speaker praises the times:

Then let me now repent mee of my rage,  
For writing Satyres in so righteous age: (21-22)

"The Authors charge" commits his "playning Orphanes" to oblivion.<sup>17</sup> If the "luck-lesse Rymes" are for a time ignored, their eventual impact upon the world will be greater, since the envy, hatred and love of the satirist's contemporaries will not cause the meaning of his verses to be weakened, distorted, or their very existence to be threatened:

For when I die, shall Enuie die with mee  
And lye deepe smothered with my Marble-stone,  
Which while I liue cannot be done to dye,  
Nor, if your life gin ere my life be done,  
Will hardly yeeld t'await my mourning hearse.  
But for my dead corps change my liuing verse.  
(13-18)

<sup>16</sup> Kirk, p. 179.

<sup>17</sup> Compare John Marston, "To the Worlds Mightie Monarch, Good Opinion"; "To euerlasting Obluiun." Citations from Marston in my text are to The Poems of John Marston, ed. A. Davenport (Liverpool, 1961).

Hall's imagery depends largely for its effect upon contrasts between the sublime and the vulgar:

So pride aboue doth shade the shame below:  
A golden Periwig on a Black-mores brow. (V.ii.43-44)

Metaphors are drawn primarily from visual impressions, and frequently involve references to animals. "Labeo" reading Virgidemiae is described in this manner:

His angry eyne looke all so glaring bright,  
Like th'hunted Badger in a moonelesse night,  
(VI.i.11-12)

Animal images occur in connection with an opposition between darkness and light (IV.ii.68-70; IV.vi.23-29), with predatory qualities (IV.v.63-64), with corruption (V.ii.42) and with death (IV.v.21-22, 88). On the other hand, beast metaphors are associated with intuitive apprehension of the natural order (IV.iii.68-71).

These poems, like those of Donne and Marston, use dirt, excrement, putrefaction and disease as metaphors for vice.<sup>18</sup> Corrupt growth is an appropriate symbol for the degeneration of the countryside:

The marble pauement hid with desart weede,  
With house-leeke, thistle, docke, & hemlock-seed.  
(V.ii.59-60)

<sup>18</sup> See II.iii.10-14; II.iv.9-12; III.ii.21-24; IV.i.158-160; IV.v.67-68.



Lechery is associated with filth, "loathsome smoke,"  
 "Acherons steemes, or smoldring sulphur dust" (IV.i.154-155).  
 "Spitfull mothes, and frets, and hoary mold" (IV.ii.14)  
 threaten "Lólio's" possessions. The tricks of the usurer  
 involve "fusted hoppes" and "mo'ld browne-paper" (IV.v.117-118).  
 The peasant's cottage is ingrained with smoke and soot,  
 suggesting the inhabitants' misery:

. . . a silly cote,  
 Whose thatched spars are furr'd with sluttish soote  
 A whole inch thick, shining like Black-moors brows  
 Through smok that downe the head-les barrel blows.  
 (V.i.59-62)

This kind of imagery is used to describe "the hypocrite," who  
 is "a rotten sticke in a darke night, a Poppie in a corne  
 field, an ill tempered candle, with a great snuffe, that  
 in going out smels ill."<sup>19</sup> Rich men are generally diseased  
 and bloated (II.ii.62):

. . . I see some rotten bed-rid Syre,  
 Which to out-strip the nonage of his heire,  
 Is cram'd with golden broaths, and drugs of price,  
 And ech day dying liu's, and liuing dies, (V.ii.7-10)

Hall can also suggest tactile qualities; for example,  
 "Gallio's" manners are imaged forth rather than portrayed in  
 direct narrative:

<sup>19</sup> Kirk, p. 172.

All soft as is the falling thistle-downe,  
 Soft as the fumie ball, or Morrians crown;  
 (IV.iv.74-75)

Clothes define the man in the satiric world. The grotesque dress of gallants is compared to the nakedness, "ruder hide" or "home-spun Russet" of an earlier age.<sup>20</sup> The parsimonious "Lolio" appears in "rough Pampilian," "white Carsy hose, patched on eyther knee" and a "knit night-cap" (IV.ii.19-24). This imagery is one way of contrasting the soldier and the plough-man:

The sturdie Plough-man doth the soldier see,  
 All scarfed with pide colours to the knee,  
 Whom Indian pillage hath made fortunate,  
 And now he gins to loath his former state:  
 Now doth he inly scorne his Kendall-greene,  
 And his patch't Cockers now dispised beene.  
 (IV.vi.36-41)

"Zoylus" feigns illness in order to display "his wrought night-cap, and laune Pillow-bere" (VI.i.112). Thus, elaborate, miserly and simple apparel become metaphors for vice and virtue.

Virgidemiae evokes a world where all good is measured by gain, a profit society:

If Mammon selfe should euer liue with men,  
Mammon himselfe shalbe a Citizen. (IV.v.129-130)

<sup>20</sup> See III.1.62-69; III.vii.25-46; IV.iv.46-51.

The narrator asks

Whom cannot gifts at last cause to relent,  
Or to win fauour, or flee punishment? (V.i.79-80)

A man's prestige is dependent upon what he owns, be it gentle birth or financial means, not upon his personal virtue. Values are distorted. There is a cleavage between appearance and reality:

All is not so that seemes; sor surely than  
Matrona should not be a Curtizan,  
Smooth Chrysalus should not bee rich with fraud,  
Nor honest R. bee his owne wiues baude. (V.ii.25-28)

The general decay of the times is manifested in that of learning, resulting in the disintegration of the social order. These are the first English satires in which literary criticism is a major element. As if to stress their importance, Hall places his literary and academic satires at the beginning of the book. Debasement of literature and literary taste reflects moral corruption. Hall attacks obscenity (II.i):

Now is Pernassus turned to the stewes:  
And on Bay-stockes the wanton Myrtle growes.  
Cytheron hill's become a Brothel-bed,  
And Pyrene sweet, turnd to a poysoned head  
Of cole-blacke puddle: whose infectuous staine  
Corrupteth all the lowly fruitfull plaine.  
(I.ii.17-22)

The popularization of tragic poetry (I.iv) causes him to exclaim

Shame that the Muses should be bought and sold,  
 For euery peasants Brasse, on each scaffold.  
 (I.iii.57-58)

The satirist attacks the immense amount of bad literature, in fact, simply paper-wasting (I.ii.27-34; II.i), that is directed towards the vulgar (I.ix.11-12). Academics suffer hardships and wisdom is despised:

Each home-bred science percheth in the chaire,  
 Whiles sacred arts grouell on the groundsell bare.  
 Since pedling Barbarismes gan be in request,  
 Nor classicke tongues, nor learning found no rest.  
 (II.iii.23-26)

The "ouer-learned age" breeds superficial glibness and learning (VI.i.129-160):

