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English Petrarchists: The Relative conventionality of Sir Philip Sidney and John Donne

by

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ABSTRACT

Sir Philip Sidney and John Donne may both be considered Petrarchan poets, poets who make frequent use of the poetic forms, the language, and the ideas that derive from Petrarch's poetry. Both also draw on the concepts and figures of speech of amorous NeoPlatonism. Sidney's Petrarchism is obvious, but it is also self-conscious, critical, and inventive. Sidney at times challenges the restraints imposed by an idealized conception of love by showing both the press of other obligations upon the lover and the continual intrusiveness of desire. Donne's relation to Sidney's Petrarchism varies. In his treatment of the blason form, he energetically rebels against the tradition Sidney represents. Yet, in poems offering an exalted conception of love, Donne often depends upon Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic figures and concepts similar to those Sidney uses. Donne, however, directs the conventions toward praise of forms of love that are decidedly unPetrarchan. In their respective relations to Petrarchism, Sidney and Donne most resemble one another in their insistence that the body be given place in human love. Sidney, however, confines his lovers to conventional forms of love and offers no more satisfying alternative, except renunciation. Donne uses convention selectively, applies it to new subjects, both human and divine, and thus perpetuates convention, investing Sidneyan Petrarchism with new possibilities of meaning.

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I. INTRODUCTION

> Donne's treatment of love is entirely unconventional except when he chooses to dally half ironically with with convention of Petrarchian adoration. (Herbert Grierson, 1921)[1]

Since Herbert Grierson's editions and assessments of John Donne and the English metaphysical poets occasioned the twentieth-century revival of Donne studies, scholars and critics have been much occupied with upholding, modifying, or denying Grierson's judgment about Donne's originality. Donne's departure from and dependence on convention, and particularly Petrarchan convention, have been variously traced. Un-Petrarchan, Anti-Petrarchan, Petrarchan -- Donne is said to be all three. Those who stress Donne's novelty often contrast the language and the views of love expressed in his poetry with those of sixteenth-century English Petrarchan poets. Those who argue for Donne's Petrarchism, on the other hand, tend to go abroad for their comparisons and liken him to Petrarch himself or to European Petrarchists writing verse "characterized by fantastic arguments, emotional extravagance, and peregrine comparisons."[2] Generally, however, most of those concerned to place Donne either within or without a tradition of Petrarchan love poetry set him in opposition to the poet called in Donne's own time "English Petrarke," Sir Philip

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[1] Herbert Grierson, "Donne and Metaphysical Poetry," John Donne's Poetry, ed., A.L. Clements (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), p.116.
[2] Donald L. Guss, John Donne, Petrarchist: Italianate Conceits and Love Theory in "The Songs and Sonets" (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), p. 18.

Sidney.

Yet, while those offering general discussions of convention or tradition tend to contrast Donne with Sidney, others who undertake close analyses of particular poems often remark on similarities. David Kalstone, for instance, finds Sidney "engaged in an activity that Shakespeare and Donne were to continue."[3] Douglas Peterson discusses Renaissance style and Renaissance amorous philosophies and claims "Sidney, Donne, and Greville all recognized"[4] that certain conventional conceptions were false or problematic. In asserting strong similarities between Sidney and Donne, perhaps no one goes further than Yvor Winters, who claims: "Donne is only superficially a rebel against the tradition of Sidney; essentially he is a continuator, at least in a large number of his poems."[5] Such remarks invite a close examination of Sidney's and Donne's Petrarchism.

To compare Sidney and Donne, one must be familiar with the main features of Petrarchism as scholars describe it. The term signifies, first, a pattern of love exemplified in Petrarch's protracted devotion to his beloved, Laura. The aristocratic lover adores a lady who is both beautiful and virtuous. Her beauty arouses the lover's desire, while her virtue makes her beneficent in spiritual influence but

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[3]David Kalstone, Sidney's Poetry (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 181.
[4]Douglas L. Peterson, The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 185.
[5]Yvor Winters, "Aspects of the Short Poem in the English Renaissance," In Forms of Discovery (Alan Swallow, 1967), p. 72.

finally inaccessible. (The lady's marriage, social status, or death may also account for the division between lover and beloved, but it is her virtue that enforces it.) Praise of the lady and meditation about the paradoxical experience of a love that is both spiritual and passionate, both idealized and frustrated, are expressed, then, in characteristic Petrarchan verse forms -- songs and sonnets -- and in language replete with oxymoron, antithesis, and paradox.

According to Leonard Forster, "the elaboration and exploitation [of antitheses] is the essence of petrarchism."[6] That Forster identifies a rhetorical figure as Petrarchism's essence indicates that Petrarchism must be understood not simply as a pattern of love, but as a language of love. The devices, conceits, situations, and philosophical commonplaces through which Petrarch traced the contrarieties of his love were imitable, and widely imitated, sometimes by poets not much taken by his conception of love. Considering Petrarchism as a literary convention, Donald Guss offers a useful summary of its central elements:

> A primary element of the tradition is the Petrarchan attitudes: amorous devotion, dependence, adoration, dolor, and despair....
>
> Another chief element of Petrarchism is its collection of conceits: its fires of passion, tempests of sighs, dying and resurrected lovers, and pictures of ladies engraved on lovers' hearts....
>
> A third element of Petrarchism is its collection of

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[6]Leonard Forster, The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 4.

> commonplaces of amorous philosophy: for example, the two-in-oneness of lovers, the distinction between base and spiritual love, and the NeoPlatonic amorous ladder....
>
> Finally, there are stock Petrarchan situations, such as the initiation of love, the parting of lovers, and the despairing poet complaining of his lady's hardness.[7]

Such elements, Guss insists, may be treated with varying degrees of seriousness, of particularity, or of literalness and still remain recognizably Petrarchan.

As Guss' list shows, the commonplaces of amorous NeoPlatonism came to be associated with Petrarchan poetry, even though the NeoPlatonic view of love was itself rather different from the Petrarchan. The great exponent of amorous NeoPlatonism was Marsilio Ficino with his Commentary on Plato's Symposium; the great popularizer was Baldassare Castiglione with his Book of the Courtier, widely known in late sixteenth-century England through Sir Thomas Hoby's translation. Following Plato, NeoPlatonists describe a heirarchy or "ladder" of love. In the NeoPlatonic view, man possesses three modes of cognition: sense, reason, intellect. Each of these gives rise to a corresponding desire for beauty, that is, a corresponding love. The lowest form is sensual appetite; the highest is spiritual love; the intermediate is the rational power to choose one or the other. Spiritual love is to be enjoyed strictly through the senses of sight and sound. As Castiglione's Bembo puts it,

> so shall [the lover] with most daintie foode feede the soule through the meanes of these two senses,

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[7] Guss, pp. 23-24.

> which have litle bodily substance in them, and be the ministers of reason, without entring farther toward the bodie, with coveting unto any longing otherwise than honest.[8]

Such virtuous love, then, becomes the first rung on the Platonic ladder of love. The intellectual lover moves from the chaste love of beauty in one beloved, to the love of beauty in many, to the pure, abstracted love of ideal Beauty, which is God.

Those who study Renaissance poetry differ in their accounts of why NeoPlatonism and Petrarchism came to be associated. NeoPlatonism may have offered a new source of conceits for poets driven by a desire for ingenuity, or it may have been attractive as a moral corrective to the sensual or adulterous aspects of Petrarchan love.[9] For whatever reasons, by Sidney's time NeoPlatonic ideas and figures were pervasively associated with Petrarchism.

Sidney clearly works with both the amorous pattern and the literary devices of Petrarchism, and with the commonplaces of NeoPlatonism. His lovers often adore the lady both beautiful and virtuous, languish in the painful pleasures of unrequited love, and complain of the obdurate mistress. They also debate the place of Reason and Sense in love. Yet Sidney through Astrophil disclaims servile imitation and mocks those who echo "poore Petrarch's

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[8]Baldassare Castiglione, The Courtier, transl., Sir Thomas Hoby, In Three Renaissance Classics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 605.

[9]Possible reasons for the association of Petrarchism and NeoPlatonism are offered by Peterson, p. 183 and by Wesley Trimpi, Ben Jonson's Poems: A Study of the Plain Style (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 280.

long-deceased woes." He often challenges or examines amorous conventions even as he uses them. Sidney's Petrarchism is obvious, but, as close analysis of poems will show, it is also self-conscious, critical, and inventive.

Donne, generally, rejects the Petrarchan pattern of unrequited love and ignores the Petrarchan posture of helpless devotion. In some poems, in fact, Donne's speakers invert the convention, asserting variety instead of constancy, indifference against adoration, ugliness against beauty, sensuality against idealization. Yet in others, Petrarchan devices are put to serious uses of celebration or praise. Tear-floods, sigh-tempests, lovers who are two-in-one, love which is both life and death -- these and other Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic devices pervade Donne's love poetry. And they provide, not just a ready vocabulary, but also a means for examining the moral-psychological-metaphysical experience of love.

If a "Petrarchist" may be broadly defined as a poet who makes frequent use of the antitheses, situations, and conceits that derive from Petrarch's poetry, then both Sidney and Donne may be called Petrarchists. How, though, do Sidney and Donne compare? To call both Petrarchists may be to say little if the uses to which they put the convention are conflicting or divergent

Between Sidney and Donne there are certainly marked differences. One of them is that, though both poets make use of the conventions of courtly love, Sidney's poetry is

courtly in a way that Donne's is not. This difference is traceable partly to aspects of style. Sidney's poetry, at least the best of it, is notable for its refinements and subtleties of metre and rhythm and for the [illegible]y with which the syntactic unit is played against the poetic line. Sidney's diction is decorous, his style, generally, sweet and elegant. Donne at times writes poetry as refined, as restrained, as Sidney's, but more characteristically displays a kind of mannered roughness. Metrical unevenness, disjointed and complicated syntax, and extravagant figures of speech work to convey passionate immediacy or satiric detachment, but not aristocratic poise. As the style of Donne's love poetry is often less courtly than Sidney's, so too are some of its attitudes toward the experience of love. The extremes of indifference, of cynicism, of sensuality, and of religiosity to which Donne's lovers variously reach have no equivalent in Sidney's verse.

The opposition of Sidney's smoothness and Donne's roughness, Sidney's restraint and Donne's extravagance, should not, however, obscure certain similarities between the two poets, similarities which, if less insistently noticeable, may be of equal or greater significance in understanding the relation of these poets. In matters of style there are resemblances as well as contrasts. Both Sidney and Donne, for instance, are frequently concerned to capture in their poetry the tones and inflections of the speaking voice. Donne's often praised "confident brusque

immediacy"[10] has in Sidney a precedent. Both Sidney's speakers and Donne's often begin with a direct, colloquial address to a specific and present listener. "Deare, why make you more of a dog then me?" (A&S 59) is just as colloquial as "I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I / Did, till we lov'd?" ("The Good-morrow"). "Alas, have I not paine enough my friend" (A&S 14) is as direct an outburst as "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love" ("The Canonization"), though less vehement. Sidney's lovers are at such times no less immediate than Donne's, though they may may be more restrained or less complicated in tone. Donne's colloquial directness is sometimes considered an innovation, a form of rebellion against conventional language; it seems in fact to be an extension or exaggeration of a technique already used by Sidney.

Donne's procedure resembles Sidney's in other formal aspects as well. Both men write poems with a dramatic structure: sudden turns and dramatic shifts take place as the speakers change attitude, tone, or even subject part way through the poem. At times, particularly in poems which oppose the claims of the world to the commitment of the lovers, such a shift takes the form of a modulation of tone as the lover moves from colloquial outburst to more controlled celebratory rhetoric. Movement of this kind is evident in poems like Sidney's "Alas, have I not pain

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[10] Brian Vickers, "The 'Songs and Sonnets' and the Rhetoric of Hyperbole," In John Donne: Essays in Celebration ed., A.J. Smith (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1972), p. 132.

enough" as well as in Donne's "The Sun Rising" or "The Canonization." More frequently, the greater part of a poem is given to argumentation about or analysis of one subject, attitude, or experience; then, in the last line or two, the argument is thrown over for the sake of a sudden contrary assertion -- whether of praise ("Hath this world aught so fair as Stella is?"), or of vengeance ("since you would save none of me, I bury some of you"), or of passion ("But ah, desire still cries: Give me some food"), or of dismissal ("by tomorrow, I may think so too"). In both Sidney and Donne, the unity of such poems is a dramatic unity provided by the speaker, who dramatizes tensions and conflicts and shifts of attitude and resolve, rather than the unity of an expository structure.

