JOHN DONNE
AND
THE LEGACY OF PETRARCH

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INTRODUCTION

It has been held that John Donne's greatness is a discovery of the twentieth century after two hundred years of neglect. Indeed, it was this century more than any other which proved true the prophecy of Walton's last sentence in his biography of Donne: "But I shall see it reanimated." Although he was speaking of Donne's dust, the statement has been prophetic of his rehabilitated reputation and influence as well.

The reanimation began in 1912 when H. J. C. Grierson edited the poetry of Donne. The two volume edition was so well received that it has stood as the definitive edition of Donne's poetry -- most subsequent editions are substantially Grierson's.¹ Not of the least importance in Grierson's edition is his Introduction on the poetry of Donne which did much to stir modern interest in the poet.

In 1921, Grierson's anthology Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century prompted an article reviewing it by T. S. Eliot in The Times Literary Supplement. This

¹Helen Gardner's edition of The Elegies, and The Songs and Sonnets (1965) is a radical departure and is too new to evaluate with strict objectivity. Unless otherwise noted, Grierson's text will be used in this paper.
article and Eliot's critique on Marvell printed in the same year (and reprinted in Selected Essays, 1917-1932) have been what Edward Le Comte calls "incalculably seminal." With them John Donne's reputation flourished, and it is the direction and emphasis of this rebuilding that this thesis challenges and wishes to modify.

The plans for the rebuilding were Eliot's. His reading of Donne and other metaphysicals was conditioned by his sense of what a poem and a poet must consist. For him the emphasis was on experience; he praised Donne and the other metaphysicals for exploring experiences of a fantastic variety. Donne's world of The First Anniversary (1611) seemed to be the same as his own: complex and unintelligible. In his reading, Donne was allowed to make some order of his world and in so doing helps to supply an example for modern poets to make sense of theirs. Eliot's phrases became formulary: "a thought to Donne was an experience", "a sensibility which could devour any experience", "a verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling", "the association of thought", the "dissociation of sensibility" -- these became the jargon of Donne criticism.

Eliot's Donne was, however, answering a need of the time. There was an optimistic feeling that a new style was

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2 "Grace to a Witty Sinner", 235.

emerging in revolt against the Romantic revival. There was a desire for anti-traditional poetry, breaking the old conventions and breaking with the old gods -- but retaining a nostalgia for the lost order. Rather than emotional and sentimental, the kind of poetry desired was highly (even self-consciously) intellectual, introspective and psychologically real. Moreover, it was to be difficult, complex, disciplined, elliptical and unprecedented poetry. To these critics and poets Donne as read by Eliot was attractive; he seemed to be a kind of Prufrock, a modern man, wrestling with their problems.

This tendency continued. Helen C. White sees in 1936 that "At the present moment there seems to be" a very considerable tendency among critical moderns to find in the seventeenth century the beginning of the world against which, at least as far as certain aspects of life are concerned, they are coming more and more to rebel."' Donne seemed, and still seems to some, to sum up the crisis of modernity in the famous passage on the ruined world in The First Anniversary, and his themes and manner seemed to crystallize their desire to rebel. The modern opinion of him, his influence, and impact may be summarized in the following:

Donne had an immense impact on the temper and trend of the poetry of his day. But he was lost sight of completely in the riotous and rollicking Restoration days, and remembered only by a few scholars in the nineteenth century. And then when the assurances of empire, outside and inside man, fell

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upon evil days, this cynic-singer, this doubter, this analytic lyricist, this lover of the intellectual approach to passion, this Elizabethan and Jacobean breaker of Elizabethan and Petrarchan peace of mind, this man of fever-like figurativeness, came alive and came into his own. As he had founded — against his wishes, once he was within the church — a school of the metaphysical in his own time, so now he was responsible for the Fugitives . . . whose minds hurt them and made them say bitter and beautiful things . . . T. S. Eliot, Elinor Wylie, Archibald MacLeish, Auden, Spender, MacNeice, Dylan Thomas, Robert Penn Warren, and a host of other modern poets. 5

Despite the fact that Eliot changed, losing somewhat his enthusiasm for Donne by 1931, it made little difference to others: the rebellion, the modernity, the dissociation and association of sensibility and all the rest are generally held as proven truths even today.

While most critics have looked at Donne in the light of tradition, they have generally put him in a position against it. His interest in science as witnessed by his scientific images, reveals to some an antipathy for other disciplines. That this might be attributing a present antipathy to the past is not thought of, however. Rosemund Tuve points out that by seeing such antipathies, we attribute "to 'scientific' images such as had characterized European poetry all through the Middle Ages a dissonant intention which they do not convey to contemporaries." 6 Many critics put him outside the literary tradition he inherited. They say in essence: there are the Petrarchans, languishing, devotion-

5 From Coffin and Witherspoon's Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry (1946) quoted in LeComte, 240.

6 Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, 419.
al, trite, affected; here is Donne, frank, sensual, colloquial, sincere. For example, speaking of style in love verse, one writer says: "in Donne . . . for instance, we have the play of intelligence all right, but proceeding undisguisedly from one source, one vision, one personality."\(^7\) Themselves suspicious of conformity and tradition, they look for the same suspicions in all writers -- and they find it. Because dissonance and individuality are more interesting and dramatic, the searching it out even in the most minor figures has become the reason for, and driving force behind, much criticism. The reason of course is that all good poets, it is now felt, are anti-traditional.

There have recently, however, emerged extremely educative works of criticism which have tried to balance the tendency to view Donne as an iconoclast. Miss Tuve has revealed that the metaphysical revolt against Petrarchism is not new nor a rebellion.\(^8\) Mario Praz, in "Donne's Relation to the Poetry of His Time"\(^9\) has provided a corrective to the conception that Donne was a rebel against Elizabethan Petrarchism by displaying him against an European background, both medieval and renaissance. A similar line is taken by J. B. Leishman's *The Monarch of Wit* (1951) which sets him in his

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\(^7\)Bayley, *The Character of Love*, 60.

\(^8\)Tuve, 226-230.

\(^9\)In *The Flaming Heart*, 186-203.
Elizabethan milieu. Edward LeComte's recent biography Grace to a Witty Sinner, sees Donne as far less than the St. Augustine that Walton pictured him. Most recently Donald Guss has shown Donne's debt to Petrarchism in his "Songs and Sonets".

Against this background of the modern study of Donne, I feel that he must be seen in relation to, and as a part of, the great poetic development of the era to which he belonged -- the Renaissance. The legacy which he inherited in common with other Elizabethans -- he would have been in his early manhood during the 1590's -- was bequeathed by Petrarch to all poets who followed him. This is not a narrow Petrarchism of a clutch of clichés and stereotypes for languishing and adoration, but a rich and varied legacy which embraced a range of Petrarchism from an elegant sentimentalism to an extravagant, literal-minded courtliness used for a variety of poses and social purposes. It is also a more highly pervasive Petrarchism than suggested by most critics: it is not the language of an insular court only, nor is it antithetical to the so-called "real" Elizabethans as characterized by Greene and Nashe. It has, however, a longer history and a more pervasive one in English letters and life than generally acknowledged. Donne, as we shall see, being a man committed to his society, it would have been surprising had he revolted against the legacy.

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10 John Donne: Petrarchist (1966), which is a compilation of several articles printed elsewhere in PMLA, HLQ, JEGP.
John Donne is a Petrarchan writer. Because Petrarchan poets copied, imitated, translated and commented on each other, and, because there were so many of them, specific sources are well-nigh impossible to trace. However, tendencies, common images, themes, motifs, and adaptations reveal the use of the legacy as well. While too often, when Petrarchans are read at all, the fountainhead of the legacy, Petrarch, is not read or discussed, this will not be so here. In fact, in some ways Donne will be seen as more like Petrarch than many Petrarchans.

Because most critics deal with the "Songs and Sonets" when they either admit to Donne's use of some Petrarchan stances, and, because Donald Guss deals solely with them, I will shift my focus somewhat. After having looked generally at the "Songs and Sonets" as revealing Donne's Petrarchan interests, tendencies and uses, I will look more closely at some "Elegies", the "Verse Letters", some prose letters, "The Anniversaries", and his "Divine Poems" as indicative of his Petrarchism. For reasons which will become evident, I will not be trying to unravel the tangle of his psyche, or denying the possibility that his inner life may be bodied forth in conventional terms: these are concerns of the biographer. However, by citing his poetry as evidence, I will place him not in revolt against, but as a member of the family of poets who benefited from the legacy of Petrarch and who worked within a society accustomed to and conditioned by it.
PETRARCH AND HIS LEGACY

One of the most remarkable things in the history of literature is that the influence of an individual should endure through centuries, and yet change entirely in its nature. Francesco Petrarch to his contemporaries had been first and foremost a humanist. More than anyone else, he had brought about disfavour for all the old scholastic learning, and ushered in a new age which revived the knowledge of the ancient world. Later generations, however, were to praise him, not for his Latin poems with which he laid claim to immortality, but for his Italian poems, Trionfi -- a series of visions in terza rima -- and especially for his Canzoniere (Songbook) or Rime (Rhymes). It is for this latter work that immortality has been granted him.

The Rime is a volume of 365 lyrics including canzoni, ballati, madrigals and sestine, and (chiefly) sonnets. The sonnets are not, were not even in his day, especially original. The form had been invented a century earlier by Lentino in Sicily. At that time the Tuscan poet Guittone d'Arezzo and his school "fitted to the sonnet all the far-fetched inventions of the Provençal poets, many of which coincide with the concetti of the Roman erotic poets". Petrarch cites, in Trionfi,
those poets to whom he owed a debt: Alcaeus, Pindar, Anacreon, Virgil, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus, Dante, Cino, Guittone d'Arezzo, Cavalcanti, Guinizelli, Sennuccio, and Franceschino. He gives, however, climactic position to the Provencal poets: Daniel, Peire d'Auvergne, Raimbaut, Giraut, Folquet, Jaufre Rudel, Aimeric, Bernart de Ventadorn, Uc, and Gaucelm.²

It is in the verse of the troubadours of Provence that the legacy of Petrarch has its beginnings. The sense of love as a service to the loved one, and as a world well lost, were new expressions of that emotion and state which, but with a very few exceptions, in Greek and Roman amorous verse was regarded as a sickness as soon as it over-stepped the bounds of sensual pleasure which was regarded as its natural expression. The courtly love of the troubadours was expressed in chansons d'amour, which were in a general way songs of longing and complaint to a woman, who was usually married, above the poet socially and politically, and who though she might return the passion, rarely satisfied it. It was in essence an idealization of adultery because any idealization of sexual love must be so "in a society where marriage is purely utilitarian",³ and because sensual pleasure was not to

²See Triumphs, 28-29.
³Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 13
be felt between husband and wife.

Elevating women was part of the newness of amor cortois. Whereas women had been, and in clerical circles still were, thought of as diabolical half-wits, unclean and irrational, they were now in effect worshipped by the lover. They became both the rival of and parallel to the Virgin whose official worship may be dated from 1140 when the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was instituted. However, even in the codifiers of courtly love the old attitude remained: Andreas Capellanus' retraction at the end of De Arte honeste Amandi (c. 1185) is a castigation of women in part, and Matfré Ermengaud's Breviari d'Amor reveals an absorbing interest in love matched only by his detestation of women.