O age well thriuen and well fortunate,  
 When ech man hath a Muse appropriate, (VI.i.233-234)

The "well knowne daintines of the time" hinders the broadcasting of unpleasant truths:

Ye Antique Satyres, how I blesse your daies,  
 That brook'd your bolder stile, their owne dispraise,  
 And wel-neare wish; yet ioy my wish is vaine,  
 I had beene then, or they were now againe!  
 For now our eares beene of more brittle mold,  
 Than those dull earthen eares that were of old:  
 (V.iii.5-10)

The satirist deplores writers' financial dependency and self-abasement in sycophantic dedications (I.i.11-14). He attacks

not simply lasciviousness, corruption and over-production but also lack of restraint and decorum. Poets should be guided by reason (I.iv.15-17). In his satires upon indecent poetry, Hall glances at specific poets, such as Marlowe (I.iii) and Nashe (I.ix.35), and assumes that the writers of "ribald rymes" are as shameless as their verses (I.ix.21-24). Many of the important genres of Elizabethan literature are discussed, rhymed tragic poetry (I.iii), unrhymed heroic poetry (I.iv), "de casibus" tragedy (I.v), attempts to write quantitative verse in English (I.vi) and sonnet sequences (I.vii).

The "Academicall" satires are a survey of the various professions, focussing on greed as the motivation in all walks of life. The "Morall" criticisms are concerned with private behaviour, personal humours, fashions and religion. The multiplicity of stock figures gives an impression of great variety. Targets are the wealthy man who contemns scholars (II.ii), lawyers (II.iii), doctors (II.iv), simoniacs (II.v), private tutors (II.vi), alchemists (IV.iii.34-39), astrologers (II.vii), tailors (IV.ii.63-65), usurers (IV.v), merchants (IV.v.111-114) and landlords (V.i; V.iii). Vainglory (III.ii), the decline of hospitality (V.ii) and ostentatious piety or wealth (III.iv) are also satirized. The satirist criticizes fantastic dress, drunkenness (III.vi), excessive personal ornamentation (III.v) and elaborate food (III.iii.17-26). Other targets are avarice,

lechery (IV.i.92-161), murder (IV.i.55-58), marrying rich widows in order to inherit their lands (IV.i.61-65), pride (IV.iii), cockfighting and gambling (IV.iii.18-23), gluttony (IV.iv.18-21), trivial pursuits (IV.iv.86-95), bribery (IV.v.1-16), travellers' tales (IV.vi.58-73) and extravagance (V.iv). He scorns Roman Catholics (IV.vii).

The range of characters and subject-matter reveals an extensive and varied knowledge of most aspects of the life of the time, that of the peasantry (V.i.59-122), of city merchants (III.iii), of the country gentry (V.ii), of household servants (V.ii.49-50), of tavern dwellers (V.ii.100-102) and, above all, of scholars and gallants. The difference between the Tooth-lesse and the byting Satyres,<sup>21</sup> except for the first satire of the fourth book, is not so much in the style, in spite of the satirist's declarations to that effect, as in the material. The later books are aimed more directly than the first three at the major social and economic abuses of the period, caused by the sweeping social and agrarian revolutions. The narrator does not approve of the desire for novelty, the discontent of the man who thinks "happy all estates except his own" (IV.vi.49). He cries

O. Nature: was the world ordain'd for nought,  
But fill mans maw, and feede mans idle thought:  
(III.i.56-57)

<sup>21</sup> See above, p.54.

The satires are particularly bitter about social climbers, old "Lolio," who scrapes and drudges to make his son a gentlemen (IV.ii) and "Lolio's sonne," who buys his gentility, like "the Ambitious," who "hath projected a plot to rise, and woe be to the friend that stands in his way. He still haunteth the Court, and his unquiet spirit haunteth him; which having fetcht him from the secure peace of his Country-rest, sets him new and impossible taskes."<sup>22</sup> The "vpstart" carpet-knight (IV.iv.1), for these reasons, denies his humble origins:

He findes recordes of his great pedigree,  
And tels how first his famous Ancestor  
Did come in long since with the Conquerour.  
(IV.ii.134-136)

The heir of "Villius the welthy farmer" (V.iv) has the expensive tastes of the impoverished fops who congregate at St. Paul's (III.vii). Like "the Unthrift," "he ranges beyond his pale, and lives without compasse."<sup>23</sup> In short, the ambitious or inconstant man "is an importunate suter, a corrupt client, a violent undertaker, a smooth Factor, but untrusty, a restlesse master of his owne; a Bladder puffed up with the wind of hope, and selfe-love. He is in the common body, as a Mole in the earth, ever unquietly casting;

<sup>22</sup> Kirk, p. 192.

<sup>23</sup> Kirk, p. 193.

and in one word, is nothing but a confused heape of envy, pride, covetousnesse."<sup>24</sup>

Questions of public concern are given considerable attention, for example, the enclosure movement.<sup>25</sup> "Faire glittering Hals" (V.ii.18) conceal famine and misery.

Estates are depopulated:

Would it not vexee thee where thy syres did keepe,  
To see the dinged foldes of dag-tayled sheepe,  
And ruined house where holy things were said,  
Whose free-stone wals the thatched rooffe vpbriad,  
(V.i.115-118)

Other abuses of the time do not escape notice, in particular, rack-renting (V.i.51-58), "conceaied land" (V.i.37-38) and the engrossing of corn (IV.vi.23-27). The attractions of late sixteenth-century London are described. Men pay

to view some tricke  
Of strange Moroccoes dumbe Arithmeticke,  
Or the young Elephant, or two-tayl'd steere,  
Or the rig'd Camell, or the Fidling Frere.  
(IV.ii.93-96)

Political events, such as the English blockade on trade with Spain (IV.iii.30-31), are used for satirical purposes. Pride is embodied in the building of the Escurial, that "vaine bubble of Iberian pride" (V.ii.37-42), and the Spanish attempts to invade England (V.iii.84-87).

<sup>24</sup> Kirk, "Of the Ambitious," p. 193.

<sup>25</sup> See IV.ii.123-128; V.i; V.iii.