The differences and the affinities between Sidney and Donne in matters of style and structure bear on the question of how they treat the Petrarchan convention. Donne's sometime stylistic harshness is related to the way he at times mocks, inverts, or parodies the convention Sidney more commonly works within. Yet refusal and parody are not Donne's only reactions to Petrarchism or NeoPlatonism. In certain poems Donne employs the same conventional conceits or devices that Sidney uses, but puts them to unconventional purposes, significant among them the celebration of mutual and consummated love. Such redirections raise the question of whether Donne is rebelling against convention, or in fact investing it with new possibilities of expression. The

dramatic structure on which both poets rely points to another affinity. Both Sidney and Donne are frequently concerned with discovering the conflicts and tensions suggested by the Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic views of love. Both are acutely aware of the tensions between body and soul, sense and reason, separateness and unity, two and one. And neither is willing to forfeit the insistent claims of the body for the sake of idealized love.

The question of Donne's relation to "English Petrarke" may be more closely considered by examining particular poems in which Sidney and Donne take up Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic forms and themes. The intention is not to determine whether Sidney was a source or influence for Donne, nor whether Donne is an imitator of Sidney -- such formulations would be simplistic and inadequate. Winters' word "continuator" is more suggestive: is there some way in which Donne perpetuates or continues the Sidneyan version of Petrarchism? In treating Petrarchan subjects and devices, Donne often seems to take up the distinctive tensions or emphases in Sidney's verse and exaggerate, elaborate, or extend them. There is between Sidney and Donne an inescapable difference in manner and effect, but at times a striking similarity in conception and emphasis.

II. THE BLASON: CELEBRATION AND PARODY

The blason, or celebratory catalogue of the lady beauties, is one of the recognizably Petrarchan verse forms. Its purpose is praise; its usual techniques are an orderly progression through particular beauties and the use of analogy to isolate the qualities praised. The contreblason, then, is a witty parody or inversion of such techniques for purposes of dispraise or mockery. Comparing Sidney's blasons and contreblasons with Donne's provides a useful beginning to a larger comparison of the two poets' Petrarchism, for these poems show Sidney giving distinctive treatment to the convention and Donne at work to parody and subvert, if not Sidney himself, then the conventions Sidney represents.

Sidney's most elaborate and best known blason, in his time and since, is "What toong can her perfections tell" from the Arcadia.[11] The opening lines raise the poem's purpose and its method:

> What toong can her perfections tell
> In whose each part all pens may dwell?
> (Arcadia 62)

Though the rhetorical question implies the task is futile, the poem goes on to "tell" -- in the senses both of "relate" and "enumerate" -- the "perfections" manifested in each part of the lady. To fulfill its purpose the poem must be, or must seem to be, comprehensive, slighting no part and no perfection; it must, in other words, be quite long. To

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[11]The text of Sidney's poetry used throughout this paper is: The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney, ed., William A. Ringler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

shorten the poem would be to stint the praise. The lover proceeds topographically, moving at a leisurely pace from top to bottom down the front of the lady's naked body, then to the back. He likens each feature to some other object, and the analogies work to convey general sense of the lady's beauty and worth and to render in some particularity the contours, colours, textures, and even at times the scents and tastes, of the lady's lovely body. From praise of each part, the speaker then moves to the grace of the lady's whole physical self, and then to the virtues of her soul.

"What toong..." in many ways portrays a conventional Petrarchan mistress with a conventionally paradoxical effect on the lover. She is enticing, with her hair which holds men's thoughts and her waist which wastes men's lives. Yet she is also forbidding, with a forehead whiter, and presumably colder, than snow, teeth which guard her heavenly-dewed tongue, and fingers which provide "The bloudy shaftes of Cupid's warre" (l. 131). As with all Petrarchan mistresses, this lady's inaccessibility implies cruelty, but reveals virtue as well: her eyelids forbid bold attempts, her cheek blushes modestly, her ears hear no "talk untaught," her tongue speaks no vain words. Sidney's speaker at times sounds like the conventional Petrarchan lover in his tones of complaint, yet not simply so, for Sidney here offers no abject or debased lover. The poem traces the lively play of the lover's mind as he moves from complaint to witty wordplay to elevated praise. He is variously

petulant, outrageous, and tender, but he seems always aristocratic.

A poem proceeding by a principle of elaboration or amplification must skirt the dangers of monotony and excess. Sidney's blason succeeds not only by the variety of tones the lover adopts, but by the pleasing variety of analogies offered and the ingenuity and acuteness of certain of them. Classical allusions, natural images, and courtly analogies provide varied means for praising the lady's beauty and worth. Though some of the analogies seem merely conventional, others are more ingenious: the lady's eyebrows achieve geometric proportion, yet they also resemble the ranging new moon (ll. 9-12); the whiteness of the lady's skin where her ribs meet her waist is like "Neptune's fomie face" struggling to embrace rocks (ll. 67-70). The principle of variety extends to the blason's syntax and metre as well. The length of syntactic units varies, as does the rhythm of the iambic tetrameter lines as Sidney's speaker moves from questions to descriptions to ejaculations to imperatives.

For some modern readers, such as R.L. Montgomery, the poem's formality and remoteness are more striking than any variety, ingenuity, or immediacy. According to Montgomery,

> The technique is rather pedestrian and Sidney occasionally descends to the ridiculous. Also, the variety of the images is superficial; their real significance lies in their function as details reiterating and overemphasizing the lady's supreme worth. And inevitably, the obvious formalism of the blazon mirrors its subject only at a distance. The pretended immediacy of the list of physical features is drained of all life and movement. The portrait is frozen and deliberately remote, suggesting perhaps

the inaccessibility of the chaste mistress.[12]

Certainly, the portrait's details emphasize the lady's supreme worth, yet their variety and sometimes startling immediacy are not insignificant. Much of the poem, for instance, is given to distinguishing quite closely the appearance and textures of the lady's skin. Part way through the catalogue, the immediacy and sensuality are greatly heightened. The speaker wryly celebrates the navel which "nothing but impression lackes" (l. 76), then uses alliteration to draw attention to the appearance and very texture of the lady's belly:

> Like Alablaster faire and sleeke,
> But soft and supple satten like.
> (ll. 81-82)

Then, with both daring and delicacy, Sidney makes Cupid's "chiefe resorte," emphatically present by lamenting its omission -- forced by decorum -- from this otherwise thorough portrait.

> Loath, I must leave his chiefe resort;
> For such an use the world hath gotten
> The best things still must be forgotten.
> (ll. 84-86)

As if to underscore his restraint by means of contrast, the speaker then turns to a quick series of fanciful and outrageous similes for the lady's thighs, knees, and calves. Near the end of the physical catalogue, the poem becomes somewhat more conventional. The final, long, periodic sentence then creates a heightened tone which helps close

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[12]R.L. Montgomery, Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 37.

the poem with a proper emphasis on grace and virtue. There is little question, however, that the poem's chief interest is the lady's lovely naked body.

Sidney's blason manages, with aristocratic poise, to be both intimate and distant. The seemingly exhaustive catalogue of human features is remarkable for its variety of lovely analogies, for the ingenuity of certain images, for the lively play of the speaker's mind, and for its tactful but insistent sensuality.

Such an insistent sensuality seems to mark others of Sidney's poems which use the blason techniques. For Sidney, dwelling upon the physical features of a lady has, it seems, the inevitable and sometimes disruptive effect of arousing desire. In Astrophil and Stella 9, Astrophil offers a blason of the lady's face, likening its features to precious stones in an octave of ceremonial, distant, conventional praise. The sestet then praises the lady's eyes, partly by playing with the word "touch": "Of touch they are that without touch doth touch." The lady's eyes are, as Katherine Duncan-Jones paraphrases, "touchstone (black marble) which without physical contact has an emotive effect."[13] The sonnet's last line extends the pun and subverts the sense of ceremony by lamenting that these eyes, like touch-paper, also have an igniting effect: "Of touch they are, and poore I am their straw."

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[13]Sir Philip Sidney, Selected Poems, ed., Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; repr. 1979), p. 216.

Sensual desire is also insistent and disruptive in Astrophil and Stella 77. Astrophil is restrained and decorous as he catalogues in stately Alexandrines the parts of the lady which offer virtuous delight. Sidney enhances the catalogue effect by an almost mechanical repetition of syntax and rhythm in the first ten lines. Lines twelve and thirteen offer the proper and virtuous conclusion to this almost excessively controlled praise. Each of these parts of the lady,

> Makes me in my best thoughts and quietst judgment see,
> That in no more but these I might be fully blest:

Yet passionate desire again intrudes as Astrophil makes other, un-named parts, with their accompanying blessings, present by drawing attention to their modest exclusion: "Yet ah, my Mayd'n Muse doth blush to tell the rest." With this sonnet, unlike with "What Tongue...", R.E. Montgomery notes Sidney's sensuality, saying, "...it epitomizes Sidney's habit of sharply modifying the conventional style of love to bring it up against the realities of feeling."[14]

When Donne in his Elegies takes up techniques of the blason, he does more than modify conventional style. While Sidney brings ingenuity and a natural emphasis on desire to the blason, Donne gives to the blason techniques an office, an audience, a context, and even a subject antithetical to conventional intentions and associations. "Love's Progress"[15] invites particular comparison with Sidney.

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[14]Montgomery, p. 79.
[15]The text of Donne's love poetry used throughout this paper

Donne's speaker addresses "Who ever loves" and declares his subject to be the moral-philosophical question of "the right true end of love." His office, then, is not typically Petrarchan; he offers neither praise nor meditation nor complaint but argument, or rather, the witty display of tactics of argumentation.

The elegy's first two sections establish the argumentative context for the blason. In the elegy's first section (ll. 1-16) Donne uses figures drawn from seafaring, natural history, philosophy, and metallurgy to make incredible arguments about the right end of love. His conclusion, based on the discussion of metallurgy, that we value things for their use, begins to betray his intention. In the elegy's second section (ll. 17-36), Donne turns from the idea of ends and use to that of essence -- men must love women for that which makes them women. In considering what that might be, the speaker slides over virtue, dismisses wealth and beauty, and decides on "the Centrique part." The woman's sexual organ, to which Sidney could daringly but tactfully allude, is in Donne's hands now made the end of love, the essence of woman, and, most importantly, the means for a clever, obscene joke.

It is in the elegy's third and longest section (ll. 37-72) that Donne turns to the Petrarchan catalogue. Like Sidney in "What toong..." Donne proceeds topographically,

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[15](cont'd) is: John Donne, "The Elegies" and "The Songs and Sonnets", ed., Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

making the technique still more explicit with a sailing metaphor. As the speaker traces the mistaken voyage from the face down, he pauses at various features and with conventional Petrarchan images describes the effect on lovers. Like Sidney, or any Petrarchan lover, he likens eyes to suns, notes the rosiness of cheeks, and pays particular attention to the mouth, lingering over lips, teeth, tongue, and enticing utterances.