The elevation of women was due to more than the worship of Mary. The women worshipped were important. Eleanor of Aquitaine, granddaughter of the first recorded troubadour, Guillaume, Count of Poitiers and Duke of Aquitaine, was the patroness of the most famous troubadour, Bernart de Ventadorn. Of peasant stock, this poet is said to have become the lover of his patroness. Her daughter, Marie de Champagne, held literary court at her husband's castle at Troyes in the 1160's and in 1181 where Andreas wrote his treatise.

Despite the fame of the ladies and the patronesses, the women of the chansons were generally anonymous, partly because of the public rendering of the song, and partly because of the losengière, or talebearer, within the poem
and, one would suppose, in the audience. Bernart de Ventadorn reveals the dangers and fears felt by the poet and his beloved in "Gent Esterà Que Chantes":

Mas fals lauzenger engres
m'an lunhat de so país,
que tals s'en fai esdevis
qu'eu cuiderà qu'ns celes
sí.ns saubcs òms d'un cortage.

[The false, violent slanders have banished me from her country. Then such a one becomes a spy whom I should think would hide it from us, if he knew us both of one mind.]

Ecarré me don espaven,
va queren cubert viage
per on vengues a lairo
denan leis ses mal resso.

[And because I am fearful, I am trying to find a secret way to come furtively to her without harming her reputation.]

This fear and secrecy was conventional and was designed to indulge the penchant for drama and to titillate the desire for speculative sex gossip in the audience. As part of this convention of secrecy the woman's features became stereotyped: she became blond-haired, slender, round-armed, straight-nosed, grey-eyed, white-skinned, with a small red mouth, sparkling teeth, small firm breasts and a slim waist.

While the beloved lady was idealized and stereotyped, the notion that the love the poets sang of was a frustrated idyll is false. When Bernart sang of his pure and fine lady, he also wanted to be in her arms. The chanson d'histoire or

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4The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn, 94. Trans. by the editor.
de toilette dramatised the lady's longing for a man, the alba
and the chanson de malmariée were essentially adulterous; the
pastorelle recorded fornication. While Andreas eliminates
love gained by money, praise and fleshly desire from the code,
he allows that uncourtly peasant girls may require forcing. Apparent
ly neither prostitution nor casual wenching broke
the bond between mistress and lover.

The troubadours employed several styles of writing:
l'aura amara, which reiterated stereotypes; trobar clar,
which was light and clear; trobar ric, which was moody, and
trobar clus. This last was mainly enigmatic and teasing. Of
it Peire d'Auvergne wrote: "I like to sing in words that are
tight and closed, so that people will hesitate to mock at
them." The influence of this style was felt by Italian poets
and is traceable in Gascoigne, Shakespeare, and in Donne
(whose published poems are addressed by the printer "To the
Understanders").

The educative effect of amor cortois is one of its
most important characteristics. Whereas the power of passion
had always been acknowledged by the church fathers, courtly
love became in essence a secular state of grace. Andreas
says, "O what a wonderful thing is love, which makes a man

5Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, 443-444, discusses
this and other aspects of the sexuality of courtly love.

6Quoted in Valency, In Praise of Love, 127.
shine with so many virtues, and teaches everyone, no matter who he is, so many good traits of character!" While "mixed love" has as its end coitus, pure love "is distinguished by being of such virtue that from it arises all excellence of character; and no injury comes from it, and God sees very little offence in it."

The troubadour love songs passed through Sicily, where Lentino incorporated their conventions into the sonnet, and on to Italy to flower in Guittone d'Arezzo. A reaction against the exaggerations of the conventions was the dolce stil nuovo of Guinizelli, Cavalcanti and Dante. With them love became intellectualized and was explored philosophically. In Dante himself, the lady and her perfections are wholly dissolved and transfigured into the symbol of transcendent beauty and ideal love.

Petrarch inherited both these strains of love poetry. His love for Laura, the girl of the Rime whom he apparently met in Provence in 1327, is a courtly sensual love first and foremost. Because she was married shortly after they met, it was an adulterous love; his subsequent complaints against her cruel chastity echo the amor cortoïs pattern. Not only did he inherit the general idea, "but many developments of thought and language. Such are his conceits on battles, imprisonments, chains, on the escape of the heart from his

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7 Robertson, 400. Subsequent quotations in this paragraph are from the same source, 438, 437.
breast, on the potency of his lady's eyes, on purification by
fire, on the melting ice of emotion, on passion which files,
gnaws, makes sick, and cures. "8 He also inherited the compli-
cated imagery of Roman de la Rose. Whereas Dante's Beatrice
had a fairly constant allegorical meaning, Laura is herself.
While conventionally beautiful, perhaps even the incarnation
of earthly beauty, and the inspiration of virtue, she has her
faults. Despite the fact that his love, or at least the
work on the sonnets, lasted his adult life, he could not shake
off the nagging doubts of his consciousness whose foundation,
in large part, was built on the church fathers. In his
Secretum he inconclusively argues with St. Augustine about the
issue of the effect of passionate love on his soul. This
concern is reflected in Rime in his palinode, "Sonetto 1",
which was probably written late in life and inserted there.
This palinode is repeated in prose in his "Letter to Posterity":

Although I may have been carried away by the fire of youth
or by my ardent temperament, I have always abhorred such sins
from the depths of my soul. As I approached the age of forty,
while my powers were unimpaired and my passions were still
strong, I not only abruptly threw off my bad habits, but even
the very recollection of them, as if I had never looked upon
a woman. This I mention as among the greatest of my blessings,
and I render thanks to God, who freed me, while still sound
and vigorous, from a disgusting slavery which has always been
hateful to me. 9

He constantly brings the possibility of equivocation into

8Bishop, Petrarch and His World, 81.

9Selected Sonnets, Odes and Letters, 2-3. All subse-
quent references to Petrarch's works in translation are to
this source, unless otherwise noted.
view, as in XL, LVI, LXII, \textit{in vita}, in which, respectively, he prays for death to free him from his trap, in which he rails against love's trickery, and in which he realizes the vanity of earthly love and begs to be led to a good life after this long waste.

What Petrarch does with his inherited traditions is to appropriate them so completely and skilfully that they become, for succeeding centuries, his own. Moreover, he gives them unequalled refinement of expression in as infinite a number of features, reflections and occurrences as a poet can bring to the study of love. He is too often associated with his inferior imitators who simply plucked from the Rime the plums of rhetoric and nothing of the psychology, introspection and grace. However, after Petrarch's triumph with the sonnet and \textit{canzone}, imitators had little to add.

The legacy of Petrarch is revealed in the use of his words, phrases, lines, metaphors, conceits, ideas, and the adaptation for poetic purposes of his experiences and attitudes. The attitudes are central to the legacy; they include amorous devotion, dependence, adoration, dolor, and despair. Another important element is the collection of conceits: fires of passion, tempests of sighs, dying and resurrected lovers, and pictures of ladies engraved on hearts. These conceits might be taken in varying degrees of literalness: Chariteo, for example, takes them literally, so that fires burn houses and sighs move ships. There are also stock
Petrarchan situations, such as, the initiating of love, the parting of lovers, the despairing poet complaining of the lady's hardness.¹⁰

With this legacy to feed it, Petrarchism flourished uninterrupted in Italy between the early fifteenth century and the late sixteenth century. Some, like the quattrocentisti (Chariteo, Tebaldeo, Serafino, and their imitators) took the images used by Petrarch with such grace and materialized them. These poets, who might be called the witty or extravagant pole of Petrarchism, gave the images an existential reality unintended by Petrarch: the lady's chastity caused rivers to freeze; birds were fried in the air from the heat of the poet's passion; "Tebaldeo has so many arrows in his breast from his lady's eyes that the blind god carries him in mistake for his quiver."¹¹

At the opposite pole are the philosophical humanistic Petrarchans of the prose commentaries and the love treatises. These Petrarchans followed in the tradition of Dante who explained his sonnets in Convivio and Vita Nuova, and of Colonna's commentary on Cavalcanti's Donna mi prega, and of Pico della Mirandola's commentary on Benivieni. In most new editions of the Rime -- there were 130 in the sixteenth century alone -- the text appeared as a small island in a

¹⁰ The preceding paragraph is indebted, in part, to Guss, 23-24.

¹¹ Smith, John Donne: The Songs and Sonets, 14.
sea of annotation. This treatment "elevated Petrarch's learning and rhetoric, treating his poems as the humanists treated those of Horace, Plautus and other Romans."\(^{12}\) The tratti or love treatises, like Marsilio Ficino's translation of Plato's Symposium and his commentaries on the philosopher, also perpetuated Petrarch's legacy. In these tratti "love is a concept of multiple derivation: Christian charity, Plato's love, the friendship of Aristotle and of Cicero, and the love of the stilnovò and of Petrarch are all importantly represented."\(^{13}\) As a matter of fact "the most frequently quoted is not Plato, but Petrarch! Frequently lectures on love were delivered in the academies, where interest in Petrarch, especially in the 16th century, often ran high."\(^{14}\) So pervasive was his influence, and so respected his ideas on love that "fine ladies carried about the Canzoniere in miniature volumes -- Petrarchini -- attached to their girdles by gold chains, -- as their grandmothers had carried their missals."\(^{15}\)

An important element of the tratti were the fashionable dubbi, or doubts about love. A few perhaps entered Italian literature from the treatise of Andreas Capellanus.

\(^{12}\)Guss, 29.

\(^{13}\)Nelson, Renaissance Theory of Love, 73.

\(^{14}\)Nelson, Renaissance Theory of Love, 73.

\(^{15}\)Fletcher, Literature of the Italian Renaissance, 222.
Those cited by Equicola of Calandra are typical: "Which lady is more pleasing, the simple beauty or the clever ugly one... whether a lover can die from too much love... whether one can fall in love with a lady from her renown... which is more difficult, to acquire love of a lady or to keep it?" These dubbi might be seen rendered dramatically in such works as Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (1528), and subsequently in Hoby's translation of it, *The Courtier* (1561). In it Bembo, Morello and Count Lewis take opposing sides on questions of love and argue them. Under the leadership of Cardinal Pietro Bembo the humanistic Petrarchists made Petrarch a classic "to be studied as a model of rhetoric, a compendium of philosophical maxims and an exemplar of the Italian lyric." Part of their energies were channeled into the publishing of Petrarch's works. *Le Cose Volgari di Messer Francesco Petrarcha*, a nearly complete edition of his vernacular work, came out in 1501. *Opera Omnia* were published in Basel in 1554 and 1581. Less nearly complete are the editions of Basel, 1496 and 1541, and Venice of 1503.