The poems are often witty and amusing. Hall excels in animated character drawing. His idealized view of the Golden Age is localized by homely details that reveal keen observation of men and their activities (III.i.26-27). General sins are illustrated with sharp and often brilliant portraits. Examples are "Virginius" (IV.iv.108-123), "Matho" and "Cyned" (IV.v.67-70), "the hunger-staru'd Appurtenance" (V.ii.89-98) and the final satiric thrust, "old Catilla" (VI.289-304). Scenes are vividly painted, such as the one in which a factor tends his bed-ridden master with great care, having been deceived into expecting a rich legacy:

So lookes he like a Marble toward rayne,  
And wrings and snites, and weeps, & wipes againe,  
Then turnes his backe and smiles & lookes askance,  
Seasoning againe his sowred countenance,  
(VI.i.103-106)

The dramatic elements, however, are often undermined by the author's rhetorical and declamatory tendencies, encouraged by the excellence of the heroic couplet as a vehicle for aphorisms and revealed in statements like this one:

Wo to the weale where manie Lawiers bee,  
For there is sure much store of maladie.  
(II.iii.15-16)

This weakness is shown most clearly on the one occasion when Hall does not attempt to fully adapt classical references

and illustrations to Elizabethan England (IV.i).<sup>26</sup> The portrait of the "close adultresse" (IV.i.144-157) lacks the force of the tableau of shrewish wives who

. . . make a drudge of their vxorius mate,  
 Who like a Cot-queene freezeth at the rocke,  
 Whiles his breach't dame doth man the forren stock.  
 (IV.vi.16-18)

Hall, like Donne, expresses in formal verse satires a contempt for the misuse of human abilities in the single-minded devotion to materialistic values characteristic of the satiric world, related to the degeneration of language manifested in the decline of literature. The poet searches for truth, but in the sense of unmasking hypocrisy rather than that of pursuing an absolute reality. He speaks in an individual tone. The reader of Virgidemiae is aware of an academic commenting on the outside world, unlike Donne's perceptive observer with his curious mixture of detachment and involvement or Marston's narrator, immersed in a sea of corruption. The values Hall's persona represents are contrasted with "each single-sold squire" (II.ii.18). His criteria are explicitly set forth:

Mong'st all these sturs of discontented strife,  
 Oh let me lead an Academicke life,  
 To know much, and to thinke we nothing know;  
 Nothing to haue, yet thinke we haue enough,

<sup>26</sup> Stein, "Joseph Hall's Imitation of Juvenal," MLR, XLIII (1948), 321.

In skill to want, and wanting seeke for more,  
 In weale nor want, nor wish for greater store;  
 Enuye ye Monarchs with your proud excesse  
 At our low Sayle, and our hye Happinesse.  
 (IV.vi.82-89)

Although Hall does not communicate such an intense awareness of a distinct personality as Donne and Marston do, he achieves a high degree of structural unity through organization, imagery, thematic patterns and the criteria of the academic life, antique simplicity and virtue. The satirist does not doubt these values in spite of his conviction that he is living in a degenerate age, but he evokes a world in which a flood of vice and folly has overcome them, represented by the "spurious seede" (VI.i.239) of the press, springing up over all the land. He catches the flies of Elizabethan England and by means of ironical exaggeration fixes them in amber, adapting the genre of formal satire to his own time.

## CHAPTER VI

## MARSTON

Marston's formal verse satires, Certaine Satyres (1598) and The Scourge of Villanie, registered on September 8 of the same year, derive the monologue or dialogue form and the technique of ironical exaggeration from Hall as well as from first-hand examination of the classical satirists.<sup>1</sup> Although neither Hall nor Marston indicates any direct knowledge of the "Satyres," the intense, vividly dramatic tone of Certaine Satyres and the Scourge resembles Donne's works rather than Virgidemiae. Marston, however, is not subtle an ironist as Donne. The snarling and chastising satiric persona becomes a fully established convention in the Marstonian satires, which include no "Tooth-lesse" criticisms. Inconsistencies arise from the attempt to fuse the scourging and scorning of individuals, either possibly identifiable persons or representatives or specific types, with the elaborate moral exhortation, the pose of humility and modesty, of the writer of homily and Complaint. The opposition is concentrated in these lines:

<sup>1</sup> A. Stein, "The Second English Satirist," Modern Language Review, XXXVIII (1943), 273-278.

Preach not the Stoickes patience to me,  
 I hate no man, but mens impietie.  
 My soule is vext, what power will'th desist?  
 Or dares to stop a sharpe fangd Satyrist?  
 Who'le coole my rage? who'le stay my itching fist  
 But I will plague and torture whom I list?<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, Marston constantly drifts toward one of two extremes, straightforward, powerful invective, or philosophical meditation; the closing passages of the seventh, eighth and eleventh "Satyres" of the Scourge illustrate the latter tendency. There is a conflict between the speculative moralist, expounding Stoic and Machiavellian ideas, and the dramatic poet.

The narrator of the formal satires expresses his "gall" by the use of tortured, contorted diction and syntax, sometimes overstrained and tasteless imagery and rhetoric, elisions, abrupt phrases, rapid transitions between subjects and speakers and uneven rhythms, probably suggested by passages in the byting Satyres and by Elizabethan dramatic blank verse. Hall achieves greater compression in meaning and form, often managing to confine the sense to the couplet, and Donne approaches more closely the fusion of form and content than does Marston. In general, the scourger of villainy is less uniform in style than either of his predecessors.<sup>3</sup> His verse is freer, less regular, less compact

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of John Marston, ed. A. Davenport (Liverpool, 1961), p. 106. Subsequent citations from Marston in my text will be to this edition.

<sup>3</sup> Alden, Rise of Formal Satire, p. 132.

than Hall's, with fewer closed couplets, more irregularities of accent and some unrhymed lines (SV v.18). The satirist claims that his style is "loftier" than the usual satiric verse:

O how on tiptoes proudly mounts my Muse,  
 Stalking a loftier gate then Satyres vse.  
 Me thinkes some sacred rage warmes all my vaines,  
 Making my spright mount vp to higher straines  
 Then wel beseemes a rough-tongu'd Satyres part,  
 But Art curbs Nature, Nature guildeth Art.  
 (SV ix.5-10)

He also asserts that he is not influenced by earlier writers in the genre (SV vi.99-100). Although he is reticent about his stylistic goal and, unlike Hall, does not suggest that the English language is unsuitable for any conception of the satiric form, Marston explicitly proclaims his detestation of "too much obscuritie, & harshnes, because they profit no sence" in his artistic manifesto, "To those that seeme iudiciall perusers." He "will not deny there is a seemely decorum to be obserued, and a peculiar kinde of speech for a Satyres lips" which he "can willinglier conceiue, then dare to prescribe," but the "substance"--the matter--not the "shadow"--the form--is to be "rough." The classical satirists are obscure only because they speak of "priuate customes" of their time. Nevertheless, in spite of his boasted "plainnes," Marston continually experiments with rhythms ("Ad Rithmum"), unusual words--archaisms, alchemic,

casuistic and scholastic terms--and imagery to produce verse that is crabbed and contorted with thought.<sup>4</sup> His attempts, however, often degenerated into absurdity, unlike the effects created by similar imagery in Hamlet, King Lear and Antony and Cleopatra and similar diction in Donne's secular and religious love poetry, for instance, in passionate philosophical disquisitions like "The Extasie." The Marstonian style has been called "clumsy and chilblained,"<sup>5</sup> and a perceptive critic remarks that it can be described as "a kind of growing pain which language was bound to suffer as it passed from the manner of Spenser to the manner of Donne."<sup>6</sup>

Neo-Stoic elements are as important in Marston's works as they are in Virgidemiae. Certaine Satyres, the Scourge and all the dramas with the possible exception of Eastward Ho dramatize the breakdown of the accepted order of Nature (SV iv.24; vii.9) and express a vision of life as dark and difficult, a violent conflict between reason and passion in which passion is most often the victor. Crime exists, but the formal satires give no hint of the resolution of evil

<sup>4</sup> Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation, 3rd ed., revised (London, 1953), p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Ure, "John Marston's 'Sophonisba': A Reconsideration," Durham University Journal, n.s., X, No. 3 (1949), 82.