> Her swelling lips: to which when we are come
> Wee anchor there, and think ourselves at home,
> For they seem all: there Syrens songs, and there
> Wise Delphique Oracles doe fill the eare;
> There in a creeke where chosen pearles doe swell
> The Remora, her cleavinge tongue doth dwell.
> (ll. 53-58)

Donne's technique recalls Sidney's particularly in the way the speaker conveys both the inclination to dwell on individual features and the invitation to look further. Donne exaggerates both tendencies. While Sidney speaks of "her hair fine threads of finest gold / In curled knots man's thought to hold" (ll. 3-4), Donne goes one better and claims, "The hair a forrest is of ambushes, Of springes, snares, fetters and manacles" (ll. 41-42). Sidney's lover is drawn from his lady's neck downward to linger at her breasts:

> So good a say invites the eye
> A little downward to espy
> The lovely clusters of her breasts,
> Of Venus' babe the wanton nests.
> (ll. 51-54)

There Sidney's lover lingers a few lines before proceeding. Donne's moves rather more briskly, successfully navigating

his way between the breasts without more than parenthetical praise:

> her chin
> Ere past; and the straight Hellespont between
> The Sestos and Abydos of her brests,
> Not of two Lovers, but two Loves, the nests,
> Succeeds a boundless sea...
> (ll. 59-63)

Heightening the threat of the woman's enticements and quickening the pace of the lover's progress are, of course, means for subverting the convention, for this lover, unlike Sidney, is concerned not with the leisurely enjoyment of beauty but with the speediest possible approach to his pre-determined destination. The genuine loveliness of some of Donne's Petrarchan images ironically lends force to his anti-Petrarchan argument; the lovelier the features, the more they attract admiration, and the more they prove that such an approach is inefficient, "misspent."

The elegy's fourth section (ll. 73-96) traces the speedier approach from below. Though the speaker continues to find analogies for parts of the woman's body, particularly the foot, he now selects not associations which suggest loveliness but those which contribute directly to the obscene joke:

> Some symetrie the foote hath with that part
> Which thou dost seeke, and is thy map for that,
> (ll. 74-75)
> ....
> It is the embleme that hath figured
> Firmness; 'tis the first part that comes to bed.
> (ll. 79-80)

Donne's joke about the woman's "two purses" brings the catalogue and the pseudo-argument to a close. "Love's

Progress" provides good evidence that Donne can be violently anti-Petrarchan. In the hands of the young Donne (perhaps Donne the law-student writing for other young men), the blason becomes a reductive, rather than an idealizing form. While Sidney moves from the perfections of the woman's "each part" to her whole grace and beauty to the virtue of her soul, Donne waves aside beauty and virtue, dismisses "each part" as mere distraction, and insists on but one part, "the centrique part." The poem is a deliberately shocking parody of Petrarchan idealization.

The extent and nature of Donne's anti-Petrarchism in the elegies can be shown by further comparison to Sidney. For Sidney too can parody Petrarchism. Sidney's contreblason on Mopsa, also from the Arcadia (#3) inverts the convention as an aristocratic joke at the expense of an ugly, ill-natured peasant girl. As the technique in "What toong..." is to give to "each part his beautie's part," the technique in the contreblason is to attribute the wrong qualities to the wrong parts. As with the blason, Sidney here begins with a rhetorical question:

> What length of verse can se brave Mopsa's good
> to show,
> Whose vertues strange, and beuties such, as
> no man them may know?
> (ll. 1-2)

The question is implicitly answered, for the length of verse in this sonnet is poulter's measure, a verse length associated with base or plain poetry, not sweet or golden. As Hallet Smith explains, "the poet no doubt felt it a

suitable form for mocking verse, or for the uncouth subject matter of this poem. The intention of the whole is not serious but comic."[16] Sidney uses misplaced comparisons to classical deities and precious stones to ironically attribute vices and grotesque features to Mopsa. In the poem's final lines, Sidney again alludes to a woman's "parts unknowne." Now, however, rather than encouraging thought or lamenting the custom which prevents further description, he wryly dissuades his readers from seeking further knowledge of hidden things. The last couplet provides the final kick to the joke at Mopsa's expense.

> As for those parts unknown, which hidden sure
> are best,
> Happy be they which well believe, and never seek
> the rest. (ll. 13-14)

The joke would be crude but for its irony, an irony which depends on a sense of two audiences: the foolish and base who will mistake the poem, with all its impressive-sounding words, for praise, and the aristocrats who will get the joke.

In Donne's "The Anagram" the contreblason form becomes one of several techniques put to the use of arguing the advantages of marrying a woman of extreme ugliness. The technique of the opening lines is like that of the Mopsa poem -- finding the right qualities in the wrong places -- but here the technique is made explic . and leads into a display of chop-logic arguing first that the disposition of

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[16]Hallett Smith, Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in convention, Meaning, and Expression (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 54.

beauty's elements is unimportant:

> These things are beauty's elements, where these
> Meet in one, that one must, as perfect, please.
> ....
> Though all her parts be not in th'usual place,
> She hath yet an anagram of a good face.
> (ll. 9-10, 15-16)

Donne continues with a quick series of distorted arguments or misapplied truisms. J.B. Leishman comments:

> Donne flings moderation to the winds and overwhelms us with a continuous fire of short analogical or syllogistic arguments which follow one another so rapidly that we scarcely have time to detect or to protest against their fallaciousness.[17]

His conclusion is crude but witty:

> One like none, and liked of none, fittest were,
> For, things in fashion every man will wear.
> (ll. 55-56)

As with "Love's Progress" Donne uses Petrarchan techniques in a poem which ostensibly intends to persuade, but which seems designed primarily to shock and to impress the reader with the poet's intellectual gymnastics and his daring.

The differences between Sidney's and Donne's blasons are radical. They are not explained simply by attributing ingenuity and wit to Donne, for Sidney displays these qualities too. Nor are they accounted for by claiming Donne is more erotic or more realistic than Sidney, for Sidney's delineations of the naked human body and admissions of the pressure of desire are very literal-minded. Moreover, one cannot simply say Donne parodies the conventions and Sidney treats them seriously, for Sidney can use the blason as a

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[17] J.B. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 83.

means for mockery as well as praise. Donne's parody, however, differs both in kind and degree from Sidney's and his anti-Petrarchism in these elegies is far more thoroughgoing. Sidney's contreblason nicely answers the description Leonard Forster gives of anti-Petrarchism generally: "the attacks never seriously called in doubt the validity of the convention or its usefulness as a means of poetic expression; they came from within the convention itself."[18] Donne, however, does not write from within the convention. Partly, Donne alters the convention by redirecting the blason to a different audience and office. He speaks to young men rather than to ladies, and seeks to persuade, to impress, and to shock rather than to praise. Donne also subverts Petrarchism's ethos. Sidney, whether celebrating, complaining, teasing, or ridiculing, is always aristocratic, poised, tactful. Donne loses tact. For Sidney's insistent but delicate sensuality he substitutes a kind of impudent vulgarity. For Sidney's occasional irony he substitutes crudeness. Instead of idealizing, he debases. Perhaps most significantly, Donne in these poems differs from Sidney in that he uses Petrarchism as one technique among many. Donne's Elegies, as Leishman clearly shows, draw not only from Petrarch but from Ovid, from Italian paradox, and from pseudo-scholastic argumentation. By treating Petrarchism as a tactic rather than as a whole pattern and language of love, Donne denies its sufficiency. His parody

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[18]Forster, p. 56.

is achieved through distortion and exaggeration, but also through setting Petrarchan devices in unPetrarchan or anti-Petrarchan company.

Anti-Petrarchist poems may also be found in Donne's Songs and Sonnets. In some, like "Love's Deity" or "Love's Diet" Donne explicitly rejects some aspect of Petrarchan love. Others mock by contradiction. The wit of poems like "The Indifferent" or "Communitie," for instance, derives from the way the speaker flouts the conventions of the lover's absolute fidelity to one beloved. Still other poems sound a note of cynical disillusionment. Whereas Astrophil may extol the "sweetest sovereignty / Of reason" in Stella, the speaker in "Love's Alchemy" bitterly concludes: "Hope not for mind in women; at their best / Sweetness and wit, they are but mummy, possessed." Yet "The Anagram" and "Love's Progress" may show Donne's anti-Petrarchism at its most extreme. For the blason techniques seem emptied of their elevating power as Donne makes them all-too-ready tactics for obscene humor. "Love's Progress" and "The Anagram" show Donne to be far more rebel against convention than continuator of it.

Nevertheless, no final judgment about Donne's anti-Petrarchism may be drawn from the Elegies. For another elegy, "The Autumnall," shows Donne engaged in extending the blason convention rather than disrupting it. His affectionate praise of a middle-aged woman's wrinkled face takes an unconventional subject, but draws on conventional

techniques. While "Love's Progress" and "The Anagram" show Donne at times violently (if comically) subverting the conventions Sidney represents, "The Autumnall" points to Donne's concern to redirect conventional techniques toward the praise of ladies or forms of love that fall outside the Petrarchan pattern of love, a concern even more clearly shown in certain of the Songs and Sonnets.

III. LOVE AS DEATH AND LIFE; LOVERS AS TWO IN ONE

Donne's love poetry is not, of course, limited to poems of debasement and parody. Donne also celebrates love, going further in exalting it than Sidney does and often using Petrarchan conceits and devices to do so. Donne quite consistently rejects the conventional patterns of love: he is interested in neither the unrequited devotion of Petrarchism nor the abstract spirituality of NeoPlatonism. Instead, Donne's most famous celebrations are of love that is reciprocal and is decidedly both physical and spiritual. Nevertheless, to explore the experience of love Donne uses conventional language, just as Sidney does. Examining certain poems in which Sidney gives subtle expression to amorous commonplaces helps show how Donne re-directs and extends the conventions, applying them to new forms of love, expressing them by new metaphors, and investing them with new possibilities of meaning.

Both Sidney and Donne offer variations on one of the recurrent conceits of both Petrarchism and NeoPlatonism -- that love is a form of death, or, more paradoxically, a state of death-in-life and life-in-death. The lover loses himself or his heart to the lady and thereby dies. Yet he receives and preserves her image and keeps it faithfully and thus she lives in him. Or, in another construction, his heart or other faculties live in the lady, so the lover gains a different form of life in his death. Unless, of course, she should be cruel and reject or abuse his heart,

and then he dies yet again. Separation poses another mortal threat. For in absence the lover is parted from his own heart residing in the lady, or he is deprived of the sight of her which gives him life. As rejection is death, so too is separation. The love as living-death conceit is one way of expressing that love is in some sense a loss of self-possession, or a loss of identity, but that it may also provide a discovery or recovery of self or identity in the beloved. The two-in-oneness of lovers is thus related to the conceit of love as life-in-death.

Sidney's song "Who hath his fancie pleased" from Certain Sonnets (#23) gives sweet expression to the love as death conceit, as well as to other commonplaces of Neo-Platonic love. The song is composed of four eight-line stanzas with a final four-line envoi. The tetrameter lines are mellifluous, with their alternating feminine and masculine endings. The poem's NeoPlatonism is immediately clear as the speaker begins by indicating that there are degrees or levels of love. He invites those who have enjoyed other pleasing sights to look higher:

> Who hath his fancie pleased,
> With fruits of happie sight,
> Let here his eyes be raised
> On nature's sweetest light.
> (ll. 1-4)

The movement is from some lovely objects to another, but the shift from the positive "happy" and plural "fruits" to the superlative and singular "sweetest light" is a move to the contemplation of nature's best.

The song's sustained emphasis on sight and light is also NeoPlatonic. For the NeoPlatonic lover, beauty is a kind of effluence, like light, and sight is the sense through which love begins and is sustained. As Castiglione's Bembo explains:

> But speaking of the beautie that we meane, which is onely it, that appeareth in bodies, and especially in the face of man, and moveth this fervent coveting which wee call Love, we will terme it an influence of the heavenly bountifulnesse, the which for all it stretcheth over all thinges that be created (like the light of the sunne) yet when it findeth out a face well proportioned, and framed with a certaine lively agreement of several colours, and set forth with lights and shadowes, and with an orderly distance and limits of lines, thereinto it distilleth it selfe and appeareth most welfavored, and decketh out and lightneth the subject where it shineth with a marvellous grace and glistering (like the sunne beames that strike against beautifull plate of fine golde wrought and set with precious jewels).
>
> So that it draweth unto it mens eyes with pleasure, and pearcing through them, imprinteth himselfe in the soule, and with an unwonted sweetnesse all to stirreth her and deliteth, and setting her on fire maketh her to covet him.[19]

Such notions of beauty are implicit in Sidney's song. His "sweetest light," however, has paradoxical effects on the beholder:

> A light which doth dissever,
> And cannot unite the eyes,
> A light which dying never,
> Yet is cause the looker dyes.
> (ll. 5-8)

By what means the lady is immortal and in what sense the lover is dead are explained in the second stanza. Here Sidney's careful syntactic and rhythmic symmetry work both to enhance the antithesis and to convey balance and

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[19]Castiglione, p. 593.

completeness.