By the mid-sixteenth century the elaborate conceit, frowned on in favour of the clear lucid language of the Bemboists, reasserted itself in the Neapolitan poets. Angelo

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17 Guss, 29.
18 Further and more detailed information on editions of Petrarch may be found in Bishop, 376-377, and in Wilkins, "A General Survey of Renaissance Petrarchism", *CL*, II (1950), 327-339.
di Costanzo, Berardino Rota and Luigi Tansillo continued its use and importance in Petrarchism until Marino emerged. By the end of the century many further developments in the Petrarchan tradition evolved in Italy. The most important is what Donald Guss calls the "new Ovidianism". It manifested itself in the "use of Petrarchan language to express sensual desire for women often cynically portrayed and in a taste for myth, metamorphosis and sensual tales."\(^\text{19}\) Guarino and Tasso are the greatest representatives of these developments.

These developments in the Petrarchan tradition were reflected in France. There the imitation of Petrarch began under the influence of Serafino with Maurice Scève. The last lines of "Délie C" ("Vers toi suis vif, et vers moi je suis mort") reflects the Ficinian Platonism -- which was carried along in the Petrarchan legacy -- of the lover being dead because he lives in his beloved. With Ronsard and du Bellay the influence of Bembo penetrates to France. Ronsard can, of course, doff the Petrarchan mantle when he wishes to, as does du Bellay in Contre les Petrarquistes -- but this was to become a Petrarchan pose. Moreover at least twenty-five sonnets of Ronsard's Amours contain passages taken from Petrarch. Du Bellay's L'Olive derives directly from Italian writers and stock Petrarchan themes -- the lover's hesitations, the lady's coldness, her beauty, and his submission

\(^{19}\text{Guss, 32.}\)
which is her triumph. With Philippe Desportes another flamboyant wave of Petrarchism swept over France. Even an aging Ronsard, finding Desportes' sonnets enjoying a greater vogue than his own, wrote *Sonnets pour Helene* in a style unfamiliar to him but matching the new taste for the witty.

These, in brief, are the successive developments of Petrarchan literature on the continent. A rich and varied legacy which had gained both popular favour and intellectual sanction, it swept over Italy and France in successive waves of close imitation of Petrarch and his followers, and of extravagant extensions and wit. Consequently it was but a matter of time before its popularity would be felt in England.
THE PETRARCHAN LEGACY IN ENGLAND

While, as Praz points out, "sonneteering literature, started by Wyatt and Surrey under the influence of Serafino, was continued only at the end of the century by poets who were primarily under the influence of the French school", the influence of Petrarch on English poetry goes back much further. While many writers have insisted that Wyatt and Surrey initiated the Petrarchan vogue in England, they were nevertheless preceded in the use of Petrarchan conceits by Geoffrey Chaucer. Thomas Wilson, speaking of the Tudor court, says, "The fine courtier wil talke nothing but Chaucer"; this raises the possibility that an immediate source of Italianate influence on the Tudor Petrarchists and a contributing source for the distinctive strain of English Petrarchism was Chaucer.

He uses Petrarchism for a telling touch, as in his description of the Prioress in The Canterbury Tales. Petrarchan clichés ironically underscore the facts of her description:

Hir nose tretys, her eyen greye as glas,
Hir mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;

1 "Petrarch in England", The Flaming Heart, 271.
2 The Arte of Rhetoricke, 162.
But sikerly she hadde a fair forheed.

("The General Prologue", 152-154)³

By temperament she is a Petrarchan lover of God, with her broach's tantalizing motto "Amor vincit omnia" doing double duty.

It is, however, in Troilus and Criseyde that Petrarch's influence is most noticeable. Troilus' song, "If no love is, O God, what feel I so?" (I, 400-420), is a translation of Petrarch's sonnet "S'amor non è, che dunque e quel ch'io sento?" ("Sonetto LXXXVIII")⁴. However, the influence is greater than that. All the situations that a Petrarchan lover might face are here: the initial freedom, the lightning-quick falling in love, the love undeclared at first, the suit to the lady, her rejection and acceptance, the joys and complaints of the lover, the observance of secrecy, the separation of the lovers, the unfaithfulness of the lady, and the lover's palinode. Generally, the Petrarchan tradition demanded a constant affection despite the lady's betrayal, unresponsiveness, cruelty and bad faith; however, the state of the betrayed or the unrewarded lover, who sees the error

³The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson. All Chaucer references are to the same source.

⁴All references to Petrarch's poetry will be to Rime, con l'interpretazione di Giacomo Leopardi (Firenze, 1886) whose numbering is often different from the accepted numbering as in the translations in Selected Sonnets, Odes and Letters, ed. T. G. Bergin. Both the Italian original and the translation will be numbered therefore. The originals will have sonetto or canzone number; the translations will have the generally accepted Rime number.
of his ways and renounces the service of the lady, gained
strong preference by English Petrarchists. This should not
be thought of as un-Petrarchan, however, because Petrarch
himself says, later in life, the following:

Ma ben veggi' or si come al popol tutto
Favola fui gran tempo: onde sovente
Di medesmo meco mi vergogno:
E del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,
E 'l pentirsi, e 'l conoscere chiaramente
Che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.
("Sonetto I", 9-14)

[For now I see how once my story spread/ And I became a
wonder to mankind/ So in my heart I feel ashamed -- alas,/
That nought but shame my vanities have bred,/ And penance,
and the knowledge of clear mind/ That earthly joys are dreams
that swiftly pass. (I, 9-14)]

It is in this posture that Chaucer, or the narrator, sees
Troilus in the "eighthy spere," (V, 1809) when he

fully gan despise
This wrecched world, and held al vanite
To respect of the pleyn felicite
That is in hevene above.

(V, 1816-1819)

As Petrarch did, Troilus asserts that rather than
chase "blynde lust, the which that may nat laste"(V, 1824),
man should all his "herte on heven caste"(V, 1825).

What Chaucer has done is to realize and consummate
the sentiment of Petrarch in actual narrative. Thus Troilus' 
yearnings and complaints in Books I and II are Petrarchan.
His aubade in III acknowledges the sexual fact which in 
Petrarch is kept unconsummated:

O fool, wel may men the dispise
That hast the dawynge al nyght by thi syde,
And suffrest hire so soone up fro the rise,
For to disese lóveris in this wyse.

(III, 1465-1468)
However, like Petrarch's, Troilus' palinode shows that all human love is vain and unreliable.

After Chaucer, Petrarch was not forgotten in England. Because of his and Chaucer's enduring popularity, his influence continued. In 1396, Philippe de Mézières recommended "le solempnel docteur & souverain poete maister francois petrac" to Richard II of England. Moreover, "his works, with Dante's and Boccaccio's, were among Humphrey Duke of Gloucester's bequests to Oxford." Tottel's miscellany, Songs and Sonnets (1557), is a collection of poems, many of which are either direct translations of Petrarch or imitations of him. Gascoigne owned a copy of Petrarch with commentary by Gesualdo, published by Giglio in 1552. The Harvard copy of Petrarch, with commentary by Vellutello and published by Griffio (1554), was owned by an Englishman at least as early as 1574 because that date is written on f.62v. In 1554, the first English translation of Petrarch's Trionfi was made by Henry Parker, Lord Morley. The poem became so popular that it prompted Roger Ascham to complain that courtiers "more reverence the Triumphs of Petrarch than the Genesis of Moses." Henry Constable seems to have owned a copy of Petrarch and

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5 Robertson, 239.
6 Thomson, Wyatt and His Background, 166.
7 I am indebted for the detail of the previous sentences to Wilkins, 327-339.
8 The Scholemaster (1570) in Tudor Poetry and Prose, 654.
to have at least known the commentaries, because he addressed a poem "To His Mistress Upon the occasion of a Petrarch he gave her, showing her the reason why the Italian commentators dissent so much in the exposition thereof." Petrarcl1 and his works had, therefore, a lasting presence and popularity in England. He was, however, immortalized by his imitators.

When we look for Petrarchism we find it nearly pure in Wyatt and Surrey. Wyatt's poems contain many imitations of Petrarch: his sonnet, "My galley charg'd with forgetfulness/Thorough sharp seas, in winter nights, doth pass" (1-2)\(^{10}\), is a translation which does two things. It exhibits a continental sophistication in the recitation of stock images and ideas: the "enemy", "forc'd sighs", and rain of tears. It also expands the conventional Mediterranean storm of sentiment into a cold northern tempest: "The stars be hid that led me to this pain"; "an endless wind doth tear the sail apace". While much of his poetry reflects the clichés of Petrarchan verse generally, he also perpetuates Chaucer's (and Petrarch's) renunciation of love in "Farewell, love, and all thy laws for ever,/Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more". His awareness of the fickleness of love and life is revealed: in such poems as "They flee from me, that sometime did me seek", and, "Divers doth use, as I have heard

\(^{9}\)Tudor Poetry and Prose, 231.

\(^{10}\)All references to Wyatt's poetry are to Tudor Poetry and Prose.
and know”. The idea that the pursuit of love is time wasted, the preference for the rejection, separation and betrayal of lovers is distinctive of the peculiarly English strain of Petrarchan writing.

It is with Thomas Watson that the main wave of Petrarchism swept over England in the late sixteenth century. His Hekatompaphia (1582) is a commonplace book of all the conventional motifs of the continental sonneteers, especially Petrarch, Serafino and Ronsard. As he reveals in the headpiece to VI, he put in an apprenticeship in Petrarchism, translating Petrarch into Latin. In Hekatompaphia, copying the continental practice of annotation, he includes a prose passage with each poem showing the source of the poem and/or explaining it to the reader. The sequence is made up of seventy-nine "Passions" of "the authors sufferance of Love" and twenty-one "Passions" of his "Farewell to Love". The "Passions" are not really sonnets because of their length – eighteen lines. Elizabethans, however, seemed to call almost all short love poems sonnets.

In his letter "To the frendly Reader" Watson is careful to point out that his pains and passions as recorded in the poems are "but supposed". In L, however, he rehearses

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11 All references to Hekatompaphia are to the facsimile edition by S. K. Heninger, Jr.

12 Hekatompaphia, ix. See also Nelson, The Poetry of Edmund Spenser, 86-87.
all the pains of the lover which, he says, are expressed "as in his owne person":

While others fée de, my fancy makes me fast;
While others live secure, I feare mischaunce;
I dread no force, where other stand agast;
I follow sute where Fortune leades the Daunce,
Who like a mumming mate so throwes the Dice,
That Reason leesing all, Love winnes the price;
Which Love by force so worketh in my brest,
That needes perforce I must encline my will
To die in dreames, whiles others live in rest,
And live in woes while others feele none ill.

(1-10)

This sort of attempt at realism and sincerity will be tried many times in the years to follow, and has been tried before.