<sup>6</sup> Theodore Spencer, "John Marston," The Criterion, XIII (1934), 584.

through experiencing the suffering it causes. By willfully committing a sin or omitting to control his bodily appetites man becomes unable to hear the voice of God, Right Reason, the dictates of which are essential for salvation. Man differs from all other created beings on earth in that he possesses a rational soul, capable of distinguishing matters affecting his salvation for good or ill from those not essential to it, discriminating between good and evil and contemplating itself and God. When the passions are strong, overruling this reasonable faculty, they cause evil and misery. One doctrine of Renaissance psychology is that normally the passions act in response to the reason, through the medium of the animal spirits, the linking agents between the spiritual essence and the material substance of man. However, passions may sometimes be initiated by the imagination or stimulated by physiological factors without the intervention of the reason.<sup>7</sup> The person dominated by passions is "sprightlesse, sence or soule hath none, / Since last Medusa turn'd him to a stone" (SV vii.44-45). In man there is a continual warfare between the rational and the sensitive, the human and the bestial, the intellectual and the physical. Usage in vice dulls the will to resist:

Now here-vpon our Intellectuall,  
Compact of fire all celestially,

<sup>7</sup> Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 12.



Invisible, immortall, and diuine,  
 Grewe straight to scorne his Land-lordes muddy slime.  
 And therefore now is closely slunke away  
 (Leauing his smoakie house of mortall clay)  
 Adorn'd with all his beauties lineaments  
 And brightest iemms of shining ornaments.  
 His parts diuine, sacred, spirituall  
 Attending on him, leauing the sensuall  
 Base hangers on, lusing at home in slime,  
 Such as wont to stop port Esqueline.  
 (SV viii.189-200)

The reasonable soul must continually restrain the sensitive powers. Man's greatest enemies lie within himself, so he must strive for self-knowledge and thereby gain self-mastery.

The central concept of Neo-Stoicism is "synteresis," "the spark," the function or department of conscience that should guide conduct.<sup>8</sup> God as a fire is equated with spirit, soul, mind and reason, all of which are compressed in the term "intellectuall." A vestige of the divine fire remains in man, making him potentially able to achieve perfection and communion with God. However, the Christian writer sees man as a fallen being who does not naturally prefer the good and is not naturally inclined to be ruled by reason (SV iv.109-113). Marston even suggests that the human condition, involving a physical body, necessarily obscures the voice of Right Reason. Man will, in the distorted satiric world, either obey normal animal impulses "that soile our soules, and dampe our reasons light" (SV vii.183), or turn to

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Caputi, John Marston, Satirist (New York, 1961), p. 59.

perversions worse than simple sensuality:

Sure I nere thinke those axioms to be true,  
That soules of men, from that great soule ensue,  
And of his essence doe participate  
As't were by pypes, when so degenerate,  
So aduerse is our natures motion,  
To his immaculate condition: (SV vii.188-193)

The Scourge ultimately preaches the Calvinist position; man, who on earth is entirely bestial, is redeemed only by the grace of God.<sup>9</sup> Stoicism helps man keep his equilibrium in a world of upheaval, but controlled patience and endurance are not adequate for life (SV iv.145-160). The concept of virtuous or vicious behaviour as not determined by free will, however, is consistent neither with earnest moral exhortation nor with the belief that the mind is capable of reform. If the individual is not personally responsible for his actions, how can he be attacked for his vices? Therefore, in other passages Marston assumes that physical characteristics and temperament do not control "the inward disposition," although they may incline a person to act in a particular way (SV i.11-13).

Readers of Certaine Satyres and the Scourge encounter the conventional classicisms--pagan deities, personal type names, dialogue and dramatic settings. The author combines dramatic narrative, direct rebuke and reflection in the

<sup>9</sup> See SV iv.115-122, 141-144, 161-166; viii.110-117, 173-214.

chastisement of a decaying society. The satires are essentially a string of portraits and scenes used to illustrate general vices. The fragments exhibit a pattern of attack followed by reflection and moral exhortation. This alternation between exposure and meditation determines the structure of the individual poems and of the whole work. Marston, like Hall, prefixes mottos to his satires. In Certaine Satyres and in the first and third poems of the Scourge he limits himself to the themes suggested by the titles. The title thesis is restated within "Cras." In "Satyra Nova" and the sixth and eleventh satires of the Scourge unity depends upon internal associations. In addition to thematic patterns, the character and attitudes of the dramatic speaker and his use of language are devices to secure a certain degree of organization.

The malcontented narrator of Certaine Satyres and the Scourge is partly a convention, partly a manifestation of the author's temperament, and partly a product of conditions of the time (SV, ii, 104-109). In the late Renaissance, the "anatomising" of man and society transformed "melancholy," a sombre disposition always present in human nature, into a diseased bitterness, an obsession with vice, especially sexual vice. The melancholy man, frequently identified with the malcontent, is a natural satirist, since he senses within himself the potential evil he sees displayed

in society at large, and his own impulses give strength and vigour to the violent disgust his bitter disposition arouses in him. This personage, like "Malevole," "Macilente," "Jaques" and "Bosola," rails at classes, the world in general, and contemplates the vanity and transitory nature of existence itself. In the extreme form he becomes a "humourous" character with the privilege of verbally reviling others, a professional cynic and fantastic meditator. The formal satires, in spite of the character of "Bruto" (CS 11.127-156), are narrated by precisely such a person, one who feels himself misunderstood and undervalued by his fellows, unjustly deprived of the power and influence his superior qualities merit and so embittered. Malevolence and evil, criminal passions and actions, the malign planet Saturn, are frequently associated in Elizabethan literature with melancholy. Indeed, the melancholic's astuteness and morose mental industry increase his power to do evil. Two concepts of melancholy, however, appear in the writings of the period; it is, first, a particular set of physical and mental characteristics determined by physiological conditions, sometimes exaggerated into a disease.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the state is betrayed by despondency, taciturnity, misanthropy, envy, jealousy, suspicion, stubbornness, inconsistency and irrational fear and sorrow. The term suggests, in the second

<sup>10</sup> Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, p. 30.

place, the physiological characteristics of the sober and philosophic man, the fostering of intellectual and imaginative powers. This dualism lies behind the "dissembling shifts" of Marston's narrator. His Muse, like that of Hall's satyr, is a haughty one, "Ingenuous Melancholy," invoked in the "Proemium in librum primum." Literary melancholia is simply a tactic that the narrator adopts in his self-appointed mission to expose the fools and knaves of his world. When he has finished his task, he exorcises "dull sprighted Melancholy" (SV xi.3). The satiric cycle is completed.