> She never dies but lasteth
> In life of lover's hart,
> He ever dies that wasteth
> In love, his chiefest part.
> Thus is her life still guarded,
> In never dying faith:
> Thus is his death rewarded,
> Since she lives in his death.
> (11. 9-16)

The stanza is satisfying in its balanced structure as it describes a paradoxically satisfying pattern of love. With "wasteth" the lover's loss is made momentarily emphatic, and momentarily questionable, but with "rewarded" it is redressed. This sense of recompense prepares for the assertion of the third stanza's opening lines:

> Look then, and dye, the pleasure
> Doth answere well the paine:
> (11. 17-18)

The speaker reveals yet another hallmark of NeoPlatonism as he goes on to offer a synthesis of Christian and Platonic concepts and to turn them to amorous compliment:

> Small losse of mortall treasure,
> Who may immortall gaine.
> Immortall be her graces,
> Immortall is her minde:
> They fit for heavenly places,
> This heaven in it doth binde.
> (11. 19-24)

Heavenly virtues and immortal realms are, however, almost too exalted for a mortal lover, so Sidney's speaker gives assurance that the senses may still perceive those features of the lady which bespeak heavenly things.

> But eyes those beauties see not,
> Nor sence that grace descryes;
> Yet eyes deprived be not,
> From sight of her faire eyes:

> Which as of inward glory
> They are the outward seale:
> So may they live still sorie
> Which die not in that weale.
> (11.25-32)

The song concludes by repeating the invitation to lovers to contemplate this higher beauty who will please more than fancies.

The ladder of love, beauty as light, love depending on the sense of sight, and love as both death and immortality: these conventional ideas are gracefully expressed in Sidney's song. Partly, the song's loveliness derives from its restraint of style and statement. Sidney achieves a symmetry and balance in the lines that reinforces the sense that this is a satisfying or fulfilling pattern of love, yet his lines never become rigid, but remain mellifluous, song-like. Also, though he recalls the Platonic ladder of love, Sidney's speaker reaches not to Ideal Beauty, that heavenly entity which stirs the highest and most abstract love. Rather, he is concerned with the highest to be found in creation, with "nature's sweetest light," one who partakes of heavenly virtue but can nevertheless be perceived by mortal senses. Sidney captures the beauty and elevation of NeoPlatonic concepts while keeping them within human reach.

In "The Good-morrow" Donne, like Sidney, takes up Neo-Platonic concepts, but Donne puts them toward the praise of love which, unlike Petrarchan love, is requited, and unlike NeoPlatonic love, might involve more senses than sight

alone. "The Good-morrow" shows Donne making serious and innovative use of amorous conventions. The poem is composed of three seven-line stanzas, each with six iambic pentameter lines and one hexameter. Each of the stanzas has a rhyme scheme of ababccc, the effect of which is to make the hexameter lines still more final in closing the stanzas. Donne uses the stanzaic divisions, particularly that between the first and second stanza, to mark shifts in tone and in time. For the poem also follows a temporal arrangement: the speaker considers and, with affectionate humour, explains the past; he then tenderly celebrates the present; and he gives moral exhortation for the future. The poem's metre is quite regular,but the rhythm s flexible, catching a range of tones in the speaking voice.

The poem's opening is colloquial with its oath and its homely diction. The speaker questions the lovers' lives before their present love and suggests their previous pleasures were rustic, childish, or perhaps dream-like.

> I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I
> Did, till we lov'd? were we not wean'd till then?
> But suck'd on countrey pleasures, childishly?
> Or snorted we i' the seaven sleepers den?
> (ll. 1-4)

Uninterested in distinguishing between alternative explanations of the past,the lover affirms them all: "'Twas so." He offers then a sweet and witty explanation of his previous loves, one that derives from a NeoPlatonic notion:

> 'Twas so; But this, all pleasures fancies bee.
> If ever any beauty I did see,
> Which I desir'd, and got, 'twas but a dreame
> of thee. (ll. 5-7)

David Daiches' reading of "The Good-morrow" is perceptive and his comments on these lines are helpful:

> with sly humor Donne goes on to introduce the Platonic idea that any previous love of his must have been a "dream" of his present mistress.... The lady to whom this poem is addressed is implicitly compared to the Platonic idea of beauty, while his former loves represented earlier stages in his search for the real thing. The lines mingle humor, wit, philosophy, confession and affection.[20]

The lover's explanation of previous mistresses also takes a particularly Donnean twist, for he speaks of beauties not only desired but "got." Yet the slight emphasis does not detract from the compliment to his present love.

With the second stanza Donne's speaker turns from past to present, and from playful affection to more sustained celebration. As the lover bids "good morrow," mentions "waking," and considers the "one little room," he implies a

ral waking after physical love. Yet, though physical intimacy is implied, it is the spiritual awakening which is celebrated, with a NeoPlatonic emphasis on the place of sight in love:

> And now good morrow to our waking soules,
> Which watch not one another out of feare;
> For love, all love of other sights controules,
> And makes one little roome, an every where.
> (11. 8-11)

From the metaphysical conceit that one room may, through the concentrating and controlling power of love, be made a microcosm, Donne turns to other cosmological images to

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[20]David Daiches, "A Reading of 'The Good Morrow'," In Just So Much Honor, ed., Peter Amadeus Fiore (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), pp. 180-81.

convey the sufficiency of this mutual confident love. As Daiches explains, Donne uses an unusual third-person imperative in the past tense to dismiss the whole world except himself and his mistress.[21] The repetition of the grammatical structure gives rhetorical emphasis:

> Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
> Let Maps to others, worlds on worlds have showne,
> Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one.[22]
> (11. 12-14)

The threefold repetition of "one" in line fourteen keeps unity in tension with diversity, for the lovers remain two (each has a world, each is a world), yet are urged to actively possess one world, "possess" being an action that may subsume both what one is and what one has.

In the transition to the third stanza, Donne continue the cosmological imagery and the earlier emphasis on waking and sight. The speaker uses the precise literal detail of the mutual reflection of the lovers' faces in each other's eyes as a further metaphor for oneness. The metaphor depends on and implies both physical intimacy and visual concentration for its image of reciprocity.

> My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares,
> And true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest.
> (11. 15-16)

The eyes provide an alternate image for two becoming one, for the eyes are, literally, "hemispheres" which taken together may form a whole globe. Given the lovers' "true

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[21] Daiches, p. 184.

[22] I have here preferred the more commonly accepted version of line 14 to Gardner's choice: "Let us possesse our world, each hath one, and is one." See Gardner's note, pp. 198-99.

plaine hearts" these are hemispheres which threaten neither coldness nor diminution:

> Where can we finde two better hemispheares
> Without sharpe North, without declining West?
> (ll. 17-18)

The suggestion of "declining" prepares for "The Good-morrow's" concluding three lines, which mingle metaphysical conjecture with moral exhortation. Donne's speaker gives an aphoristic statement of the doctrine of the incorruptibility of pure substances: "What ever dyes, was not mix't equally" (l. 19). He then turns to two alternate understandings of "equally." The first is metaphysical unity: "If our two loves be one." The alternative is not so much metaphysical as moral, or even theological: "or, thou and I / Love so alike, that none doe slacken." The conclusion follows from either of the two premises. If metaphysical unity is achieved, then their love will be incorruptible. Or, if the lovers remain constant and mutually faithful, their loves and they themselves will partake of Christian immortality, for "charity never fails," "none can die."

"The Good-morrow" develops several NeoPlatonic ideas, many of them similar to those in Sidney's "Who Hath His Fancy Pleased." Both poems imply the Platonic ladder of love and both emphasize the place and power of the eyes in sustaining love. Yet Donne moves away from Sidney in celebrating mutual and reciprocal love, and in presenting love not as a form of death, but as a means of achieving

immortality. In this Donne may at first seem unconventional. Yet, though Donne's treatment of love in "The Good-morrow" is certainly unPetrarchan, it may in fact be more Neo-Platonic than Sidney's. For the NeoPlatonists commend mutual love, and perceive it as partaking of the immortal. Ficino himself distinguishes between unrequited love, which is death, and reciprocal love, which is life:

> There are these two kinds of love: one simple, the other reciprocal. Simple love occurs when the loved one does not return his lover's affections. In this case the lover is completely dead, for he neither lives in himself,...nor does he live in his loved one, since he is rejected by him.
>
> ....
>
> But when the loved one loves in return, the lover leads his life in him. Here, surely, is a remarkable circumstance that whenever two people are brought together in mutual affection, one lives in the other and the other in him. In this way they mutually exchange identities. Each gives himself to the other in such a way that each receives the other in return.

Ficino goes on, then, to elaborate the idea of lovers being two and yet one, of living in the other and yet in themselves:

> The truth must be rather that each has himself and has the other, too. A has himself, but in B; and B also has himself, but in A. When you love me, you contemplate me, and as I love you, I find myself in your contemplation of me; I recover myself, lost in the first place by my own neglect of myself, in you. who preserve me.... I am therefore closer to you than I am to myself, since I keep a grasp on myself only through you as a mediary.

Life is assured for the mutual lovers when they are confident that love will be and is reciprocated:

> In fact, there is only one death in mutual love, but there are two resurrections, for a lover dies within

> himself the moment he forgets about himself, but he returns to life immediately in his loved one as soon as the loved one embraces him in loving contemplation. He is resurrected once more when he finally recognizes himself in his beloved and no longer doubts that he is loved.
>
> O, happy death, which is followed by two lives. O, wondrous exchange in which each gives himself up for the other, and has the other, yet does not cease to have himself. O, inestimable gain, when two so become one, that each of the two, instead of one alone, becomes two, and as though doubled, he who had one life before, with a death intervening, has now two.[23]

Ficino's words reveal the strongly NeoPlatonic implications of Donne's images in "The Good-morrow." Lovers who are two-in-one and who find themselves in each other. Donne gives innovative expression to such commonplaces as he offers cosmological images, visual images, metaphysical concepts, and moral exhortation.

Yet while the shift toward reciprocal love may make Donne more NeoPlatonic than Sidney, the suggestions of physical intimacy likely make him less so. For though "The Good-morrow" includes NeoPlatonic ideas of body and soul, it also includes a natural emphasis on the body in the first stanza, and a continuing implication that the celebrated

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[23] Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium, transl., Sears Reynolds Jayne (The University of Missouri Studies. Vol. XIX No. 1. Columbia: The University of Missouri, 1944), pp. 144-45. Sidney and Donne themselves may not have read these words of Ficino's. Nevertheless, they would certainly have been familiar with his theory of love and beauty as it was popularized by Castiglione and by many French and Italian poets. In "Ficino and the Platonism of the English Renaissance," Comparative Literature 4 (1952): 214-238, Sears Jayne argues that Ficino's effect on English poets probably came about indirectly, but he also concludes, "To point out that even here Ficino's influence was mainly indirect is not to minimize the ultimate importance of that influence. Ficino certainly was the fountainhead of Renaissance love Platonism." p. 238.

spiritual love exists in a context of physical intimacy -- "one little room" in which the lovers are very close. The poem takes up NeoPlatonic notions of spiritual love without explicitly giving up the body. In "The Good-morrow's" version of the ladder of love, the lovers leave behind mere pleasures and fears about other loves and ascend to "true plaine hearts," but they do not necessarily leave behind bodies as their souls awaken.

Donne's practice of finding new metaphors and new uses for commonplace notions is also apparent when one compares Sidney's treatment of departure themes with Donne's. A farewell sonnet from Certain Sonnets provides a useful starting place. Sidney expresses the conventional notion that, as death is spoken of as departure, so departure is a form of death. The poem's chief interest is in its continued play with the word "part."