In V ("If't bée not love I feele, what is it then?") he seems unaware of both Wyatt’s and Surrey’s translation of Petrarch’s sonnet ("Sonetto LXXXVIII"), but he thinks of Chaucer’s. This knowledge of Chaucer’s Petrarchism might help to put into perspective the large number of cynical, typically English poems of renunciation of love which he has in the sequence. The glosses of the poems in "My Love is Past" reveal that many are inspired by Petrarchians: Ronsard (LXXXIII), Strozza (LXXXV), Seraphino (XCIX, XCIII), Firenzuola (XC), Parabosco (C), "some Italian poets" (XCI) and Petrarch (XC, Epilogue). Not anti-Petrarchan as Heninger suggests (p.ix), they are, rather, further evidence that Petrarchism embraced even seemingly anti-Petrarchan poses. Watson’s accumulation of them reveals, however, what I think is a rather typical English preference for this type of pose.
Sir Philip Sidney's apparent attempts at breaking away from Petrarchism have been sufficiently proven as derivative;\textsuperscript{13} however, some aspects of it may reward examination. His attempt at sincerity ("Fool, said my muse to me, look in thy heart and write")\textsuperscript{14} derives from Ronsard and emphasizes the conventional nature of Elizabethan poetic honesty. In addition, the fact that the mistress's picture was commonly engraved or painted on the lover's heart, makes it a clever variation of the stock theme of the poet-lover getting his inspiration from his beloved. This same pose is seen in Drayton's Idea which is headed by a poem asserting "My verse is the true image of my mind". However, elsewhere in their verse both Sidney and Drayton rehearse all the clichés which they affect to despise. Sidney criticizes the Petrarchan dilettante whose "tears pour out his ink, and sighs breathe out his words" ("Some lovers speak, when they their muses entertain", l. 10); he asserts,"I can speak what I feel, and feel as much as they". However, in other sonnets he does the same as the Petrarchans: "Stella oft sees the very face of woe/ Painted in my beclouded stormy face"(ll. 1-2), or, "As good to write as for to lie and groan./ O Stella dear, how much thy power hath wrought"(ll. 1-2). While on the one hand he says,

\textsuperscript{13}Tuve, 420; Praz, 272-274.

\textsuperscript{14}Astronomel and Stella in Tudor Poetry and Prose. All subsequent references to Sidney's and Drayton's poetry to follow are to the same source.
I never drank of Aganippe well,
Nor ever did in shade of Tempe sit,
And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell,
(ll. 1-3)

he says elsewhere, "Muses, I oft invoked your holy aid; / With choicest flowers my speech t'engarland so"(ll. 1-2). What these so-called anti-Petrarchan pieces are doing is repeating what Petrarchans have said for one hundred years or more: that their love is great; that conventional modes of expressing this love are insufficient, but, as proven by their verse, unavoidable. Anti-Petrarchism, if it is such, becomes another method of praise of the lady who is beyond praise. In other words, because of this and because some anti-Petrarchan utterances come from Petrarch himself, it must be seen as part of the Petrarchan legacy.

Petrarch's legacy to the Elizabethans was rich and varied. It provided inspiration, standards of love and taste, and a vocabulary of courtesy. In its development it digested elements of scholastic logic, Augustinian moralization, and Neoplatonic theorizing. Petrarch and many of his imitators were Platonic in the manner in which they tended to see the physical beauty of the mistress as the representation of her moral and intellectual beauty, and the latter beauty as a representation of ideal beauty. Platonism was made an integral part of Petrarchism by Pietro Bembo and the academies where Petrarch and Plato were mixed in love treatises. Indeed, Plato's teachings came to Elizabethans along a tangled path: from Plato himself, from Plotinus, from the Greek and
Roman moralists, as well as through Petrarchism. As a result it is rarely possible to assert with certainty specific philosophical positions held by Petrarchan poets or their origins.

In addition to Platonism, Petrarchism accumulated lascivious naturalism, anacreontic wit and pastoral affectation, which might or might not be used by the poet. In fact, these well-established elements of the legacy, along with the set of attitudes, situations and images, were like pieces of chess with which a poet might play. Edmund Spenser's Amoretti is a good example of it. The whole catalogue of themes, motifs and ideas is there: the thematic oppositions of appearance and essence (XC), of pain and ecstasy (XXX), of despair and hope (XXVI), of lust and love (XXI), of smiles and frowns (XL); the images of dying (VII, XI) and frying (XXXII), of ships (XXXIII, LXIII) and seiges (XIV), of the lady's fabulous wealth (XV), of her stereotyped beauty (LXXXI), of her sun-like power (LXXXIX); the lady's aloof and disdainful manner (VIII, LXI, LVIII, LIX); the lover's curse (X, LVIII), and palinode (LIX); the lover's rebellion and capitulation (XLIII); the lover's curse of the slanderers (LXXXVI); the ennobling power of love (III, LXXV, LXXX); the pain of temporary (LII) and seemingly endless separation (LXXXVII-LXXXIX); the mixing of secular and sacred loves.

15 All references to the Amoretti are to Minor Poems, ed. De Sélibcourt.
(XXII, XLVIII, LXI); and Platonized Petrarchan love (XC, LIII). However, Spenser gives several indications that these are poses— that he is acting a part:

Of this world's Theatre in which we stay,
my love lyke the Spectator ydly sits
beholding me that all the pageants play,
disguising diversly my troubled wits.

(LIII, 1-4)

His parts, he suggests, depict every possible mode of Petrarch-an approach:

Bring therefore all the forces that ye may,
and lay incessant battery to her heart,
playnts, prayers, vowes, ruth, sorrow, and dismay,
these engins can the proudest love convert.

(XIII, 9-12)

There is sufficient indication here that Spenser's use of the Petrarchan themes and motifs is a practical playing with socially acceptable and desirable manners and language to impress his lady. His opening sonnet makes unmistakable the suggestion that the sonnets to follow are poses designed to please: "Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone,/ whom if ye please, I care for other none" (I, 13-14).

Petrarchan imitation could vary then: there were the slavish imitators on the one hand, and the ingenious, adventure-some artists on the other. There were also the humanist imitators and the eclectic rhetoricians, who used the legacy for their own purposes. This spectrum of imitation suggests the possibilities that the Petrarchan legacy arrayed before Elizabethan poets of various personalities, outlooks and situations. Rather than being indicative of a fatuous
conformity, it allowed for various significant uses and developments. 16

An aside on Chaucer

Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde is, of course, an English reworking of Boccaccio's Il Filostrato. Its action is courtly and shows similarity to the courtly love of The Romant of the Rose. However, Petrarchism is based in courtly love as well. Chaucer recognized no doubt in the sonnet from Rime which he chose to use, the same tone, manner and feeling as he wished to present in Troilus and Criseyde. The fact that the action is courtly does not prevent its being Petrarchan. That Chaucer was interested in and borrowed from Petrarch is obvious -- F. M. Robinson says of Chaucer's praise of Petrarch in the "Clerk's Prologue" in The Canterbury Tales, "It is more likely to be an acknowledgment, in traditional form, of literary indebtedness, than testimony to a personal experience" (The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 708). That later Italianate Englishmen should look upon Chaucer as a kindred spirit certainly does not stretch probability or credibility. 16

16 While some of the details in the preceding section, and in the one to follow, may bear some similarity to some in Guss's book, they have been cleared from the author's independent research prior to the receipt of Guss's book.
To suggest that John Donne used Petrarchan conventions is no longer as startlingly daring as it once may have been. However, there is a curious reluctance to see him as an Elizabethan even though he was born in 1572 -- a date which made him younger than Marlowe and Shakespeare, and the exact contemporary of Ben Jonson. This reluctance might be explained by the fact that the great bulk of his poetry was not published until 1633. Born in 1572, however, he would have been in his early manhood in the 1590's at the time of the great English wave of Petrarchan sonneteering. The discovery of the Lothian portrait of him in 1959 in the not too melancholy pose of the melancholic lover, with the blasphemous inscription "Illumina Tenebras Nostras, Domina" [Lighten our darkness, mistress], a parody of the prayer "Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord", gives us "a convincing portrait of Jack Donne the Elizabethan, love poet and man about town".

This portrait, tentatively dated in the 1590's by Helen Gardner, along with what his college friend Sir Richard Baker said of him -- "not dissolute, but very neat, a great visiter of Ladies, a great frequenter of Playes, a great

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1Le Comte, 3-4. I am indebted to Le Comte also for the translation and the prayer above.
writer of conceited Verses"\(^2\) -- describing his stay at Lincoln's Inn (1592-1596), help to put him and his "Songs and Sonets" in a properly Elizabethan setting. The melancholic pose was linked in the English mind with Italian melancholic lovers who, like their English imitators, complain bitterly of their state. By adopting this pose -- and a pose it is, not the private melancholy of a true malcontent -- and by the Petrarchan sentiment of the inscription, we can readily see his interest in these socially popular conventions.

Moreover, he quite obviously knew the Italian Petrarchists and admired them. William Drummond of Hawthornden, when thinking of Donne's "The Anagram" (Elegie II ), compares it to Tasso's "Sopra la bellezza".\(^3\) We know he imitated one lyric of Guarini's, "Madrigal XCVI", in which parting lovers are likened to compasses, and, perhaps he also imitated a poem by Tasso which became "The Flea".\(^4\) Donne uses Italianisms such as "scarce"\(^5\) which approximates the Italian "scarso" meaning wanting, scanty, poor. Grierson cites four phrases from Petrarch to illustrate its use (II, 118). Similarly he uses "Makeron" (Satyre IV, 117) which Grierson and O. E. D.

\(^2\)Quoted in Leishman, The Monarch of Wit, 31.

\(^3\)Leishman, 53. Drummond calls Tasso's poem "Stanzas against Beauty".

\(^4\)La Face de Madame Des Roches (1582) is a collection of over fifty poems on fleas in French, Italian, Spanish, Latin and Greek. It was a popular subject of erotic verse, and a possible alternate source.

\(^5\)Satyre II, 44; IV, 4, 240 (scant).
cite as the earliest use of the Italian word in English.

Finally, Donne's original library books are easily distinguishable because his name is flourished in the lower right-hand corner of the title page, and, an Italian phrase from Petrarch's *Rime* ("Canzone XIX", 7, 1), which he apparently admired sufficiently to take as his motto, is at the top in his hand: "Per Rachel ho servito, E non per Lea". In sum, he reminded others of Italian writers; he imitated them; he used Italian words, and he knew, read, and admired Petrarch enough to borrow a phrase which seems to have been the sort not generally imitated -- he probably knew Petrarch and other Italians well.

Not only did Petrarch and his legacy supply these incidental, although not insignificant manifestations of their appeal to Donne. They also supplied him with the subject, the themes and images of his poetry. The subject of Petrarchan poetry, and of Donne, is love, not as a sickness or merely as sensual gratification, but as a positive, even worthwhile emotion. The themes of the "Songs and Sonets" are Petrarchan. They include the initiation of love ("The

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6 Keynes, A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne, 205. Keynes offers an explanation of the phrase which is founded on Genesis xxix, 25 ("And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"). Keynes interprets the phrase as showing symbolically Donne's dual threads of religious or contemplative interest (Rachel), and secular or active interest (Leah).
good-morrow"), the pains of the lover ("The triple Foole", "Twicknam garden", "Loves exchange", "A nocturnall . . . Day"), the lover's curse ("Goe and catche . . . starre", "The Curse"), the curse and palinode ("Loves Deitie"), my paine -- your blame ("The Will"), the beauty of the lady presaged by others ("The good-morrow", "Aire and Angels"), unrequited love ("Loves exchange"), the parting of lovers temporarily ("The Sunne Rising", "Sweetest love . . . thee", "Breake of day") and for longer periods ("Valediction: on my name", "of weeping", "forbidding mourning"), the anniversary of love ("The Anniversarie"), the love token ("The Token"), the farewell to love ("Farewell to love").