Marston, like Hall, is influenced by the concept of the satirist as a scourge, but unlike Hall, his manner, despairing and turbulent, does not suggest constancy and serenity. His spokesman is characterized by insolence and bluster, uncompromising intolerance and insistence that merit does not depend upon popularity. He proclaims his disdain of popular opinion in the prefatory piece, "To Detraction I present my Poesie":

Spight of despight, and rancors villanie,  
I am my selfe, so is my poesie. (23-24)

The persona is rough, honest, sickened at the rottenness and bestiality around him and a heroic scourge of vice, compelled to speak out against "impietie." The satirist attempts to fuse the traditions of the Juvenalian angry man,

the satyr, the surgeon and the preacher and deliverer of homilies in a narrator who is by turns amused, haughty, a furious punitive agent and an earnest healer of souls. Above all, he is an outspoken, blunt exposé of unpleasant truths.<sup>11</sup> "Reprofe" is invoked.<sup>12</sup> "Epictetus," the Stoic philosopher referred to in the "Preface" to The Fawne as the author's "bosome friend," delivers Certaine Satyres, but in the Scourge gives way to the coarse, savage "Theriomastix"--"Beast-scurge"--and "W. Kinsayder." The last name seems to be a pun on "Mar-stone." "Kinsing," a word which is recorded only in Hall's epigram on Marston,<sup>13</sup> may signify, as Gosse, Kernan and Spenser suggest, an operation to castrate unruly dogs and dock their tails. This interpretation is, however, only a conjecture.<sup>14</sup> The concept, nevertheless, is appropriate to the dramatic speaker's violent nature, who performs a similar operation upon mankind in his satires. The frequently recurring symbolism of barking, snarling dogs connects the Scourge with the Cynic philosophers. Indeed, the "Cynicke worke" contains a

<sup>11</sup> See CS iii.93-100; iv.1-4; SV: "In Lectores prorsus indignos": 16, 35-36; "Proem. in lib. I": 9-20; ii.1-18, 70-71, 142-143; iii.125-127; v.109-110.

<sup>12</sup> See CS iii.1; SV: "Proem. in lib. III"; ix.1.

<sup>13</sup> See "Satyra Nova."

<sup>14</sup> Leishman, ed. The Three Parnassus Plays, p. 241.

"Cynicke Satyre" delivered by a "Cynick dogge." The speaker takes pleasure in tormenting and punishing his victims (CS v.179-181):

My pate was great with child, & here tis eas'd,  
Vexe all the world, so that thy selfe be pleas'd.  
(SV vi.111-112)

In the "Proemivm in librum primum" of the Scourge there is a suggestion of physical torture rather than of sanative castigation:

I beare the scourge of iust Rhamnusia,  
Lashing the lewdnes of Britania.  
: : : : :  
: : : my vexed thoughtfull soule,  
Takes pleasure, in displeasing sharp controule.  
(1-8)

However, in addition, the targets' physical reactions manifest an inner catharsis. The "Rhamnusian whip" (CS iv.1; v.5) is a violent purge, sap-green, yielded by the berries of the buckthorn, *Rhamnus catharticus*.<sup>15</sup> The narrator purges (SV iv.81-82), scourges,<sup>16</sup> wields a razor (SV v.118) and exposes "the hidden entrailles of ranke villanie./Tearing the vaile from damn'd Impietie." He has many satirical qualities and refers to satyrs, demanding whether abuses shall remain shrouded in hypocrisy

<sup>15</sup> Randolph, "The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory: Its Possible Relationships and Implications," Studies in Philology, XXXVIII (1941), 148.

<sup>16</sup> See SV iii.150; ix.54, 129-130.

. . . Whilst my satyrick vaine  
 Shall muzled be, not daring out to straine  
 His tearing paw? No gloomie Iuvenall  
 Though to thy fortunes I disastrous fall.  
 (SV iii.193-196)

What is the satiric commentator's "natiue straine"? He is deeply interested in philosophical speculation. Like Hall's, these are satires in which personal references can be found, although the narrator protests that he does not attack individuals. In "To him that hath perused me," the postscript to the Scourge, he declares that he is "free from endeuring to blast any priuate mans good name." In many passages the moral intention of "this sharpe, yet well meant poesie" is asserted. A "milde Muse" (SV ii.97) compels the poet to attack universal evils. He is a saviour of mankind, "a second Theseus" (CS iii.100), no "icye Saturnist," no "northerne pate" (SV ii.19). In "To Detraction" he reveals an awareness of his limitations; his is a "setled censure" (20). He carefully differentiates between greater and lesser vices, as Donne does in "Satyre II" (SV iii.81-84). Although the whole society is corrupt, the speaker recognizes that hypocrisy and self-righteousness are the most monstrous sins (CS i.125-136; SV x.126-130) and that he himself is guilty of the faults he condemns. Self-criticism occurs in Certaine Satyres (ii.11-14) and in the Scourge ("Proem. in lib. II": 1-6). The scourger unmasks,



unveils and probes into the cankered spots of human society. Images of stripping away false fronts are a recurring motif,<sup>17</sup> based upon the satiric discrepancy between the substance and the shadow.<sup>18</sup> Scurrility, envy and malice are disclaimed.<sup>19</sup> The dramatic narrator is preoccupied with the popular reaction to his poetry (SV iv.169-170) and deliberately makes the first satire of the Scourge obscure to suit those who ignorantly think that such a style is a mark of a refined taste. He is concerned about misinterpretation of his words:

. . . O indignitie  
To my respectlesse free-bred poesie. (SV vi.99-100)

Since the world is "damn'd," the scourger is aware that it is impossible or at least extremely difficult to reform fallen human nature and that a "bold-fac'd Satyre" might as well confine itself to "meaner gullery," for it is as easy to "draw Nilus riuer dry, / As clense the world from foule impietie" (CS ii.105-106, 159-160). But even although he knows they will have no effect, he persists in writing satires. The "Proemium" to the last book of the Scourge

<sup>17</sup> See CS i.135-136; ii.30-32, 158; SV: "In Lectores": 42-43; "Proem. in lib. I": 18; "Proem. in lib. III": 22.