> Oft have I musde,but now at length I finde,
> Why those that die, men say they do depart:
> Depart, a word so gentle to my minde,
> Weakely did seeme to paint death's ougly dart.
>
> But now the starres with their strange course do binde
> Me one to leave, with whome I leave my hart,
> I heare a crye of spirits faint and blinde,
> That parting thus my chiefest part I part.
>
> Part of my life, the loathed part to me,
> Lives to impart my wearie clay some breath.
> But that good part, wherein all comforts be,
> Now dead, doth show departure is a death.
> Yea, worse then death; death parts both woe and joy,
> From joy I part still living in annoy.
> (Certain Sonnets 20)

Such conventional death-departure analogies are recalled by

Donne's departing lover in "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," but Donne finds new force for the comparison. Donne considers the separation of mutual lovers, and turns the analogy to consolation rather than complaint. As the death of the virtuous is peaceful, so should the separation of these spiritual lovers be:

> As virtuous men pass mildly away,
> And whisper to their soules, to goe,
> Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,
> The breath goes now, and some say, no:
>
> So let us melt, and make no noise,
> No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
> 'Twere prophanation of our joyes
> To tell the layetie our love.
> (ll. 1-8)

The consolation Donne's lover offers his mistress is based on the claim that theirs is an elevated, refined love unlike that which is limited to or dependent on the senses alone.

> Dull sublunary lovers' love
> (Whose soule is sense) cannot admit
> Absence, because it doth remove
> Those things which elemented it.
> (ll. 13-16)

The condescending description of earthly lovers is reminiscent of the warning that Castiglione's Bembo gives against the effect of absence on those whose love is tied to the body:

> The lover therefore that considereth onely the beautie in the bodie, loseth this treasure and happinesse, as soone as the woman beloved with her departure leaveth the eies without their brightnesse, and consequently the soule as a widdow without her joy. For since beautie is farre off, that influence of love setteth not the hart on fire, as it did in presence.[24]

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[24]Castiglione, p. 608.

Sidney's Astrophil also considers the effect of absence on the senses, but in Sonnet 88 he bravely claims that memory sustains and even strengthens his love for Stella:

> Tush absence,while thy mistes eclipse that light,
> My Orphan sence flies to the inward sight,
> Where memory sets foorth the beames of love,
> That where before hart loved and eyes did see,
> In hart both sight and love now coupled be;
> United powers make each the stronger prove.
> (A&S 88, ll. 9-14)

Bembo likewise admits that memory provides sustenance for lovers such as Astrophil,but insists it is but temporary and leads to further torment:

> yet doth the remembrance of beautie somewhat stirre those vertues of the soule in such wise, that they seeke to scatter abroade the spirits, and they finding the wayes closed up, have no issue, and still they seeke to get out, and so with those shootings inclosed, pricke the soul, and torment her bitterly, as yong children, when in their tender gummes they beginne to breed teeth.
> And hence come the teares, sighes, vexations and torments of lovers.[25]

Just as Bembo describes, Astrophil's brave assertions in Sonnet 88 give way to vexation and torment in Sonnet 89, with its extended contrasts of day and night:

> Now that of absence the most irksome night,
> With darkest shade doth overcome my day;
> Since Stella's eyes, wont to give me my day,
> Leaving my Hemisphere, leave me in night,
> Each day seemes long, and longs for long-staid night.
> (ll. 1-5)

According to Bembo, the solution for lovers such as Astrophil is to ascend to a more spiritual form of love. He must learn to love, not beauty in the body, but beauty "in it self simple and pure." Donne's lover draws on this

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[25]Castiglione, pp. 608-9.

conception of a refined and spiritual love as he assures his mistress they will be less affected by absence.

> But we by a love, so much refined,
> That our selves know not what it is,
> Inter-assured of the mind,
> Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Yet Donne's refinement of love differs somewhat from Bembo's. Donne's spiritual lovers are not entirely abstracted from "eyes, lips, and hands." They will miss one another's bodies, but "less" than base lovers would. Bembo advocates love that is spiritual instead of fleshly; Donne suggests love that is spiritual as well as fleshly. As in "The Good-morrow," the security of this love derives not only from its spirituality but also from its reciprocity, for these two lovers are made one by their love. The famous concluding stanzas of this valediction offer ingenious and striking metaphors for the lovers' two-in-oneness. The much admired "gold to aery thinness beat" and "stiff twin compasses" are unconventional metaphors. Yet they are, at the same time, innovative developments of NeoPlatonic commonplaces, new ways of figuring forth in what way the lovers are one, and in what way they are two.

"The Good-morrow" and "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning" both show Donne continuing the Petrarchan task of representing love as exalted and idealized. Both poems also show him modifying and extending conceits that Sidney uses. Love as death and the lovers as two-in-one become for Donne figures to portray a form of love that is mutual and secure. In "A Valediction: of my name in the window" Donne again

draws upon conventional language to examine the reciprocity of love and its security in the face of separation, but this poem offers little certainty that love can be preserved. While the former two poems show that reciprocal love in which lovers become two in one is a means for conquering death, this valediction shows that lovers' failure to maintain their unity makes love a painful form of death. As the lover questions whether his lady will remain faithful, he also implicitly questions the efficacy of Petrarchan concepts as a means of expressing and preserving love.

In "A Valediction: of my name in the window" Donne again finds an unusual figure to express or examine the concept that love is an exchange of identities. The departing lover has engraved his name in his mistress' window and he exhorts her to constancy and warns her against infidelity through figurative elaboration of the significance of this name, this representation or expression of himself.

In the first three stanzas, the lover finds ways to compare the physical properties of the window in which his name is engraved to moral qualities in himself: his firmness, his transparency, and his constancy. Sometimes he remarks on chance likenesses; sometimes he suggests a kind of magical connection effected by the name. In each of these stanzas, however, the lover concludes by insisting that his lady is responsible for giving the fullest significance to the connection of window, name, lover, and beloved. Through

her effort, the window can become a figure not just for his moral qualities, but for their metaphysical love.

Particularly in the second and third stanzas, Donne recalls Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic concepts, emphasizing the place of vision in love and the exchange of identities that love effects. The lover marvels that the window should be as transparent as he, but suggests that its capacity for reflection is still more important:

> 'Tis much that Glasse should bee
> As all confessing, and through-shine as I,
> 'Tis more, that it shewes thee to thee,
> And cleare reflects thee to thine eye.
> (11. 7-10)

"Love's magique" can provide the interpretation of this figure, the lover says: "Here you see mee, and I am you" (l. 12). There is here a remarkable correspondence between literal and figurative meanings. The lady must now not only look at the window, but look in such a way that she sees not that which is beyond it, but the glass itself, her lover's name in the glass, and herself reflected in it. So, metaphorically, because a name is a way of establishing identity, she may see him in his name, and because of the metaphysical union of two lovers into one entity, she may see herself in him. In both its literal and its figurative meanings, this reflective property depends on the lady's effort and on the quality of her vision: she must refuse to look beyond her lover and must consider him, or his name in his absence, in a way that sustains the metaphysical union of their souls.

In the third stanza, the lady's responsibility is made still greater. The window is a figure for his constancy, he says. She, however, can give this "intireness" greater significance.

> You this intireness better may fulfill,
> Who have the pattern with you still.
> (ll. 17-18)

Douglas Peterson explains:

> The "accessaries - to this name" do indeed "fulfill" the name, but the name is only a symbol of identity. The lover's identity may only be fulfilled by the beloved. She brings him to life when by contemplating his name and her own reflected image she "becomes" him.[26]

The lover requires of his lady the kind of love that, through her contemplation, holds both body and soul together. Yet as the lover requires more, he seems to become less certain that his beloved will "fulfill" her profound responsibilities. She "will," he says in the first stanza, give "price" to his name; she "may," he hopes in the third, fulfill his "intirenesse."

As the "Valediction" continues the speaker draws attention to the poem's method of offering various figurative significations for the name in the window as he rather abruptly suggests that the preceding interpretations may be "too hard and deepe / ... for a scratch'd name to teach" (ll. 19-20). He offers alternate meanings for the name, several of which introduce associations with death. The name may be considered a memento mori, "lover's mortalitie to preach" (l. 22) or it may be the lover's

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[26]Peterson, p. 323.

skeleton, showing his death but also guaranteeing his return. The lady must not resist the astrological influence of the name, he insists, for she should "till I returne / Since I die daily, daily mourne" (ll. 41-42). The lover will die in several senses: he will daily risk death in the hazards of travel; he will grow older and nearer to death; but most importantly, he will continuously experience the metaphorical death of separation from the beloved, a separation which puts his identity at risk.

Through the first seven stanzas the lover offers various interpretations of his name in the window and insists on no specific one. But he does insist first on the lady's responsibility to contemplate his name properly and to "fulfill" the "intireness" of their love, and second, on her obligation to sustain both her love for him and her grief at their separation. At stanza eight the poem changes abruptly and the lover no longer exhorts his beloved to constancy but vividly imagines a scenario of betrayal. He seems certain of such eventual infidelity -- he says "when," not "if":

VIII

When thy' inconsiderate hand
Flings out this casement, with my trembling name,
To looke on one, whose wit or land,
New battry to thy heart may frame,
Then thinke this name alive, and that thou thus
In it offendst my Genius.

IX

And when thy melted maid,
Corrupted by thy Lover's gold, and page,
His letter at thy pillow'hath laid,
Disputed it, and tam'd thy rage,
And thou begin'st to thaw towards him, for this,

May my name step in and hide his.

X

And if this treason goe
To'an overt act, and that thou write again;
In superscribing, this name flow
Into thy fancy, from the pane.
So, in forgetting thou remembrest right,
And unaware to mee shalt write.

The very qualities which the first stanzas emphasized are now inverted: the lover hopes his name, earlier as firm as diamond, will "flow / into thy fancy" to counter the actions of the "melted maid" and the lady who begins "to thaw towards him." And the lover hopes the name in the window will have a quality opposed to the transparency earlier established: it will be opaque, he says, to hide the new lover's name. With the mistress's betrayal, the figurative significance of the name in the window is somewhat disrupted.

In these stanzas we hear a strain in the lover's tone, a kind of implicit awareness that a name cut in a window, and a valediction straining to show the power of figurative language, are finally powerless to preserve love and prevent infidelity. The first lines of the last stanza make this explicit:

But glasse, and lines must bee,
No meanes our firme substantiall love to keepe.
(ll. 61-62)

The lover disclaims the adequacy of the engraved name, and implicitly comments on the poem's style: these "lines" are lines of poetry as well as lines carved in glass. The self-conscious elaborateness of a poem that offers many

varied and ingenious interpretations of a single figure is finally said to be incapable of sustaining love. The poem ends in bitter anti-climax.

> Neere death inflicts this lethargie,
> And this I murmure in my sleepe;
> Impute this idle talke, to that I goe,
> For dying men talke often so.
> (ll. 63-66)

These last lines suggest both lover and beloved are in bed, and so intensify the fear and bitterness associated with the imagined betrayal. But the lover dismisses his valediction as "idle talke" and suggests it is due to his dying: perhaps his mortality, possibly the "death" of orgasm, but certainly the impending separation of the lovers. His urgent plea for constancy, couched in Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic language, is, he says, no more than irrational and ineffectual murmuring.

In "A Valediction: of my name in the window" Donne examines anew the ways in which love is an exchange of identities and departure is death. Instead of assurance in the security of love, he now expresses a fearful sense of love's precariousness and an acute awareness that the two-in-oneness of lovers depends on sustained moral effort which is more difficult in absence. In this poem and others, Donne enters into moving complexities of the experience of love, but does so by means of conventional language. Donne modifies, elaborates, and innovates Petrarchism, and thus shows himself to be both original and dependent.

IV. LOVERS AGAINST THE WORLD

The two preceding chapters generally take Sidney to be an exemplar of Petrarchism and examine more closely how Donne reacts against or extends amorous convention. Such a focus may obscure the extent to which Sidney is also critical of Petrarchism, as his lovers question or push against the limitations of conventional style and conventional ideas. In fact, some of the challenges Sidney mounts to the morality and sufficiency of idealized love have no counterpart in Donne. By considering poems in which Sidney and Donne set lovers against the claims of an intruding world, one may again see Donne as a continuator and innovator of tradition, but also perceive Sidney as a disruptor of conventional poses and ideas.