Donne generally does not treat one theme in one poem as Watson and Spenser do. He, however, uses several at a time. In "Loves exchange" the theme is the conventional re-monstrance against the god of love, but the also alludes to his meanness (l. 6), the desire for secrecy (l. 19), love's warfare (l. 26), the miraculous powers of the lady (stanza 5) and the torture of his condition (l. 40). In so doing, Donne gives his poems a dramatic compression which the sonneteers, who generally spread one theme over fourteen to eighteen lines, seldom achieved.

Interestingly, the title of the collection, "Songs and Sonets", was given by the editor of the 1635 edition to have it conform with the most famous of the sixteenth century
collections, Tottel's miscellany, Songs and Sonnets. Moreover, the editor put the poems in the order that the poems of the sequences had—ah order followed by Grierson. It begins with what could be called the initiation of love ("The good-morrow"), passes through sorrow at the lady's illness ("A Fever"), the anniversary ("The Anniversarie"), amorous complaint ("Twicknam garden"), protest to love ("Loves exchange"), the dream ("The Dreame"), the definition of love ("Negative love"), the complaint at parting ("The Expiration"), the renunciation of love ("Farewell to love").

Most editors will allow that a number of Donne's poems use Petrarchan elements. Grierson divides the "Songs and Sonnets" into three groups: the cynical poems which are mildly misogynistic; the poems treating the joys of love and the sorrows of parting; and the smallest group in which Donne "adopts the tone of the Petrarchan lover" (II, 10). Helen Gardner divides and re-arranges them into two groups: one group written before 1600, varied but generally light and frivolous; the second group of poems, written after 1602, about mutual love with no falseness, and which play with Platonic fancies. She includes in group one, ten poems of unrequited love which, she says, "handle the classic Petrarchan situation"(pl.iii). Her separation of the Petrarchan from the Neoplatonic poems ignores the fact that from Petrarch onwards
Platonism has been a part of the Petrarchan legacy. Moreover, both she and Grierson take a very narrow view of Petrarchism: Miss Gardner seems to equate it with unrequited love; whereas Grierson sees it as the "mistress's coldness" which "provokes his [the poet's] passionate protestations". From what we have seen and will see, Petrarchism is much more than that.

The language of the "Songs and Sonnets" is Petrarchan. We see the images of love's warfare ("Loves exchange"), sun-eclipsing beauty ("The Sunne Rising"), the potent eyes of the lady ("The Dreame", 12), the weeping of floods ("A nocturnall", 23), myths and personifications ("The Dampe"), alternating heat and cold, joy and pain of love ("The Paradox"), the loss of the heart ("The Legacie"), the picture in the heart of the lover ("Witchcraft by a picture"), the ship of love ("Aire and Angels").

Donne's use of commercial and monetary imagery has been seen as a rejection of the Petrarchan conventions which abjure such unpoetic concerns. However, Spenser, a Petrarchist in the Amoretti, writes a love sonnet which describes his love as containing and epitomizing "all this worlds riches that may farre be found"(XV, 6): "Saphyres", "Rubies", "Pearles", "Yvorie", "Gold", and "silver". In fact, he asks,

Ye tradefull Merchants, that with weary toyle, do seeke most pratioues things to make your gain; and both the Indias of their treasures spoile,

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8Rugoff, Donnes Imagery, 145.
what needeth you to seeke so farre in vaine?
(XV, 1-4)

Donne's question to the sun, in "The Sunne Rising", asking if "both the India's of spice and Myne/ Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee", is as Petrarchan as Spenser's is. He, himself, who uses references to stocks, bargains and purchases ("Lovers infiniteness") and to the law ("The Will"), complains that some poets woo ladies in legal terms (Satyre I, 39-60). From his description of the poet, he is a Petrarchan. The assertion that using these terms is un-Petrarchan does not bear scrutiny.

Donne's and Petrarch's development of the imagery that they use has much in common. Petrarch's "Sonetto XLVIII" ("Amor con sue promesse lusingando") deals with his imprisonment by love, where he, bemused and blind, fights for his liberty. Finally free of love, like a prisoner, he has the pallor and look of death. The prison-prisoner metaphor is sustained throughout as a means of expounding his meaning and elucidating the lover's experience. Similarly, in such a poem as Donne's "The Sunne Rising", the image of the sun-eclipsing mistress illustrates the same usage. In neither poem is the image used merely associatively or decoratively. The lady who is the centre of the world (or half of it) is essential to the structure of the poem and to its meaning. As in Petrarch's case, Donne's feelings are expressed through the
image not merely associated with it: to the lover, the loved one is the centre, the sum of the riches, of the world; to him the sun is irrelevant. In the images used, and in their development, Donne is very much like Petrarch.

Poems which exhibit typically "Donnean" features are also within the tradition. His argumentative manner, displayed in "Lovers infiniteness" and "The Prohibition" has been shown to be also in Drayton's "You're not alone when you are still alone", or in Tasso or in Ronsard. His explosive openings, as in "The Canonization", may also be seen in Wyatt, Sidney or Drayton. His obscurity and subtlety, a distinctive feature of "The Extasie", may be seen in Petrarch's "Sonetto LXIII":

Quando giunge per gli occhi al cor profondo
L'immagin donna, ogni altra indi si parte;
E le vertù che l'anima comparte,
Lascian le membra quasi immobil pondo.

(ll. 1-4)

[When through the eyes reaches the secret heart/ A high image, the others dissipate,/ And the virtues that are the soul's best part/ Desert the members, leaving a dead weight.

George Williamson gives great emphasis to Donne's "shroud", his preoccupation with death, as a mark of his distinctiveness. There is no doubt that he was fascinated by it. In "The Funerall", "The Relique", "The Will" and "The

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9Praz, 195.
10Anna Maria Armi's translation in Praz, 198.
11The Donne Tradition, 3-19.
Dissolution", absence is death, intercourse is death, the bel-
loved's scorn is death, "The Canonization" reflects the
Ficinian idea that the lover dies in himself and is reborn in
his beloved: "Wee dye and rise the same" (l. 26). This, of
course, was a popular idea among Petrarchists: it is a
special favourite in Watson's Hekatompethia XLIV, LVI, LVII,
XCI. In XLIII he hopes that his beloved will revive his heart
"and make me all anew: /The Phenix so revives amids the ayre"
(ll. 14-15).

Certainly love and death have been associated for
centuries. The Etruscan tombs depict amorous dalliance both
wanton and guiltless; the Earl of Arundel, a medieval baron,
attempted to cheat death by devising an effigy of himself and
his wife holding hands, prostrate over their tombs. Rugoff
tries to explain Donne's penchant for dying and death as being
a reflection of the cumulative force of the popular carpe
diem, of the vanity of the flesh, and the decay-of-the-world
cynicism which was emphasized by the Petrarchan tradition.
I would add that these themes found a convenient vehicle for
expression in the Petrarchan tradition, especially in the
strain of Petrarchism which has been, since Chaucer, a pecu-
iliar favourite of English Petrarchists. Donne's poems "The
Will", "The Funerall", "The Blossome" and "The Relique", all

12 See Plumb, "De Mortuis", Horizon, 40-41.
13 Rugoff, 215.
reflect the concern for the transitoriness of love -- another concern allied with the interest in death. Spenser's "Sonnet XXVII" reveals it, as does Daniel's complaint that time shall dissolve "the beauty of the fairest brow" ("Look, Delia, how we esteem the half-blown rose," l.12). Whereas all Petrarchans, including Donne, use the threat of death when the lady is hard and inflexible, Donne epitomizes the English concern to be more than rhetorical in seeing the skull beneath the flesh.

Donne's interest in death is also a manifestation of his use of witty extravagant Petrarchism which, like that of the Italian quartocentisti, takes the images and conceits of Petrarchism and gives them sensual and literal reality. In this case, he takes the "dying" cliché, assumes it as a starting point, and realizes a dramatic enactment of the death or the results of it. One need only sample the "death" poems to see that in almost all of them he opens with his actual or imminent death: "When I dyed last, and, Deare, I dye" ("The Legacie"); "When by thy scorn, O murderesse, I am dead", ("The Apparition"); "Before I sigh my last gaspe" ("The Will"); "Who ever comes to shroud me" ("The Funerall"); "When I am dead, and Doctors know not why ("The Dampe"); "When my grave is broke up againe" ("The Relique"). In others, such as "The Computation", we are told at the end that we have been talking to a dead man ("Can ghosts die?"). Donald Cuss sees rather specific analogies for "The Apparition" in Serafino's
"Strambotti" 103 and 104: "E se gli ver che lalma tormentare" and "E se glie ver chel spirito vada a torno" [And if it is true that the soul must be tormented], and, if it is true that one's ghost wanders about (Guss's trans.). 14 Donne was not the first English Petrarchist to be attracted by the extravagance of Serafino. Watson's Hekatompathia LVI, imitated from Serafino, pictures death and love as nearly synonymous. In XLIX he takes his flames of passion and his death literally as Donne does: he wishes to die to escape the torment of flames, "For he doubteth least those flames, wherein his soule continuallye burneth, shall make Charon afraide to graunt him passage over the Lake of Stix, by reason, his old withered boat is apt to take fire." Donne's poems on death are squarely within this extravagant Petrarchist tradition.

It is, however, the tone, the psychology and manner, which most critics describe as anti-Petrarchan. All of these can, nevertheless, be shown as part of the legacy. The scorn and indignation in "The Apparition" may also be seen in Ronsard's ode "A Cupidon pour punir Jeanne Cruelle". 15 His "I scarce belecve my love to be so pure/ As I had thought it was" ("Loves Growth", 1-2) is not so great a condemnation as Watson's:

14 Guss, 57.

15 The Poetry of France, 65.
Love is a Brainesickle Boy, and fierce by kinde;  
A Willfull Thought, which Reason can not move;  
A Flatterring Sycophant; a Murthering Thife;  
A Poysned choaking Bayte; a Tysing Griefe.  

(XCVIII,3-6)

His contempt for Platonized Petrarchan love which holds
"'Tis not the bodies marry, but the mindes"("Loves Alchymie", 2), and his championing of sensual love as in "The Blossome", have analogies in the Petrarchan legacy. "For Italian Platonists like Benivieni and Castiglione human love is not indeed antithetic to reason; it is rather a first step".16

Spenser's LXXVII celebrates the joy of sensual human love when he describes the body of his beloved as "Exceeding sweet, yet voyd of sinfulfull vice, / That many sought yet none could ever taste"(ll. 9-10).

The expression of the value of sensual love by Donne --
"Loves mysteries in soules doe grow, / But yet the body is his booke"("The Extasie", 71-72) -- was not made by Donne first or alone. The consummation of Chaucer's Petrarchan lovers, Troilus and Criseyde, is described simply and gravely:


Moreover, the notion that Petrarchism is not based in sexuality is quite wrong. Rime begins in passionate love seeking its

fleshly end. In CCXI, he bemoans that his senses rule him; he longs for a night with Laura in the woods by moonlight (XXII, CXXXVII), but she bids him keep his desirous hand to himself ("Ecologue III").