<sup>18</sup> See CS i.123-124; SV i.11-12; ii.12-14; v.40-47; vi.71-72; vii.13-16, 90-91, 139-142.

<sup>19</sup> See CS iv.167-169; SV xi.1-12.

advertises one more attempt to remove sin:

O that a Satyres hand had force to pluck  
 Some fludgate vp, to purge the world from muck;  
 Would God I could turne Alpheus riuer in  
 To purge this Augean oxstaule from foule sin.  
 (17-20)

The satiric commentator is entrusted with "a sacred cure /  
 To salue the soules dread wounds" (SV iv.114-115), the  
 noble purpose that is announced in the prefatory lines to  
 the third book of the Scourge:

In serious iest, and iesting seriousnes  
 I striue to scourge poluting beastlines. (1-2)

In spite of this claim to be concerned about the moral  
 well-being of others, the speaker again and again announces  
 his contempt for the vulgar and complains that his work is  
 exposed to the gaze of idiots (SV vi.105-110). The pose of  
 the virtuous avenger at times verges on comedy, as when he  
 snarls, "Let Custards quake, my rage must freely runne"  
 (SV ii.4). The over-shrill tones of this veræ perhaps reveal  
 an insecurity about the narrator's moral right to attack  
 others and a need to convince himself of the potency of his  
 social criticism, that he is indeed a "barking Satyrist,"  
 before whom all should tremble. He is inconsistent--sometimes  
 arrogant, dedicating his book "to his most esteemed, and  
 best beloued Selfe," while at other times he longs for the

cloak of "euerlasting Obluion." Pride in "darke reproofes" alternates with the attitude that it is madness to waste hours in "idle rime" and that deficiencies in the work are to be excused because of sickness or the public's ignorance (SV x.69-79). His attitudes towards other poets and towards literary devices fluctuate. In "Ad Rithmum," for example, rhyme is praised, but will be disdained if it interferes with the poet's "libertie" (26). Hall abandons minor satiric targets for major ones, but Marston rejects the other writer's topics as trivial and hackneyed (SV iii.105-120). Petty sins are well punished, while vice in high places is triumphant (CS v):

Ay me, hard world for Satyrists beginne  
To sette vp shop, when no small petty sinne  
Is left vn-purg'd . . . (SV ii.44-46)

Nevertheless, Marston covers much of the same ground as his predecessor. The speaker remarks in the address, "In Lectores," that he writes for the "diuiner wits, celestially soules, / Whose free-borne mindes no kennel thought controules" (81-82). But where in the satires do these choice spirits appear? The narrator admits that in the satiric world verses such as his are not likely to be appreciated:

These notes were better sung, mong better sort,  
But to my pamphlet, few saue fooles resort.  
(SV iv.169-170)

Although passivity is beyond the reach of the speaker's angry violence of spirit, his attitude of moral reproof crystallizes into a kind of Stoic self-sufficiency. In the last poem of the Scourge he pretends to no moral purpose whatsoever:

Here ends my rage, though angry brow was bent,  
Yet I haue sung in sporting merriment. (239-240)

In Marston's formal satires dense language and remarkably consistent, striking imagery express disgust with the animal nature of man. This idiom is a powerful mixture of bawdry and philosophy, although sometimes perversely and nearly always badly expressed. Vice and folly are associated with images of physical torment, bodily processes--sexual and excremental--and decay, dirt, putrefaction, the desecration of lovely and noble things. Men have become beasts and insects (SV vii):

. . . O these same buzzing Gnats  
That sting my sleeping browes, these Nilus Rats,  
Halfe dung, that haue their life from putrid slime,  
(SV vi.65-67)

In the world of the satires "beasts for filth are deified" (SV iii.104). Evil infects the "world Arteries" with "corrupt blood" (SV iii.160-161). Grossly physical words and images are used in serious contexts, such as the illustration of the nature of carping criticism by the

spaniel who "perfumes the roome, / With his tailles filth" (SV ix.31-32). Humanity is a milling crowd of forms without substance, of faces showing no signs of individual intelligence, a "vizarded-bifronted-Ianian rout" (CS i.4) of "ambitious Gorgons, wide-mouth'd Lamians, /Shape-changing Proteans, damn'd Briareans" (CS v.1-2) spilling over into every corner of the satiric world. "Opinion," the abuse of reason resulting from the habit of making judgments based upon incorrect sense impressions, to which Pigmaliions Image and Certaine Satyres is dedicated, is the chief cause of the grotesqueness and horror of the satiric vision. It is the source of false values and therefore a corrupting influence:

Shame to Opinion, that perfumes his dung,  
And streweth flowers rotten bones among,  
Iugling Opinion, thou inchaunting witch,  
Paint not a rotten post with colours rich.  
(SV x.63-66)

"Detraction," to which the Scourge is dedicated, frustrates the progress towards perfection by subverting, tainting and soiling good works before they can mature. It is the "foule canker of faire vertuous action, / Vile blaster of the freshest bloomes on earth." The Neo-Stoic Lipsius associates "Opinion" with earth, the contrary of fire and the usual source of sense impressions, the threat to reason.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Caputi, p. 68.

Marston's imagery largely depends upon this antithesis between fire and earth in his creation of a world dominated by "Opinion" and "Detraction." The fire-earth symbolism is associated with the figure of a conduit, pipes connecting human souls, conceived as plants, to God, the fountain that provides their nourishment. When this clear spring is polluted and clogged with slime, man's reason is rendered ineffectual. The satiric protagonist must purge the slime to reestablish contact with God, as he states in the "Proemium in librum tertium."<sup>21</sup> An opposition between fire and air is also set up. The narrator protests in "To Detraction" that his "spirit is not huft vp with fatte fume / Of slimie Ale," for "Opinion" puffs the sould, which becomes a "windie bubble" (SV vi.4), and "but a sponge" (SV vii.58). The gallants scorned in "In Lectores" are "puffie youthes" (42). This image is used to express the satiric fury in these lines:

I cannot hold, I cannot I indure  
To view a big womb'd foggie clowde immure  
The radiant tresses of the quickning sunne.  
(SV ii.1-3)

The satiric world is dusky (SV ii.23), covered in mists "of watry foggs, that fill the ill-stuft list / Of faire Desert, ielous euen of blinde darke" (SV v.11-12). Vice is symbolized by the absence of light:

<sup>21</sup> See SV ii.39-43, 70-71, 80; iii.160-161; vi.21-22; vii.188-202; viii.185-200; ix.28-29; xi.206-207.

Who sayes the sunne is cause of vgly night?  
 Yet when he vailes our eyes from his faire sight,  
 The gloomie curtaine of the night is spred.  
 (SV iv.125-127)

Corpulence and inflation are associated and identified with degeneracy, since "to be huge, is to be deadly sicke" (SV ii.118). The task of the barber-surgeon narrator is to relieve "the goutie humours of these pride-swolne dayes" (SV xi.9).