The tension between the claims of the world upon the lover and the effects of love on him is a recurrent theme in Astrophil and Stella. Sonnet 14 is the first in the sequence to place the lover in an immediate social situation in which he addresses a specific human listener. Astrophil answers an uncomprehending friend who has just warned against the ruinous effects of desire. Colloquial language, long phrases, and enjambed lines make the octave one continuous outburst as Astrophil complains first of the already incessant pains of love and then of the additional grief of the friend's moral objection.

> Alas, have I not paine enough my friend,
> Upon whose breast a fiercer Gripe doth tire
> Then did on him who first stale downe the fire,
> While Love on me doth all his quiver spend,

> But with your Rubarb words you must contend
> To grieve me worse, in saying that Desire
> Doth plunge my well-form'd soule even in the mire
> Of sinfull thoughts, which do in ruine end?
> (ll. 1-8)

The allusion to Prometheus not only evokes the inescapable torments Astrophil is enduring but introduces the suggestion that forbidden acts may be heroic and beneficial. The association thus helps prepare for the lover's response to his friend's moral-religious concern over the sinfulness of desire. From colloquial outburst the lover turns to more formal rhetoric in the sestet, with a conditional structure and balanced phrases ironically specifying the so-called "sinful" effects of love:

> If that be sinne which doth the maners frame,
> Well staid with truth in word, and faith of deed,
> Readie of wit, and fearing nought but shame:
> If that be sinne which in fixt hearts doth breed
> A loathing of all loose unchastitie:
> Then Love is sin, and let me sinfull be.
> (ll. 9-14)

Astrophil's response seems to sweep aside all possible moral objections. He enumerates the ennobling effects of love and asserts that ideal love actually dissuades lovers from unchastity. By repeating and playing with the word "sin" -- the friend's word -- and by making it part of a patently absurd premise (that which elevates the soul is sin) he renders the friend's objection ineffectual, or seems to. Far from ruining his soul, Love will better fit the lover to answer the claims of the world. There is, however, an equivocation in Astrophil's response. He specifies the effects of love; yet his friend objected not to love but to

desire, and desire proves later in the sonnet sequence to be increasingly disruptive. At this point, however, Astrophil can move from colloquial outburst to more elevated rhetoric and can play with religious language to assert love's ennobling effects with confidence.

The general movement and tactics of Sidney's Sonnet 14 are somewhat similar to one of Donne's most admired Songs and Sonnets, "The Canonization." Donne's speaker, like Sidney's, begins with an exasperated man-to-man address to one who chides him for his love, then turns to a celebration of love's elevated nature and effects. Donne, like Sidney but to a far greater extent, plays daringly with the language of religion and touches further extremes of both exasperation and religiosity. "The Canonization" also presents a radically different form of love. It shows, not the unrequited Petrarchan lover answering the claims of the world, but two lovers -- spiritual but also defiantly fleshly -- utterly renouncing the claims of the world. Donne is here uninterested in the pattern and circumstance of Petrarchan love; its language, however, he uses extravagantly.

The opposition between the lovers and the world is established in the poem's first two stanzas as the lover violently objects to the intrusion of one who has reproved him: "For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love." In case the critic cannot keep silent, the lover fires at him a rapid succession of alternative concerns: he should reprove

the lover for some other failing; he should tend to his own affairs; he should, in fact, make any other judgments: "what you will, approve / So you will let me love." The lover admits his "ruin'd fortune" in passing and without concern. In the sweeping list of alternate occupations, he communicates not just indifference but disdain for wealth, arts, education, preferment, the courts, the church, the royal court, and business. This lover may be in the world, but he is defiantly not of it.

In the second stanza the speaker resorts to the easy cliches of Petrarchism to argue that his love will do the world no harm.

> Alas,alas,who's injured by my love?
> What merchant ships have my sighs drown'd?
> Who says my tears have overflow'd his ground?
> When did my colds a forward spring remove?
> When did the heats which my veines fill
> Add one more to the plaguie Bill?

The Petrarchan tags, used to convey the lover's emotional state, are placed in a practical, worldly context which shows they have no literal force, nor are they meant to. Cleanth Brooks observes,

> [t]he very absurdity of the jargon which lovers are expected to talk makes for his argument: their love, however absurd it may appear to the world, does no harm to the world. The practical friend need have no fears: there will still be wars to fight and lawsuits to argue.[27]

The first two stanzas largely accomplish the separation of the lovers from the world, yet later details also reinforce

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[27]Cleanth Brooks, "The Language of Paradox," In The Well-Wrought Urn (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1947), p. 13.

it. In stanza four, for instance, the "legends" of these saints-for-love may not be commemorated in "chronicles" -- historical accounts of world events. Instead, the carefully worked delicacy of love poetry will be fit commemoration: "We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms" (l. 32).

Separation from the world is the first quality that these lovers share with the religious; the first two stanzas thus prepare for the poem's conflation of religion and sexuality. The third stanza introduces the sexual nature of this love as it offers a quick succession of possible metaphors for the lovers: flies, known as licentious creatures; tapers, which consume themselves as they burn, or, with a punning reference to sexual consummation, "die"; the eagle and dove, symbols of male strength and female beauty or gentleness. The lover's tone modulates from witty indifference to high seriousness as the associations of these metaphors are brought together in the figure of the phoenix.

> The Phoenix ridle hath more wit
> By us, we two being one, are it
> So, to one neutrall thing both sexes fit
> Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
> Mysterious by this love.
> (ll. 25-27)

The phoenix is a common Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic figure for never-dying love. In Donne's hands, the metaphor becomes audacious, linking overt sexuality with the religious mystery of the resurrection. These lovers are miraculous as physical consummation does not extinguish or alter their love.

Renunciation of the world, together with the mysterious quality of their love, and the sonnet-legends preserving their story shall lead, the speaker claims, to these lovers being "canonized for love." The poem's last stanza anticipates how the saints of love will be invoked by others:

> You whom reverend love
> Made one anothers hermitage;
> You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
> Who did the whole worlds soule extract, and drove
> Into the glasses of your eyes
> So made such mirrors, and such spies,
> That they did all to you epitomize,
> Countries, Towns, Courts: Beg from above
> A patterne of your love!
> (ll. 37-45)

From beyond the world they renounced, the lovers will be called upon to assist the world. Though the lover has dismissed all that countries, towns, and courts might offer (or at least sent his critic off to busy himself in them), these lovers also will have achieved something more strenuous than mere refusal -- the intense concentration of the world into one another. By great effort, the lovers find in one another's eyes epitomes of the whole world. They are invoked then to petition heaven for a pattern of their love, that others may follow their "holy" example.

In "The Canonization" Donne does not refuse or debase Petrarchism. Rather, he re-directs Petrarchan metaphor and a Petrarchan sense of the exalted nature of love towards a love that is mutual and that is fleshly. Against the press of a world busy about important affairs, Donne's lovers make themselves hermits in one another's bodies and concentrate

the whole world into one another's eyes. The world may go its way; Donne's lovers find all in each other, and other lovers may profit from their example.

In poems which offer an exalted conception of love, Donne's dismissal of conflicting claims is more certain, more sweeping, and more hyperbolic than Sidney's, as "The Canonization" shows. In "The Sunne Rising" Donne's speaker again dismisses the world, taking a playful tone, yet also hitting notes of high seriousness. The poem is addressed to an intruder into the lover's bedroom -- the "Busie old foole, unruly Sunne," also charged with being a "Sawcy, pedantique wretch." The lover takes up the sun's properties and their irrelevance to, inferiority to, or dependency on love and the lovers. In the first stanza, the speaker argues that though other creatures depend on the motions of the sun which measure time (in the poem's Ptolemaic universe), to lovers, time is inconsequential:

> Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
> Nor houres, dayes, months, which are the rags
> of time. (11. 9-10)

The second stanza moves from time to light and sight, and from lovers generally to this particular man and woman. Donne introduces Petrarchan hyperboles into this poem of mutual love, and gives them new wit and new extravagance. It is commonplace enough to claim the mistress' eyes are like the sun, or even brighter than the sun, but witty to suggest they therefore might blind the sun. It is standard practice to compare the lady to exotic spices and precious jewels,

but newly hyperbolic to identify them with her. And for Donne's pattern of reciprocal love, extravagant claims extend to the man as well:

> If her eyes have not blinded thine,
> Looke, and to morrow late, tell mee,
> Whether both th'Indias of spice and Myne
> Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
> Aske for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
> And thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay.
> (11. 15-20)

The third stanza opens, then, with an absolute claim.

> She' is all States, and all Princes, I;
> Nothing else is.

The dimeter line -- with a trochee and a spondee -- arrests the reader with its emphatic rhythm and its unqualified claim. The next lines, however, make the statement relative.

> Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,
> All honor's mimique; all wealth alchimie.
> (11. 23-24)

Yet the lover is not forsaking the figure of the lovers as microcosm. Returning to the affectionate, mocking tone of the poem's opening, he considers the property of warmth and suggests the aging sun gains an advantage "In that the world's contracted thus." For the universe is still centered on the lovers, and especially on the place of their physical union.

> Shine here to us, and thou art every where;
> This bed thy centre is, these walls thy spheare.
> (11. 29-30)

The figure of the microcosm gives metaphorical force to the dismissal of the world for love.

To reject the world for love is a fitting action for the Petrarchan or NeoPlatonic lover. Ficino himself says

"because of the presence of the loved one the lover despises riches and honors and considers them worthless, for it is right that the divine be valued above the human."[28] Donne's version of the divine is rather more carnal than Ficino would endorse, but Donne's evaluation of the relative claims of the world and of love accords with the NeoPlatonist's. Sidney's lovers also refuse riches and honors for the sake of love, yet at times seem less assured that the choice is "right." Although in Sonnet 14 Astrophil makes positive assertions about the ennobling effects of love, in later sonnets he chooses love for Stella in apparent defiance of reason or morality. While Donne is more extravagant in renouncing the world for love, Sidney goes further than Donne in representing the moral and psychological ambiguities of doing so.

Sonnets 18, 19, and 21 from Astrophil and Stella again question the effects of love by raising the larger obligations and expectations that rest upon the lover, and particularly those concerning how he will use his mind. In the first two, Astrophil examines himself; in 21 he responds again to a reproving friend. Sonnet 18 employs a plain, meditative style and the diction of finance and stewardship as the gifted man considers the waste of his youth.

With what sharp checkes I in my selfe am shent,
When into reason's audite I do go:
And by just counts my selfe a bankroutt know
Of all those goods, which heav'n to me hath lent:
Unable quite to pay even Nature's rent,
Which unto it by birthright I do ow:

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[28] Marsilio Ficino's Commentary, p. 141.

And which is worse, no good excuse can show,
But that my wealth I have most idly spent.

The religious language of repentance underscores the seriousness of this bankruptcy: his debt is not only to nature but to heaven. The tone is subdued as Astrophil goes on to tabulate the waste of his youth, knowledge, and wit and to foresee the outcome of his actions: "I see my course to lose myself doth bend" (l. 12). These seem the meditations of a penitent. In the concluding couplet, however, Astrophil turns from the moral, reasonable analysis and willfully abandons himself to love.

I see and yet no greater sorrow take
Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake.
(ll. 13-14)

The repetition of "I see" from line twelve underscores the fact that Astrophil's choice is made in full knowledge of the reasons against it. David Kalstone comments on the couplet's deliberate irrationality: "There is no attempt at reconciliation, but rather a shrugging gesture of abandonment."[29] Such a sacrifice for love gives some measure of Stella's worth and of love's power, and it is the proper stance for a Petrarchan lover. Astrophil's moral examination, however, is not easily dismissed; the "rightness" of the choice is uncertain.