Donald Guss says that Donne "repudiates ... Petrarchan attitudes" and cites "To the Countess of Huntingdon: That unripe side of earth" (55-76), to show "that Petrarchan love is the least efficient manner to win a woman".17 This is certainly not news to a Petrarchan lover like Petrarch who admits that his sighs, tears and curses have no effect on Laura in "Gia desiai con si guista querela" ("Sonetto CLXII") (Once I besought her mercy with my sighs (CCXVII)). As we have seen, to say anti-Petrarchan things is not necessarily being anti-Petrarchan. Similarly, A. J. Smith has shown that the lowering of woman's love to a position beneath man's as in "Aire and Angels" is not outside the tradition: "It is not, then, the novelty of its attitudes or insights that makes the poem worthwhile. They are stock — there is no direct enlargement of perception or addition to knowledge."18

Donne's occasional misogyny is generally held up as being un-Petrarchan. Such statements as "Hope not for minde in women; at their best/ Sweetnesse and wit, they are but Kummy, possess" ("Loves Alchymie", 23-24), and such treatment

17Guss, 50.
of woman, as in "Loves Progress" in which she is a mute thing to be travelled over, are found in other Petrarchist work. Petrarch himself, who gave deathless fame to one woman said of the rest, "woman is a real devil, an enemy of peace, a source of impatience, a matter of strife— and to be without her is to be assured tranquility."¹⁹ Donne's masculine impatience and occasional, seemingly un-Petrarchan, charges of unfaithfulness against women have been somewhat misunderstood. The Petrarchan curse of the hard-hearted lady covers a wide range:

The commonest word is disdain, and the lady is also unkind, ruthless, stern, obdurate, remorseless, flinty, unrelenting, cruel, scornful, proud, niggard of her grace, unmerciful, pitiless... a tyrant, a stock, a block, a stone (Fidessa); is comparable to a tiger, a wolf, a panther, a griffon, a savage Moor, and a scorpion... Wyatt sometimes speaks of the lady's infidelity: doublenes (V), unfaithfulness (VI), bering in hand (XIV), thyn hert mutable (XIX) -- This vocabulary reflects the usage of the continental poets.²⁰

Tasso, Sannazzaro and Guarini blame the lady's deceit and falseness; Gaspara Stampa, in this vein, calls her lover "fonte di valor... e d'inganno" [spring of valour and deceit].²¹ Similarly, Tasso after his lady has ended their relationship has only scorn for her: "Sdegno vuol ch'io ve'l dica/sdegno che nel mio petto/ tien viva l'onta del mio don negletto."

¹⁹Quoted in Fletcher, 60.
²⁰Schaar, Elizabethan Sonnet Themes, 44-45.
²¹The Penguin Book of Italian Verse, 181. All references in the following paragraph are to the same source, 189, and to The Penguin Book of French Verse, 127.
[scorn demands that I tell you this, scorn that in my breast keeps fresh the shame of my neglected offering.] Agrippa d'Aubigné complains of his cruel mistress's unfaithfulness: "mais son vouloir volage est soudain transporté/ En l'amour d'un corbeau" ("Sonnet pour Diane"). Watson, imitating Seraphino, curses the lady "whose slie deceyte" (XCI, 6) caused him pain. The Petrarchan curse obviously was far more encompassing than moaning over the lady's hard heart.

It is in this broad range that such curses as "No where/ Lives a woman true, and faire" ("Goë, and catche", 16-17) must be seen. Besides a curse, it is a pose from Hoby's The Courtier, in which one of the disputants in the discussion on love, Sir Frederick, states, "beautiful women for the most part be either proud and cruel (as is said) or unchaste."22 Such a poem as "The Indifferent" while apparently a defence of constancy, is more likely a desire to escape what the speaker knows will be his fate, inevitably, at the hands of the woman addressed: "Must I, who came to travaile thorow you,/ Grow your first subject, because you are true?" (ll. 17-18.). The reluctance to fall in love as revealed here and in "Loves Usury" merely shows how sure the speaker is of the claims of love when it does overcome him.

Donne's (and Shakespeare's) willingness to "love both faire and browne" ("The Indifferent", 1) is sometimes held as being un-Petrarchan, yet it does not prevent the lady

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22 Tudor Poetry and Prose, 698.
from being beautiful and the poet infatuated. Nor is it un-
heard of in Petrarchan poems: Sylvester (sonnet XXII) says
that his lady's eyes though black, can illumine the darkness
of night. Similarly, Toft, in his Laura (III, xxxi) answers
an objection to the dark complexion of his mistress with "yet
love I her although that brown she be."23 Donne's indifference
to the colour of complexion is not new.

The anti- and un-Petrarchan aspects of Donne's verse
can be explained as part of the legacy, as I have shown.
However, there are many inconsistencies between poems which
require further explanation. If he says in "The good-morrow"
that "true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest"(l. 16), he
takes it back in "Twicknam garden": "Alas, hearts do not in
eyes shine"(l. 23). If in "The undertaking" he sees "verteu'
attir'd in woman"(l. 18), he does not in "Loves Progresse",
"Loves Alchymie", or "Womans constancy". If in the "C anon-
ization" his lovers reject the world of business, the lover
in "B'reake of day" does not (l. 13). Because of these incon-
sistencies critics and editors have spent a great amount of
time and effort trying to decide which of the poems are:
serious and which flippant, or they try to place them in a
biographical context with less than happy results. Miss
Gardner, for example, places "The good-morrow", a poem of
new love, in the second section of the canon (after his

23 Quoted in Schaar, Elizabethan Sonnet Themes, 112.
marriage), too late to apply to his wife whom he met much earlier. Similarly placed is "The Anniversarie", even though it deals with adulterous love (1. 11). While it is undoubted that his most successful poems have a ring of authenticity -- this is probably his greatest innovation and triumph -- it is nearly hopeless to extract from poetry's "nebulous, volatile, and mercurial matter lost facts, specific episodes, faceless and nameless mistresses." 24

It is, in fact, almost impossible to understand Donne's poetry if we insist that he be what we call "sincere". The fact is that he is not apparently committed to any utterance, just as a dramatist is not necessarily committed to his actors' speeches. While his poems are characteristic of his witty Petrarchism, they are not necessarily characteristic expressions of his feelings, values and ideals. Donne, an admirer of London and the court, could say "Sir, though (I thank God for it) I do hate/ Perfectly all this towne"(Satyre II, 1-2) just as easily as he could write "Breake of day" for a woman's voice. In his days preaching at Lincoln's Inn, he "delivers a series of sermons on apparently contradictory texts, as if they were conflicting laws." 25 Insofar as he used similar practice in both his secular and sacred verse, as we might assume that like in his sermons at Lincoln's Inn,

24 Le Comte, 53.
25 Le Comte, 176.
Donne took conventional postures or "caps" on several sides of the question of love. In doing so he had precedents in the fashionable dubbi of the love treatises.

Sir Thomas Hoby's The Courtier (1561) provided an excellent example of the dubbi dramatized. The famous discussion in the "Fourth Book" on love and beauty, exemplifies how such subjects might be argued from several sides. Such questions as the following are discussed: is sexual love fitting for older men? is beauty always good? can women love platonically? Such Donnean statements as the following arise: "the possessing of this beauty, which he praiseth so much, without the body, is a dream"(M. Morello); "this amiable look were like a bait that covered the hook"(Sir Frederick).

Amid such statements we get similarly Donnean statements (of another posture), as "beauty is always good"(Bembo). This attempt to approximate what Castiglione and Hoby considered to be a contemporary court of love was fertile ground for all writers who followed. In being firmly grounded in Platonized Petrarchism, The Courtier dramatized many of the postures and poses that a poet such as Donne would like to assume.

Miss White warns, "the capacity of a young Donne to try on various metaphysical caps should not be lost sight of when we are tempted to take too seriously certain youthful scintillations."26

Perhaps the most conclusive and provocative evidence

26 The Metaphysical Poets, 49.
of Donne's penchant for poses is in his portraits. While it is true that the two arts are different (poetry literary, portraits graphic), we might legitimately see similar tastes, sensibility and interests at work in them. All the portraits are carefully posed. The Milliard engraving was done in 1591. The inscription "Autes muerto que mudado" [sooner dead than changed] is a boast of constancy spoken by a fickle mistress in Montemayer's Diana. The aggressive grasp of the sword-hilt is a fitting pose for a young man who is off to war against the Spanish. The carefully posed and exquisitely done Lothian portrait displays him as affecting the posture of the melancholic lover, with arms crossed, doublet undone carelessly, one glove missing, and the large hat of the conventional melancholic -- not slouched over as conventionally, but pushed back. All the details of the pose are conventional except the pushed back hat; however, he seems to be enjoying the pose from his not too melancholy expression. His stone effigy, an engraving of which is on the frontispiece of Death's Duel (1632), is a truly fantastic work. Walton describes its making with Donne naked in his winding-sheet, with it tied in a knot above his head and his "feet and his hands so placed as dead bodies are usually fitted to be shrouded". He stood, with eyes shut, facing the East until the drawings for the effigy were finished. 27 An effigy

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27 Details taken from Le Comte, 220.
so carefully posed — even so far as closed eyes and beatific smile — as this, at a time so near his death, is vivid evidence of the importance he placed upon the significant posture even at this late time in his life. One cannot imagine more significantly different poses as these portraits exhibit. One must agree with Miss Gardner, who says, "it may be said that the number of portraits of Donne that we possess is testimony to his egoism and devouring interest in his own personality." In addition it is graphic testimony of his penchant for poses.

Donne himself seems to admit the fictive nature of his poetry in a letter to Sir Robert Carr: "you know my uttermost when it was best, and even then I did best when I had least truth for my subjects. In this present case ["An hymne to the Saints, and to Marquesse of Hamylton"] there is so much truth as it defeats all Poetry" (I, 288). Allowing for the fact that the second sentence is flattery which is intended to reveal his emotional involvement in the subject and the resultant difficulties for his writing — allowing for that, the revelation that poetry and truth are antithetical is significant. Further, in a letter to Sir Henry Goodere (1608?), speaking of poetic songs Donne says, "I doe not condemn in my self, that I have given my wit such evaporations, as those, if they be free from prophaneness, or

28 Elegies, Songs and Sonets, 270.
obscene provocations."

Are these references to "least truth" and "evaporations" defensive, as Petrarch's affecting to disparage his "trifles", or are they poses? Insofar as the letters are generally less literary and probably more candid, I think we may assume that they are fairly close to the truth.

He does give us his opinion of poets who borrow from others, but I feel that the statement has been largely taken as a claim for originality. In Satyre II he says,

But hee is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Other wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spu,
As his own things; and they are his owne, 'tis true,
For if one eat my meate, though it be knowne
The meate was mine, th'excrement is his owne.

(l. 25-30)

While this is apparently a conventional disclaimer of imitation, the really operative words are "rankly digested". Poetic food merely taken in, chewed up and expelled is, in his terms, "excrement"; however, poetic food, taken from the "dolce varieeta" of the groaning board that Petrarch's legacy offered, properly digested, can give energy and power for something distinctive within the convention.