In this atmosphere, all appearances are false. Certain Satyres treats, first, negative evil, the empty appearance of good, flatterers, lovers, courtiers, Puritans in the roles of citizens and usurers, and soldiers, second, positive evil masquerading as good, Puritans, flatterers, the malcontent, third, evil both in fact and appearance. After attacking Hall's criticism of the literature of the time, the poet expands on the picture of a world in which all values are inverted (CS v). He ends on the ironic note, as Hall does in the sixth book of Virgidemiae, that the world has become so virtuous that there is no need for satire (139-166).

In the first book of the Scourge, "Satyres" one to three are a general attack on various aspects of immorality, especially lust. "Satyre I" is a panoramic survey of satiric types which illustrates the motto, "Fronti nulla fides"-- "there is no trusting to appearances." The next poem, a

similar review of society, justifies the writing of satire and lists the topics proposed for discussion in the works that follow. In the third satire the speaker reaches the heights of indignation. "Cras" (iv) portrays those who will repent tomorrow and closes the book on a didactic note, an examination of philosophical and theological concepts. The next book is made up of the fifth, sixth and seventh satires. The first and last, as well as the beginning of "Satyre VIII," which opens the third book, develop more fully the vices exposed in the earlier group, such as the domination of wealth and guile (v), man's bestiality (vii) and the loss of reason when sensual desires are dominant (viii). The central portion in this section is occupied by "Hem nosti'n" (vi), a structural digression attacking those who, the author claims, have misinterpreted his Pigmalion, related to the main satiric theme in that literary corruption, another abuse of man's rational faculties, reflects and encourages moral decline. The last passages in the seventh and eighth satires are didactic and reflective. Book III, after "Satyre VIII," is in a somewhat lighter vein. "Here's a toy to mocke an Ape indeede" (ix) unmasks the apishness of man, the ridiculous nature of the creature. "Satyra Nova" is another digression, a sustained, somewhat petulant attack upon Hall,



added in the second edition (1599). The final satire parallels the opening one in that it is a survey of the age. "Humours" presents a string of caricatures of gallants--dancers, theatre-lovers, fencers, bores, lechers, fops,--and closes, like the other two books, with moral exhortation. The speaker appeals to young men to recover "Synderesis." He has moved from fury to contempt, reflection and some kind of resolution.

Marston is concerned with morals, humours, manners, fashions and classes of mankind. "In Lectores" follows the precedent set by Hall of prefacing verses with a literary manifesto, defining the nature and mission of satire and discussing the degeneration of the literature of the time. In Marston's satires Hall symbolizes something resembling the figure of "Labeo" in Virgidemiae, the bad writer who spreads his venom abroad, "belching lewd termes gainst all sound littrature" (SV iii.176). Distortions of language are a major cause and manifestation of the abuse of reason (SV vii.84-99). The general decay of the times extends to "Englands yeomanrie" (SV ii.139) and to the military caste (SV viii.72-83). References are made to monopolies (SV iv.83-86; vii.33), the cheating of heirs (SV ii.56-63; iii.157-158), usury (SV iv.73-80; vii.62-75) and lawyers (SV vii.80-99). Other targets are Puritans (SV ii.92-106; ix.105-119) and Roman Catholics (SV ii.72-90).

The traditional anti-clerical and anti-feminist criticism is reiterated. These satires are particularly bitter in their invective against the lower classes, peasants and artisans. The most substantial subject, however, is lust, normal and abnormal. The satirist depicts an age

When euery signe can brothelrie afford.  
 When lust doth sparkle from our females eyes  
 And modestie, is rousted in the skies.  
 (SV ii.107-109)

The lover frequently is a satiric target, a conventional figure exhibiting the familiar melancholic traits (CS iii.51-74). The idle and luxurious life of courts is an erotic life; wine and certain foods, such as eringoes, eggs, potatoes, oysters and marrow pies (SV iii.68-74), are considered to be aphrodisiacs. Lust is a disease of body and mind, destroying virtue and happiness. When it overpowers reason, flesh conquers spirit and the subhuman element in man's nature conquers the human.

Marston creates the vision of a world gone mad, a world in which "Circes magick charme" turns men into maggots (SV vii.70-71) and "still the sensuall haue preheminance" (SV xi.234). The obsessive concern with the flesh, drawing forth evil from dark corners, ripping off veils and tearing up entrails, produces a bizarre, eccentric,

sometimes hysterical and incoherent, but always strongly individual note. The desire for recognition and the self-dramatization as a dreadful scourge conflict with the wish for oblivion in these poems. There is a mixture of contempt for the reader, for the vices that are being unmasked and for the speaker. The discrepancy between the narrator's revulsion at the physical and his attraction, even fascination, by it, his unpleasant satisfaction in dwelling upon unclean details,<sup>22</sup> can perhaps be explained as an ironic comment upon the speaker himself, but I think not. The incongruity is central to the artistic failures in Marston. It is manifested in the grotesque attempt in Antonio and Mellida to fuse romantic melodrama, satirical comedy and burlesque of conventional literary and theatrical modes. A similar effect is created by the superfluous accumulation of horrific details in Antonio's Revenge (1602), the frank delight in sheer brutality. The scourger depicts the unnatural vices of "Luscus" (SV iii.34-52) in the tone of one simply reciting an unsavoury joke; but the habits of "Lucea" in the same poem are offered as an example of the "brutish filth" he will not "cease to curse and ban" (126). The problem has given rise to a critical quarrel over Marston's claim that his Ovidian poem The Metamorphosis of

<sup>22</sup> Alden, p. 135.

Pigmaliions Image is satirical. Should his statement be accepted at face value? Is Pigmalion "an ironic piece of studied excess"<sup>23</sup>? Or did a revulsion against the physical cause the author to declare that his work had a moral intent (SV vi.23-32)?

Although Pigmalion is not, of course, a formal satire, it contains, in my opinion, the tensions between dwelling on lust and contempt for it and for the readers that are found in Certaine Satyres and the Scourge. The highly personal tone of the running commentary, the incidental social satire in references to "the subtile Citty-dame" and "the peeuish Papists" and the burlesque of the affected language of the sonneteers in the hero's plea to the "sweet happy sheetes" differ in kind from the conventional asides and, for example, the story of the country maid and Mercury in Hero and Leander. And finally, the pretense of tantalizing the reader is drawn out to an inordinate length. The tone shifts from light banter to mockery of the "gaping eares that swallow vp" the tale when the narrator excuses himself from saying more. The "loose lines" are an intentional slip. The satiric comment is based upon the discrepancy between the imaginative world of lover and empirical reality. The conventions of the Ovidian poem allow Marston to illustrate the fact that a romantic insistence on the ideal can only lead to absurdity:

<sup>23</sup> Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, 2nd ed. (New York, 1963), p. 182.