Sonnet 19 also considers love's debilitating effects, but in a different style, and with what may be a more reassuring conclusion. The octave seems an exercise in Petrarchan paradox, yet the paradoxes of this sonnet are

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[29]Kalstone, pp. 141-2.

concerned not just with the sensibility but with the morality of the lover who may be wasting his mind. The conscious irrationality and the religious language of Sonnet 18 are echoed:

> On Cupid's bow how are my heart-strings bent,
> That see my wracke, and yet embrace the same?
> When most I glorie, then I feele most shame:
> I willing run, yet while I run, repent.
> (ll. 1-4)

The sestet questions the utility of exalted, idealized love through a proverb comic in its effect: what is the good of looking to exalted things if it makes you fall in a ditch? Astrophil then makes a heartfelt plea that his mind and abilities be sustained, and his petition receives an unexpected answer:

> O let me prop my mind, yet in his growth
> And not in Nature for best fruits unfit:
> 'Scholler,' saith Love, 'bend hitherward
> your wit.' (ll. 12-14)

As with sonnets 14 and 18, the poem moves from charges against love to the power of love. Love's invitation here may, however, be somewhat ambiguous. Will bending the wit to love bring forth the best fruits, or must the best fruits be sacrificed for the sake of love? Does Love offer redemption or further self-destruction?

If the sonnet which immediately follows may be read as an example of what Love will do to the scholar's wit, Love's effect may seem questionable. Sonnet 20 is a conventional Cupid sonnet with an account of love at first sight (or love at first shot). The poem in fact contradicts Astrophil's earlier claim that he did not fall in love with Stella

instantly or because of Cupid (A&S 2). The representation of Cupid is lively and the sonnet clever, but placed where it is between sonnets questioning the effects of love on the noble mind, one wonders whether it does not prepare for the friend's objection in Sonnet 21 that Astrophil's wits are "quick in vain thoughts, in virtue lame" (l. 4). In Sonnet 21, Astrophil reproduces his friend's rebukes without the apparent impatience of Sonnet 14 but with a seeming reasonableness. The tone turns to irony, however, as the lover mockingly admires his friend's wisdom and sends him off to dig deeper, but asserts the superiority of his own personal and particular experience of love:

> Sure you say well; your wisdome's golden mine
> Dig deepe with learning's spade; now tell me this,
> Hath this world aught so faire as Stella is?
> (ll. 12-14)

Again the more public claims of reason, of philosophy, of the world are rejected in favor of love.

Sonnets 14, 18, 19, and 21, and several others in the sequence, all turn at the end away from the claims of the world and toward praise of Stella or an affirmation of love. So one would expect from the Pe[illegible]chan lover. Yet in these sonnets and others Sidney creates a curious moral-psychological tension because, except in Sonnet 14, the objections to love are elaborated more fully and rationally than the relatively abrupt assertions of love. It may be inevitable that Astrophil will ch[illegible] love, and it may even be admirable, but Sidney does not leave the reader assured that, to return to Ficino's words once more, "it is

right" that riches and honour and, more importantly, wisdom and learning be despised for love.

The poems which raise the claims of the world and of reason on the lover recur periodically throughout Astrophil and Stella and are recalled again near the sequence's end. In Sonnet 107, Astrophil returns to the problem of the loss of self as he petitions Stella for a temporary return of his faculties that he may carry out an enterprise of some worldly importance.

> Stella since thou so right a Princesse art
> Of all the powers which life bestowes on me,
> That ere by them ought undertaken be
> They first resort unto that soueraigne part;
> Sweete, for a while give respite to my hart,
> Which pants as though it still should
> leape to thee:
> And on my thoughts give thy Lieftenancy
> To this great cause, which needs both use and art;
> And as a Queene, who from her presence sends
> Whom she imploves, dismisse from thee my wit,
> Till it have wrought what thy owne will attends.
> On servants' shame oft Maister's blame doth sit;
> O let not fooles in me thy workes reprove,
> And scorning say, 'See what it is to love.'

In this sonnet, no challenge is presented. Astrophil speaks in the language of one whose servitude is not in question: he is his lady's. Nevertheless, he recognizes that love renders him ineffectual for great causes and it subjects him to shame and scorn. So he attempts a temporary resolution of the conflicting claims of the lady and the world. Neither this sonnet nor that which follows offers assurance that any resolution can succeed. In the subsequent poem, the concluding sonnet of the sequence, Astrophil returns to Petrarchan self-absorption and the paradoxical state of

perpetual hope and perpetual despair. Such a conclusion suggests no balance of the claims of the world, and the claims of love may be achieved: love is all-absorbing. Sidney and Donne often concur in that assessment, but for Donne the all-consuming nature of love is to be celebrated; for Sidney, at least at times, it prompts moral and rational examination.

V. SOUL AND BODY: CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

In Book IV of Castiglione's Courtier, Pietro Bembo concludes his amorous discourse with a rapturous hymn to ideal Love. The high praise ends in a petition for the utter separation of the lover's soul from his body:

> Therefore vouchsafe (Lorde) to hearken to our prayers, pour thy selfe into our harts, and with the brightnesse of thy most holy fire lighten our darkenesse, and like a trustie guide in this blinde mase shew us the right way .... Purge with the shining beames of thy light our eyes from mistie ignorance, that they may no more set by mortall beautie .... Accept our soules, that bee offered unto thee for a sacrifice. Burne them in the lively flame that wasteth all grosse filthinesse, that after they be cleane sundred from the bodie, they may bee coupled with an everlasting and most sweete bond to the heavenly beautie. And wee severed from ourselves, may bee changed like right lovers into the beloved, and after we be drawn from the earth, admitted to the feast of the angels, where fed with immortal ambrosia and nectar, in the end we may dye a most happie and lively death, as in times past died the fathers of olde time, whose soules with most fervent zeale of beholding, thou didst hale from the bodie, and coupledst them with God.[30]

To such rapture, the lady Emilia responds with gentle humour: she "tooke him by the plaite of his garment, and plucking him a little said. Take heede (maister Peter) that these thoughts make not your soule also to forsake the bodie."

Sir Philip Sidney and John Donne stand in little need of a warning such as Emilia's. For, though their love poetry is informed by Petrarchan and NeoPlatonic conventions, neither Sidney nor Donne follows the NeoPlatonic lead in renouncing the claims of the body in human love.

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[30]Castiglione, pp. 614-15.

Sidney's lovers do at times struggle to renounce desire and to love virtue only, but with little success. In Sonnet 71, Astrophil celebrates Stella's beauty and virtuous influence, but then passion erupts: "'But ah,' Desire still cries: 'give me some food.'" In Sonnet 72, he strives to separate himself from desire and gives an impressive summary of the acceptable manifestations of pure love:

> Service and Honor, wonder with delight,
> Feare to offend, will worthie to appeare,
> Care shining in mine eyes, faith in my sprite,
> These things are left me by my only Deare.
> (ll. 9-12)

He turns then to dismiss desire, with its ravenous demands:

> But thou, Desire, because thou wouldst have all,
> Now banisht art but yet alas how shall?
> (ll. 13-14)

The lover may will that desire be gone, but his will in such matters is ineffectual; desire cannot be excised.

Sonnet 52 also takes up the claims of virtue and desire and also ends with a surprising twist, but the turn in this sonnet is not to a slightly dramatic eruption but to a wry deduction from the argument itself. Virtue and Love (with Astrophil on side) are litigants in a suit over who owns Stella. Love lays claim to Stella's body, Virtue to her soul. But Virtue claims ownership based on the argument that Stella's soul is her true self. Astrophil therefore takes advantage of this extreme opposition between body and soul. He admits the argument, but uses it to press his side's legal claims:

> Well, Love, since this demurre our sute doth stay,
> Let Vertue have that Stella's selfe; yet thus,

That Vertue but that body graunt to us.
(ll. 12-14)

For Sidney, the absolute dualism of NeoPlatonism is unsatisfying, and gives rise sometimes to frustration, sometimes to witty cynicism.

Donne likewise refuses the extreme opposition of body and soul in human love. Though Donne's love poetry ranges through diverse attitudes and no single poem stands as his definitive statement on love, the famous lines from "Love's Growth" offer a view of love that undergirds much of his verse:

Love's not so pure, and abstract, as they use
To say, which have no Mistresse but their Muse,
But as all else, being elemented too,
Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do.
(ll. 11-14)

Donne's lovers in "The Good-morrow," "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," and "The Canonization" celebrate this kind of "elemented" love, both spiritual and fleshly. And Donne's more worldly lovers endorse it too. The departing lover of "The Blossom" mocks the notion that the heart without the body can move a lady to love:

A naked thinking heart, that makes no show,
Is to a woman, but a kinde of Ghost.
....
Practise may make her know some other part,
But take my word, shee doth not know a Heart.
(ll. 27-28, 31-32)

He urges his recalcitrant heart to meet him in London for their mutual benefit:

I would give you
There, to another friend, whom we shall finde
As glad to have my body, as my minde.
(ll. 38-40)

Whether Donne's lovers are worldly or other-worldly, licentious or religious, they never echo Bembo's desire that the soul in love be "cleane sundred from the bodie."

Sidney and Donne agree in their insistence on the claims of the body. To both, the extreme dualism or extreme spirituality of NeoPlatonism falsifies human experience and even human nature. The two poets differ, however, in the extent to which they counter the NeoPlatonic view. Sidney shows passion to be intrusive, irremediable, and even natural, but working largely within Petrarchan and Neo-Platonic conventions, he offers no resolution of the claims of body and soul, desire and virtue. Donne not only finds NeoPlatonic dualism inadequate, he counters it with his own view of love. The ways in which Donne continues Sidney's concern with physical love and turns it from frustration to resolution can be illustrated by comparing the "Eighth Song" from Astrophil and Stella with "The Exstasie" from the Songs and Sonnets.

Sidney's song is an example of the reverdie convention, an encounter of lovers in spring. It is also the most explicit invitation to physical love in the sequence. It was, according to George Williamson, imitated by several English poets, Donne among them.[31] "The Exstasie" echoes "The Eighth Song," but also departs significantly from it.

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[31]George Williamson, "The convention of 'The Extasie'," In Seventeenth Century English Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism. Rev. ed'n., ed., William R. Keast (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 106-117.

Sidney's song takes the form of a third-person narration which describes the lovers' encounter and records their dialogue. The narrator is a sympathetic observer, so affected by the outcome of the lovers' meeting that he slips into a first person pronoun: "My song is broken," he concludes as the lovers part. Most of the song, however, is given to the lovers' dialogue. Donne also offers a dialogue, but a "dialogue of one," a first person plural account of the lovers' harmonious and wordless intercourse of minds. Yet Donne also includes a third person, not as narrator, but as hypothetical observer. The imagined onlooker who might profit from observing this encounter would be a NeoPlatonic lover, "so by love refin'd, / That he soules language understood, / And by good love were grown all minde" (ll. 21-23). Like Sidney's observer, he would be sympathetic; unlike Sidney's he would be not only moved but educated, "And part farre purer then he came" (l. 28).

A description of the natural setting is conventional to the reverdie. Sidney's song begins with the setting, and throughout the song details from nature lend force to Astrophil's plea for love. The grove in which the lovers meet is "rich of shade," providing privacy. The birds make "wanton musicke," as they sing "Now use the season." Donne likewise begins with the lovers' natural setting, and though he does not return to it after the first stanza, the figurative details of the opening lines carry even more erotic suggestion than in Sidney's poem:

Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swel'd up, to rest,
The violets reclining head,
Sat we two, one anothers best.
(ll. 1-4)

As Donne's setting suggests greater erotic intensity than Sidney's, so too does the posture of Donne's lovers. Both Sidney's lovers and Donne's gaze at one another, recalling the Petrarchan picture in the eyes. For Sidney, "their eyes by love directed, / Enterchangeably reflected" (ll. 15-16). Donne extends the figure to convey even stronger interconnections:

Our eye-beams twisted, and did thred
Our eyes, upon one double string.
(ll. 7-8)

This exchange of visual images is also, for Donne, only preliminary: "as yet ... pictures on our eyes to get / Was all our propagation." The conventional image anticipates eventual physical union. As Astrophil and Stella gaze at one another, they are initially rendered motionless and silent in their intimacy:

With armes crost, yet testifying
Restlesse rest, and living dying.