Donne's love poetry has a naturalness and yet an intellectuality quite original in Petrarchan poetry. "The good-morrow", an aubade, summarizes this. It alludes to a density of intellectual matters: to "the seaven sleepers den".

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29 The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne, 374. All subsequent references to Donne's prose letters are from this source unless noted.
Platonic forms ("If ever any beauty I did see"), chemistry ("What ever dyes, was not mixt equally"), astronomy ("sharpe North... declining West"). But it is in a speaking voice ("I wonder by my troth") to achieve a naturalness found rarely in combination with the intellectual.

While "The good-morrow" argues a case, using a series of rhetorical questions, Donne's love poetry reveals an absence of many rhetorical figures used by most Petrarchists. The anaphora used by Spenser in "Sonnet IX" is typical of the repetition of words at the beginning of lines or sections which Donne avoids, except in a few lines (12-15) of "The good-morrow". While he generally avoids traductio and anadiplosis in the "Songs and Sonets", he does use parallelism in "The good-morrow" and in "The Canonization" (ll. 1-7). However, his frequent use of ellipsis, and the naturalness of his opening, give the rhetoric a passionate urgency which, while not new to Petrarchism, is striking compared to some poems like Barnabe Barne's Parthenophil and Parthenophe (1593), or to Spenser's "Sonnet XV" ("Ye tradefull Merchants").

The personal direction of his poetry is noteworthy. While Chaucer also did so, Donne changes the setting of the Petrarchan clichés from descriptive to dramatic. While most Petrarchists used oxymora statically to describe the frustrations induced by the mixed emotions of love, Donne explores them actively. In "The Prohibition" he deals with the love-hate dilemma, forbidding the lady to love or hate him:
But thou wilt lose thy stile of conqueror,
If I, thy conquest, perish by thy hate.
Then, least my being nothing lessen thee,
If thou hate mee, take heed of hating mee.

(ll. 13-16)

He finally realizes that life itself is an antithesis ("To
let mee live, C love and hate mee too").

While Donne uses the apostrophe employed by all
Petrarchists, his are usually directed to someone near at
hand, perhaps even in the same bed: "Busie old foole, unruly
Sunne"; "Let me powre forth/ My teares before thy face".

Obviously, therefore, his verse is relational; it is domi-
icated by personal pronouns:

Call her one, mee another flye,
We're Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us finde the' Eagle and the Dove.
The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it.

("The Canonization", 20-24)

However, we must retain our perspective even here. Such a
statement as Grierson's --"The finest note in Donne's love-
poetry is the note of joy, the joy of mutual and contented
passion"(II, xlii) -- is based, as are the many similar ones
which follow this line, on a very careful selection of his
poems. It is not an original note because Chaucer strikes
it as well in a Petrarchan context. Moreover, it should be
noted that there are more poems in which the speaker's
curse or defensive reaction reveals that the woman is in
control and that the speaker is aware of the power of love,
there are

As a result of the original use of Petrarchan materials
Donne's "Songs and Sonets" affected a reality and what appears to be a deep feeling despite the conventionality of the language which sometimes enervated other Petrarchans. His uniquely varied stanza forms — Legouis "has calculated that of forty-nine poems which are in stanzas no less than forty-four are in stanza forms which are not exactly repeated" — in itself gives the appearance of rebellion and immediacy. His dramatization of Petrarchan clichés, gives neatness, fancy, wit and ingenuity to the poise and propriety of the courtly convention without being unconventional. Not the "excrement" of "rankly digested" fruits of other wits, the "Songs and Sonets" have the poise, grace, currency and variety of the legacy of Petrarch.

30 Leishman, 238.
THE ELEGIES

Although the "Elegies" owe as much to Ovid as to anyone, it is difficult not to see in many places Ovid translated through Petrarch and his legacy. "Elegie III: Change" gives another setting of the man bound to a woman who does not reciprocate his faithfulness: "They're our clogges, not their owne; if a man bee/ Chained to a galley, yet the galley's free" (ll. 15-16). "Elegie VI" deals with a Petrarchan farewell to love:

Though hope bred faith and love; thus taught, I shall
As nations do from Rome, from thy love fall.
My hate shall outgrow thine, and utterly
I will renounce thy dalliance.

(ll. 41-44)

"Elegie X: The Dreame" rehearses many Petrarchan themes: the poem itself is a love dream in which the lover finds in sleep the satisfaction denied him while awake (l. 14); it reveals the lover's pains (l. 15); the lady's love gives him value (ll. 4-5) despite his meanness (l. 6).

"Elegie II: The Anagram" and "Elegie VIII: The Comparison" both derive, in part at least, from the Petrarchan legacy. The stock catalogue of the mistress's beauties provoked a reaction against the formula. Francesco Berni wrote "Sonetto alla sua Donna", a eulogy to a grey-haired hag, which scrambled the formula so that she had grey hair.
rather than eyes, pearly eyes rather than teeth, snowy eyebrows rather than breasts, and so on. "The Comparison" like other poems in this vein lists a catalogue of deformities which make the lady as singular, though not as conventional, as any of the fair Petrarchan ladies. As seen above, "The Anagram" has precedents in Italy in Tasso's "Sopra la Bellezza". It has also, however, an Elizabethan one: Sidney's praise of Mopsa, daughter of the clownish Dametas, in Arcadia (I, iii, 6). She is described as follows:

Her forehead jacinth-like, her cheeks of opal hue,
Her twinkling eyes bedecked with pearl, her lips as sapphire blue;
Her hair like crapal-stone; her mouth, oh heavenly wide:
Her skin like burnished gold, her hands like silver ore untried.

As for her parts unknown, which hidden sure are best: Happy be they which well believe, and never seek the rest.

Sidney goes from a description of visible beauties to "parts unknown", and Donne goes from visible beauties to a borrowed maidenhead (1. 8), using a similar technique. Perhaps Donne had the Italian in mind when he wrote his poem, but he was probably also aware of Sidney's Mopsa.

"Elegie IX: The Autumnall" containing the theme of wrinkled beauty, while it is not a very popular Petrarchan theme, has some precedents in the legacy. Petrarch, describing how Laura's beauty has a lasting effect upon him, says in "Sonetto LXI" (after describing her faded beauty),

Uno spirto celeste, un vivo sole
Fu quel ch' i' vidi; e se nom fosse or tale,
Piaga per allentar d'arco non sana.
[A divine spirit, a living sun, was what I saw, and if it is not so now, the wound does not heal though the bow is slackened.]

The wrinkled beauty which Donne describes ("Call not these wrinkles, graves; for if graves they were, They are Loves graves", ll. 13-14) is used to describe faded beauty just as Daniel did in Dalia ("Beauty, sweet love, is like the morning dew"): Short is the glory of a blushing rose; The hue which thou so carefully dost nourish, Yet which at length thou must be forced to lose, Then thou, surcharged with the burden of thy years, Shalt bend thy wrinkles homeward to the earth, And that in beauty's lease expired appears The date of age, the kalends of our death. (ll. 6-12)

Daniel's conclusion ("For women grieve to think they must be old") might give some insight into Donne's reasons for assuring the lady to whom his poem is addressed, of his Petrarchan devotion even in age.

"Elegie XVI: On His Mistress" shows a combination of Petrarchan tenderness and expurgated realism. It touches many stock clichés; the "first strange and fatall interview" (l. 1); "our long starving hopes" (l. 3); the "spies and rivals" (l. 6). The praise of her beauty, "else Almighty" (l. 19), involves an inversion of the power of beauty in Petrarchan ladies. His image ("for thee/ England is onely a worthy Gallerie, / To walke in expectation", ll. 43-45)

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1 Translation from "The Petrarchan Vision", Elizabethan Poetry, 191.
suggests another Petrarchan convention: that all the world, its riches and diversity, are concentrated in the loved one.

"Elegie XX: Loves Warre" is a good example of Donne's use of Petrarchism in his verse. Miss Gardner, who usually prefers the classical analogue, points out that the contrast between the wars of Mars and Venus "is a stock theme of Roman Elegie," She does not mention, however, that love as warfare is a commonplace of Petrarchan literature and through it, of ordinary courtship and courtly suit. Petrarch's sonnets to Laura as "bella guerriera" became the source of the convention which might be seen in such poems as Spenser's Amoretti XIII and LVII. Donne exploits the imagery here as he did in the "dying" poems. He opens with the conventional image ("Till I have peace with thee, warr other men"), then takes the image literally (ll. 3-28) showing how in real wars men die. Then he exploits the conventional again with licentious puns and Petrarchan clichés:

Here let mee warr; in these armes lett mee lye;  
Here let mee parlee, batter, bleede, and dye.  
Thyne armes imprison me, and myne armes thee;  
Thy hart thy ransome is; take myne for mee.  
(ll. 29-32)

However, the expectation of a literal war is reversed by their war (ll. 35-46). Here, as in so many of his "Songs and Sonnets", he takes the Petrarchan images literally: there is a real war going on which he has opted out of to daily

2The Elegies, and The Songs and Sonnets, 128.
with his mistress.

In the "Elegies" we see Donne infusing this Ovidian genre with the accent of Petrarchan images and clichés, and the extravagant Petrarchan manner. In doing so, he gives them the ring of contemporary life which had adapted the Petrarchan legacy to its speech, manners and society.
THE LEGACY AND THE MILIEU OF DONNE'S COURTLY VERSE

The interest in the legacy of Petrarch was not merely an efflorescence restricted to the period between Watson's Hekatompethia and the end of the sixteenth century. It had become deeply and significantly infused in the society of Donne's England. Nor can its influence be revealed statistically, chronologically or as a matter of identification of sources. It had, by Donne's time, became at once the model for and the imitation of courtly life and behaviour. But it was even more than that.

The extraordinary fertility of English literary soil for Petrarchism is attributable not only to Chaucer, Wyatt, Surrey and Hoby, but also to the more politically oriented complaint on the Fall of Princes theme. In The Mirror for Magistrates the ghost of an eminent person appears to the poet, tells the story of his fall from glory, and begs to be pitied and remembered. Donne's "I long to talke with some old lovers ghost" ("Loves Deitie", l. 1) may owe something to this theme. Nevertheless, the Petrarchan complaint found favourable ground here and appropriated political overtones, or the political appropriated Petrarchan overtones in the use of complaint for court purposes -- a subject dealt with more fully below.

Not only did the Petrarchan complaint have relevance
to political literature. The pining lover — coming from
amor cortois through Petrarchism and emphasizing precedents
in Ovid, Theocritus, Euripides, Sappho and II Samuel 13: 1-4
— receives scientific sanction by the contemporary ideas on
love melancholy. In medical treatises as in the sonnets,
the melancholic lover complains of weakness of body and soul,
of alternating heat and cold, of sleeplessness, of love of
solitude, of longing for death. These qualities are listed
in the third book of Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy (1621)
and prompt one to wonder whether the writers of these treatises
took the characteristics from life or from literature.