I oft haue smil'd to see the foolery  
 Of some sweet Youths, who seriously protest  
 That Loue respects not actuall Luxury,  
 But onely ioy's to dally, sport, and iest:  
 (109-112)

The poet exploits the ironies latent in the Pygmalion myth, the familiar dichotomy between shade and substance (6, 163-168). The statue is constantly compared to a living woman, the commentator's beloved (65-66) and the narrator's behaviour is contrasted with that of "Pigmalion":

O wonder not to heare me thus relate,  
 And say to flesh transformed was a stone.  
 Had I my Loue in such a wished state  
 As was afforded to Pigmalion,  
 Though flinty hard, of her you soone should see  
 As strange a transformation wrought by mee.  
 (187-192)

The theme of the amorists who are distracted with "busk-points" is developed further in the formal satires (SV viii.94). Finally, Pigmalion is prefaced and followed by pieces written in the form of the verse satires. One must conclude therefore, I think, that in tone, attitude and subject-matter, although not in form or organization, Pigmalion is distinctly satirical.

In the formal satires, imagery, keen and vigorous character sketches and exempla, shifts in style and mood<sup>24</sup> and movements from ridicule and bitter indignation to pleas

<sup>24</sup> See SV iv.167-170; v.103-106; ix.54.

for reform are all devices to present a particular, usually grim, vision. The targets condemn themselves by their actions. Situations are taken from the life of Elizabethan England, such as the tableaux of simoniacs, usurers, lawyers and soldiers. At times Marston draws illustrations from classical mythology (CS v). In the handling of these elements, however, the satirist often models himself upon the worst in Hall, exaggerating the passages in Virgidemiae that are written in an artificial, forced manner. Hall's mythological and literary allusions, when illuminated by his editor's commentary, have an intellectual content and a structural role in the poetic argument. The allusions in Marston, however, sometimes do not advance the conceptual movement of the satire.

While Marston does objectify his emotions and point of view to a certain extent, he does not achieve the degree of aesthetic distance that a reader might desire. He has little of Hall's Augustan quality, clarity of apprehension and expression. A critic analyzes this characteristic:

The secret of Marston's temperament is that he was an idealist, and like so many of his contemporaries, he was an idealist whose idealism was built on insufficient facts. When the facts hit him in the face the blow was severe, and in order to conceal how much he was hurt, he pretended that he had known about them all along, that he had enjoyed them. . . . he only gives himself away by

the unnecessary violence with which he expresses himself.<sup>25</sup>

Psychological speculations are outside the limits of literary criticism, but it is certainly true that Marston is more unrestrained in his denunciations of the corrupting influence of lust and hypocrisy than Hall or Donne. The dominating impression left by his work is one of bitterness and violence.<sup>26</sup> However, as this chapter has attempted to show, the Scourge is not without order, nor does it preach a purely destructive ethos.<sup>27</sup> Marston does not have a set of values based upon academic pursuits, ancient simplicity and decency, but the denial of the usefulness of good works and, to an extent, the power of the human will, gives his works a vivid, dramatic quality that is lacking in Hall's reminders of a shadowy Golden Age and classical wisdom and approaches the effect of Donne's formal satires.

<sup>25</sup> Spencer, "John Marston," The Criterion, XIII (1934), 597.

<sup>26</sup> A. José Axelrad, Un Malcontent Élizabéthain: John Marston (1576-1634) (Paris, 1955), p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> Ure, "John Marston's 'Sophonisba': A Reconsideration," Durham University Journal, n.s., X, No.3 (1949), 90.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE ENGLISH SATYRS

An order of merit has been assigned to the Elizabethan satirists by Morse S. Allen. Marston is ranked third, surpassed in "interest" by Hall and in "literary ability" by Donne.<sup>1</sup> This vague evaluation says nothing about the specifically satiric qualities of their works, and with the closing of the sixteenth century and the coming of the seventeenth, the spirit of England was becoming more harsh and satirical. Hall's satiric pose is detached and impartial. His criticism of society is perfectly clear and in no danger of being misunderstood. Marston, on the other hand, assumes the mask of the malcontent, and his subjective scourging is more forceful than his predecessor's cool, rational approach. Yet when the satirist himself is involved in the subject of his denunciations, inconsistencies result. Donne unites the advantages and avoids the disadvantages of both techniques in "Satyres" one, two and four, which combine objective characterization and realistic description with subjective reflection and intense introspection. However, Donne's genius is not directed primarily towards social

<sup>1</sup> The Satire of John Marston (Columbus, Ohio, 1920), p.115.



satire but towards self-analysis in "Satyre III," which is the best of the five poems but is not satire except for the exempla that advance the thesis.

Hall and Marston attempt in their styles to produce "synthetic obscurity."<sup>2</sup> Thus, in their works are found references which are undigested, isolated, unconnected with the surrounding material. This fault is particularly noticeable in Marston. These satirists adapt classical material to their own age and express contempt for popular taste. At the same time, they long for recognition by the reading public. Their dilemma is whether to write for the learned or the unlearned. Donne quite frankly addresses himself to a limited, cultivated audience, and so is able to deliver a monolithic indictment of London society, lawyers, religious sects, the Court, officers and suitors.

The five "Satyres" have more immediate impact than all six books of Virgidemiae, with its artistic restraint and wealth of fascinating information about the poet's society. Marston's works have a power similar to Donne's, but a lack of artistic control at times makes them diffuse and transforms personal feeling into petulance. Compare these passages, the first from the "Prologue" to Book I, Virgidemiarvm, and the second from the "Proemivm in librum primum" of the Scourge:

<sup>2</sup> A. Stein, "Donne's Obscurity and the Elizabethan Tradition," ELH, XIII (June 1946), 105.

Goe daring Muse on with thy thanklesse taske,  
And do the vgly face of vice vnmaske:

Marston's narrator snarls a warning:

Quake guzzell dogs, that liue on putred slime,  
Skud from the lashes of my yerking rime.

Donne's "Satyre III" begins in this manner:

Kinde pittty chokes my spleene; brave scorn forbids  
Those teares to issue which swell my eye-lids;  
I must not laugh, nor weepe sinnes, and be wise,  
Can railing then cure these worne maladies?

To conclude, Donne's works are superior as poems to those of his contemporaries, but the fine balance of moral indignation and detached contempt shown in Virgidemiae is the most purely satirical achievement, creating a distorted world as a vehicle for social criticism. Marston, however, in my opinion, has been underestimated. If the hysterical tone that his narrator adopts in certain moods were further modulated, the power manifested in the organization of brief sermons and the dramatization of general sins with a battery of stock characters and situations, evoking a world from which Right Reason has been banished, would make the Scourge the most effective of the Elizabethan formal satires.

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