Their eares hungry of each word,
Which the deere tongue would afford,
But their tongues restrained from walking,
Till their harts had ended talking.
(ll. 19-24)

Such restraint, however, is only temporary, for Love causes Astrophil to break his silence and his stillness. His lips "speake in love and wonder" (l. 28) and "his hands in their speech, faine / Would have made tongue's language plaine"

(ll. 65-66). Donne's lovers also strike a motionless and silent pose, but they remain still throughout, as only their souls converse:

> And whil'st our soules negotiate there,
> Wee like sepulchrall statues lay;
> All day, the same our postures were,
> And wee said nothing, all the day.
> (ll. 17-20)

Donne's poem resembles Sidney's in situation, in setting, and in erotic suggestiveness. The two poems also have a similar purpose: negotiation. Yet in the nature and outcome of their negotiations, Donne's divergence from Sidney is clear. In Sidney's poem, Astrophil negotiates with Stella, pleading for her love with urgency and occasional comic awkwardness:

> "Graunt, O deere, on knees I pray,"
> (Knees on ground he then did stay)
> (ll. 49-50)

Astrophil seeks no merely spiritual love; he urges that Stella follow the examples of nature and descend to an earthly consummation:

> Love makes earth the water drink,
> Love to earth makes water sinke;
> And if dumbe things be so witty,
> Shall a heavenly grace want pitty?
> (ll. 61-64)

Stella's response both expresses love and refuses it. Honour prevents her from yielding, for the song, and indeed the whole Astrophil and Stella sequence, assume a Petrarchan love triangle, with a woman already married and hence resisting the shame of adultery. Significantly, in neither Astrophil's petition nor Stella's response is there any hint

of idealizing NeoPlatonic concepts. The lover makes a clear, though somewhat awkward and euphemistic plea for physical love; the lady's refusal is based on her circumstance, not on any conception that such love is base in itself or that the lady's "self" is to be identified only as her soul.

> Tyrant honour thus doth use thee;
> Stella's selfe might not refuse thee.
> (ll. 95-96)

No concept of idealized love provides Astrophil with consolation; he is left "passion-rent."

Donne's "Exstasie" is also a negotiation, but, unlike Sidney's, not one aimed at bringing together two lovers, for they are already one, "both meant, both spake the same" (l. 26). Rather, the poem is concerned with the reconciliation or reunion of the lovers' souls with their bodies. While Sidney forgoes NeoPlatonism in his reverdie, Donne's lover continuously speaks in NeoPlatonic terms and figures as he describes the perfect union of the lovers' souls. In ecstasy, their souls have been rapt from their bodies. Through love's "interinanimation" they have actually become one "abler soule," and they see that it was not sex which moved them to love. To the supposed NeoPlatonic observer, who has "grown all minde," such talk would be pleasing and acceptable. Yet the "abler soule" has promised that the onlooker will not simply approve but "part farre purer." The speaker goes on, therefore, to reconcile the extreme Neo-Platonic dualism implied by ecstasy and to argue for the purity and necessity of spiritual love being expressed

through bodies. Donne's "abler soule" argues partly by an analogy likening the nature of love and the nature of man.

> As our blood labours to beget
> Spirits, as like soules as it can,
> Because such fingers need to knit
> That subtile knot, which makes us man:
>
> So must pure lovers soules descend
> T'affections, and to faculties,
> That sense may reach and apprehend,
> Else a great Prince in prison lies.
> (ll. 61-68)

David Novarr, arguing that the NeoPlatonic observer is the primary audience for the poem, comments on Donne's decidedly unPlatonic emphasis on the body:

> Unlike the conventional Neo-Platonic advocate who is anxious to divorce body and soul, to leave the body behind so that he may focus on the soul, the "abler soul," in its infinite wisdom about love, makes it clear that it is concerned not merely with the soul, but with man, and the word appears three times in the last five stanzas.[32]

In a conception of man as both body and soul rather than simply a soul in a body, Sidney would agree with Donne. Yet NeoPlatonism and Petrarchism offer no virtuous satisfaction of the passions. Working for the most part within these conventions, Sidney accepts, in Douglas Peterson's words, "the irrascibility of the passions as a reality of man's condition."[33] Moving beyond the conventions, Donne, in contrast, offers a more integrated love. While Sidney's lovers are often left "passion-rent," Donne's may "to bodies turn."

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[32]David Novarr, "'The Extasie': Donne's Address on the States of Union," in The Disinterred Muse: Donne's Texts and Contexts (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 34.
[33]Peterson, p. 196.

VI. CONCLUSION

The style or tradition labelled Petrarchism is an identifiable complex of ideas, attitudes, situations, and figures of speech about love. Petrarchism takes up a certain range of human feeling and experience, but that range is limited. J.V. Cunningham's definition of "a style" explains this necessary restriction:

> Now, the inclusion and exclusion of certain classes of ideas and expressions constitutes a style. And in any literary situation certain attitudes and experiences, "certain known habits of association," are available to a particular style, and the exploration of other attitudes and experiences requires a new and different style, for a style is itself a principle of selection and order.[34]

Generally, Sir Philip Sidney accepts those particular inclusions and exclusions that constitute Petrarchism. In sweet verses, his lovers court ladies who are beautiful, virtuous, and inaccessible. His speakers praise, plead, complain, and meditate, but, for the most part, they do not explore new experiences of love. Yet Sidney also introduces certain unconventional elements to his largely conventional treatments. He includes at times a plain, moral evaluation of love's debilitating effects. Though such notes of rational judgment are succeeded in the poems by Petrarchan re-affirmations, their effect nevertheless is to disconcert the convention. Moreover, in Sidney's distinctive version of Petrarchism, desire is even more unsettling than reason. For though Sidney's lovers rarely enter into unconventional

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[34] J.V. Cunningham, "Lyric Style in the 1590s," In The Collected Essays (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1976), p. 311.

experiences of love, they do at times adopt one or another unconventional posture: that of the witty and purposive seducer, the man unwilling and unable to relinquish or eradicate desire from his experience of love. The many poems in Astrophil and Stella in which passion intrudes or erupts, together with poems like the 'Eighth Song' which make direct appeals for physical love, communicate dissatisfaction with any idealization or sensualization that distorts the reality of experience. Yet Sidney offers no alternative. Though he in some measure introduces unconventional and even subversive language and ideas, his purpose seems to be to discover tensions and conflicts within conventional love, not to refuse Petrarchism's amorous pattern and language. He shows the Petrarchan lover in "psychological disarray,"[35] but the lover is still Petrarchan.

John Donne brings to Petrarchism his own principle of selection and order. At times he is clearly a rebel against the traditions Sidney represents. His parodic elegies, for instance, manipulate conventional structures and diction and exclude or invert their expected associations. Donne generally ignores or refuses the Petrarchan pattern of virtuous but frustrated love, the helpless or languid postures of the conventional lover, and the sharp

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[35]The phrase is R.L. Montgomery's from "Astrophil's Stella and Stella's Astrophil." In Sir Philip Sidney and the Interpretation of Renaissance Culture, eds., Gary F. Waller and Michael D. Moore (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), p. 49.

dichotomies of NeoPlatonism. Yet, selectively, Donne also employs conventional language and ideas, investing certain elements of Petrarchism with new meaning, new expressiveness, and even new vitality. He is, then, not only a rebel, but something of an innovator, or perhaps renovater, of convention. Donne also continues and extends certain aspects of Sidney's treatment of convention. Donne too is engaged in the discovery of conflict, and he too brings a literal sensuousness to love poetry. Donne continues the Sidneyan dissatisfaction with forms of love that forget or deny that man has (and is) a body as well as a soul. Yet in developing and countering NeoPlatonic concepts, Donne goes beyond Sidney. He does more than just disrupt "Known habits of association." Donne draws not only upon Petrarchism but upon other styles and sources, and he enters into explorations of unconventional experiences of love, some cynical, some exalted, but nearly all reflecting Sidney's concern that the body be given place in human love.

Determining the relative conventionality of Sidney and Donne in their love poetry may explain, at least in part, their differing treatments of Petrarchism when they turn to divine subjects. In his amorous verses (nearly the whole of his poetry) Sidney writes primarily from within the Petrarchan set of exclusions and inclusions. Then, in two sonnets of renunciation, Sidney repudiates both the pursuits and the language of the Petrarchan lover. In plain, moral, emphatic speech, he rejects earthly love and fleshly desire.

The first of these poems, 31 from Certain Sonnets, recalls those sonnets in Astrophil and Stella which question love's deleterious effects or represent desire's disruptiveness. The lover now rejects desire, characterizing it in a forceful series of scornful epithets:

> Thou blind man's marke, thou foole's selfe chosen snare,
> Fond fancie's scum, and dregs of scattred thought,
> Band of all evils, cradle of causeless care,
> Thou web of will, whose end is never wrought.
> (ll. 1-4)

The ineffectual lover who lamented "Alas, how shall" desire be banished is here replaced by one who is resolute and ruthless: "Desiring nought but how to kill desire" (l. 14). In the second sonnet of renunciation, Certain Sonnet 32, the speaker not only rejects earthly love, but embraces heavenly. Though the poem's diction may at times recall Neo-Platonism, it more clearly echoes the Bible and Christian proverb. The speaker here chooses religion, not amorous philosophy:

> Leave me O Love, which reachest but to dust,
> And thou my mind aspire to higher things:
> Grow rich in that which never taketh rust:
> What ever fades, but fading pleasure brings.
>
> Draw in thy beames, and humble all thy might,
> To that sweet yoke, where lasting freedomes be:
> Which breakes the clowdes and opens forth the light,
> That doth both shine and give us sight to see.
>
> O take fast hold, let that light be thy guide,
> In this small course which birth drawes out to death,
> And thinke how evill becommeth him to slide,
> Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heav'nly breath.
> Then farewell world, thy uttermost I see,
> Eternall Love maintaine thy life in me.

Sidney's stance in these sonnets is extreme. For him, the

conflicts, tensions, and moral dangers of Petrarchism lead not to resolution, but to renunciation.

Donne, unlike Sidney, takes Petrarchism not as a complete system of love, but as a rich source of discrete figures and concepts as valuable for treating divine subjects as amorous ones. In Donne's Holy Sonnets, extravagant sighs and tears may express "holy discontent"; the picture in the lover's heart may be that of Christ; struggles with inconstancy afflict the believer as they do the lover. In one of the Holy Sonnets Donne does show the love of God supplanting the love of a woman. The transition from human to divine love is not, however, a process of renunciation, but of elevation.

> Since she whome I lovd, hath payd her last debt
> To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
> And her soule early into heaven ravished,
> Wholy in heavenly things my mind is sett.
> Here the admyring her my mind did whett
> To seeke thee God; so streames do shew the head,
> But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst
> hast fed,
> A holy thirsty dropsy melts mee yett.
> But why should I begg more love, when as thou
> Dost wooe my soule, for hers offring all thine:
> And dost not only feare least I allow
> My love to saints and Angels, things divine,
> But in thy tender jealosy dost doubt
> Least the World, fleshe, yea Devil putt thee out.[36]

Human love does not here reach but to dust; it reaches to heaven, and leads the lover to reckon with the magnanimity, the exclusive claims, and the "tender jealousy" of God's love. Donne's poem is in fact closer to Petrarch himself than are Sidney's sonnets, for the love of Laura and the

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[36]John Donne, The Divine Poems, ed., Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). pp. 14-15.

death of Laura both intensify Petrarch's desire for heaven and for God. In both Donne and Petrarch, the transition assumes that human love is worthy and elevating, though inevitably lesser than divine love. Of course, Donne's pattern of human love is not Petrarch's; in this sonnet he almost certainly implies marriage, the Christian union of bodies and souls. Yet in moving beyond the Petrarchan pattern, Donne finds new value for the Petrarchan idealization of love, and for Petrarchan connections between the human and the divine. Sidney, lively practitioner of a vital but limited mode of love, exposes Petrarchism's limitations, and escapes them only through renunciation. Donne selects from Petrarchism, circumvents or mocks its restraints, and joins its "known habits of association" to new subjects, unconventional varieties of the experience of love, both human and divine.

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