Petrarchism permeated social life most noticeably.
Such books as Della Casa's Galateo and Castiglione's Il
Cortegiano were translated into English in the sixteenth cen-
tury and helped to refine court manners. This new Italian
influence in matters of social intercourse might be best dis-
played by two Elizabethan books on conversation and letter-
writing: Robert Hitchcock's Quintessence of Wit was a collec-
tion of aphorisms from Italian writers; Fulwood's Enemy of
Idleness gave, as illustrations, letters from Italian humanists.
"Even the lover, languishing for his mistress, could find in
this book the proper Petrarchan type of love-letter for him
to send."¹ In fact, "in all matters of human affection Pe-
trarch was regarded as 'the Grand Master in love'."²

¹Einstein, The Italian Renaissance in England, 82.
²Einstein, 86.
The standard of love presented by Petrarchism was aristocratic and heroically competitive. Part of its appeal must have been that all Petrarchan lovers felt themselves aristocrats of love. Moreover, the Petrarchan manner had currency in real life, even at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Paston Letters, plain, candid and unliterary, reveal a debt to the Petrarchan courtliness. Allowing for the feudal conventions, in such an address as "Mine own dear sovereign lady" of John Paston I to his wife Margaret,\(^2\) the Petrarchan influence is evident. In another letter (John Paston to Anne Haute) the lady is the object of Petrarchan devotion:

I beseche yow, let me not be forgotyn when ye rekyn up all your servaunts, to be sett in the nombyr with other . . . And I prey yow, Mersistre Anne, for that servyse that I owe yow, that in as short tyme as ye goodly may that I myght be assarteynyd of your entent . . . And now farewell, myn owne sayr lady.\(^4\)

Love here is a service, with rivalry among servants for the favour of the fair lady. Here, as elsewhere, conventional people use conventional language because it means something, and because to use it was to wear the mantle of the aristocrat in love.

But the legacy of Petrarch was not for nobles and gentry alone. The Elizabethan shopkeepers were no less interested in love and its newest conventions. While they viewed the themes more realistically and prosaically than the son-

\(^2\)The Paston Letters, ed. N. Davis, 132.

nateers did, it was with as much fervour and enthusiasm.

There had been no diminution of the old controversy about the value of women: satires in poetry and prose were still popular on the evil daughters of Eve, but these charges were increasingly refuted. An attack such as Barnabe Rich’s The Second Tome of the Travailes and adventures of Dan Siminides (1584) was frequently balanced by some defence like Thomas Bentley’s The Monument of Matrones (1582). One defence, Anthony Gibson’s A Woman’s Worth, defended against all the men in the world (1599), calls on all men to acknowledge the divinity of women in what had become conventional Petrarchan terms:

And this I can assure yee beside, that the moste parte of excellent and virtuous men, have attributed all tytle of honour to Women, daylie becoming their servants in hart, yea even humble in prostration (as it were) to adore them, as if in some sorte they tooke parte with the highest divinitie.

Then let us not fayle henceforth to loove them hartilye, by examples of our wise and discreete elders, yealding our selves voluntarily as subject to them: never regarding venemous spightfull tongues, that have not spared to speake their uttermost against them.

John Donne, whose father was a London iron-monger, would have grown up amid this type of controversy. His familiarity with, and his use of, the Petrarchan idiom would have been almost unavoidable.

Nowhere did Petrarchism become the idiom of society as it did at court. Elizabeth’s court "was neither natural

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5Quoted in Wright, Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England, 479-480.
nor free. Its ritual was artificial to the last degree, despotic and repetitive. The sovereign was a painted idol rather than a person; the codes of manners it encouraged were exotic, Petrarchan and Italianate. "6 Despite the fact that Italianate dandies became the butt of jokes and satire for their slavish imitation of all things Italian, the popularity of such books as The Courtier made the proximity between the conventions of Petrarchan courtesy and court life great. In fact, both the form and the sentiment of the lover's complaint lent itself to political ends. In early Tudor times, the poem of Sir Thomas Wyatt "Wyatt being in Prison, to Bryan" is phrased in Petrarchan terms:

Sighs are my food, drink are my tears; Clanking of fetters such music would crave; Stink and close air, away my life wears; Innocency is all the hope I have. Rain, wind, or weather I judge by mine ears; Malice assaulted that righteousness should have. Sure I am, Bryan, this wound shall heal again, But yet, alas, the scar shall remain.

Such a poem as "My galley charged with forgetfulness" might easily apply both to love and the precarious life at court. The situation did not change apparently in Elizabeth's court.

To the young poet seeking patronage for fame or for survival, the world was not secure and well-ordered: for him the complaint was consistent with the restless world of the court. Thomas Watson's "Protrepticon" 7 to his Hekatompathia

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7 Hekatompathia, xiv-xv.
reveals how the Petrarchan clichés and manner could be used for currying court favour. The letter is really an apostrophe to his book ("Go, I pray timidly, little book") such as that used later by Spenser ("Happy ye leaves", Amoretti, I) and by Donne in "To Mrs. M. H." ("Mad paper stay"). After lavish praise to Elizabeth ("our Goddess", "the whetstone of poets", "this second sun") and praise for Sidney and Dyer, and for their rival, Oxford, Watson continues as follows:

When you accompany de Vere [his hoped-for patron] as an attendant as the royal court, always be mindful of your duty. Then perhaps he will give you to be read by gentle nymphs when they spin playful tales about the Cyprian-born goddess. If ever she feels unusual compassion for your loving master, then rustle your leaves, so that she might think you have sighed. If, however, she sternly condemns your too-genteel flames, then say, "I have taken my heat from a make-believe fireplace." And you might as well pick up your dice and the mark indicated by a stone, because you slight Venus and her little son. In such a way you will achieve the love of that glittering throng, and perhaps there will be some recognition for your author.

Prosper, I pray, little book, more happily than your master, whom unexpected fate weighs down through no fault of his. Finally (if it seems opportune) say that the open reaches atop Mount Pieria suffer hard times.

The Petrarchisms of the letter, here used for compliment to a patron, not to a mistress, are noteworthy. The sighs and heat of the little book reveal that the mistress sought is the approval of the "glittering throng" from whom the poet might "achieve the love" -- more probably the fame. The complaint in the last paragraph completes the parade of what was to continue to be the use of Petrarchian compliment, complaint and plea for preferment.

This then is the world of John Donne. For him to
use Petrarchan language and themes is not surprising; they had permeated both the language of literature and the society of his age. It was the language of conventional people in love and the language of the suitor at court. While Donne was not himself a courtier, he desperately wanted to be one. After his secret marriage in 1601, he tried to get preferment at court but usually without success. One temporary patron, Thomas Morton, when he became Dean of Gloucester, wished to have Donne waive his "court-hopes and enter into holy orders". He offered him a benefice in remembrance of past favours — Donne refused it in favour of the hazards of court advancement. He applied for many positions, such as, in Ireland (1608) and Virginia (1609), but without success. He even tried religious hack work in Pseudo-Martyr (1610) by which he says, in the dedicatory address to the King, "I . . . conceived an ambition, of ascending to your presence". Here as elsewhere, John Donne, the ambitious would-be courtier aspiring for favour and patronage, uses the language of the suitor and courtier — Petrarchan language.

\footnote{\textit{Quoted in \textit{Le Conte}, 102.}}

\footnote{\textit{The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose}, 212. There seems to have been no change in the Petrarchism of courtly language after Elizabeth's death and James' succession.}
THE VERSE LETTERS

Nowhere is Donne's Petrarchism more evident than in his verse letters. His verse relationship with his lady patrons is that of the courtly Petrarchan lover to a real, politically superior, and helpful mistress. Like a true Petrarchan lover he says to the Countess of Bedford,

Though I be dead, and buried, yet I have
(Living in you,) Court enough in my grave,
As oft as there I thinke my selfe to bee,
So many resurrections waken mee.

("To the Countess of Bedford", 1-4)

The living in one another, the two-in-oneness of love, stock themes of Petrarchan verse, require that the mistress "returne home gracious" when parted from him, "and bestow/
This life on that; so make one life of two"("Reason is our Soules left hand", 34-35). Indeed, his patronesses are attributed all the miraculous powers of Petrarchan ladies. The leaves of a letter ("To Mrs. M. H.: Mad paper stay") grow at her touch (1. 19) and are "glorify'd more then before"(1. 20), just as a Petrarchan lady's breath engenders flower-strewn meadows, or her tears make the earth fertile. Similarly, just as Laura excells the sun and stars (Rime, XXXI), the Countess of Bedford is a brighter, second sun:
"Out from your chariot, morning breaks at night,/ And falsifies both computations so"("You have refin'd mee", 19-20).
Before this miraculous beauty and power, he, like a Petrarchan lover, is fittingly abject: "nothings, as I am, may/ Pay all they have, and yet have all to pay"("To the Countess of Bedford: T'have written then", 7-8).

Just as all Petrarchan lovers, like Spenser in Amoretti LXXXII, are uplifted by their mistress, so Donne learns from the Countess of Bedford: "You have refin'd mee, and to worth-yest things/ (Vertue, Art, Beauty, Fortune,) now I see/ Rarenesse, or use"(ll. 1-3). She is, in fact, a kind of tutelar angel in human form. So much is this so that, just as in the Amoretti and Rime, the praises of the lady often mix sacred and secular language: "Reason is our Soules left hand" makes a daring comparison of the Countess to an object of devotion, a divinity (l. 2); in "You have refin'd mee", she is the recipient of sacrifices (l. 28), the object of praise by priests (l. 29), and the goal of pilgrims (l. 43).

Conventionally, objects of such devotion are immortalized in verse. Daniel says of his verses to Delia:

These are the arks, the trophies I erect,
That fortify thy name against old age;
And these thy sacred virtues must protect
Against the dark and time's consuming rage.

("Let others sing of knights and paladins", 9-12)

This desire to immortalize the virtues of the lady is traditional in Petrarchan poetry. Jean-Antoine de Baiff speaks of his verse as a "beau monument qui parlera de nous"¹; Spenser promises his beloved immortality for her virtues: "my verse

¹Schaar, Elizabethan Sonnet Themes, 24.
your virtues rare shall eternize,/ and in the heavens wryte
your glorious name" (LXXV, 11-12). In this tradition, Donne
says,

I would show future times
What you were, and teach them to urge towards such.
Verse embalmes vertue; 'and Tombes, or Thrones of rimes,
Preserve fraile transitory fame, as much
As spice doth bodies from corrupt aires touch.

("To the Countess of Bedford; On New-years", 11-15)

Not only does his verse perpetuate the lady's virtues, she
is at once the subject and the impetus behind it: "the
tincture of your name/ Creates in them, but dissipates as
fast,/ New spirits" ("On New-years day", 16-18). She is the
"transcript" (1. 56) of the good and lovely, "The Mine, the
Magazine, the Commonweale;/ The story of beauty" ("You have
rein'd mee", 69-70). Like the mistress of "The Sunne Rising"
where she is, the centre is (1. 30). Like so many idealized
Petrarchan ladies, the Countess becomes a Platonic ideal, the
source and epitome of her own virtues and beauties.

Questions have been raised at times about Donne's
relationship with his patronesses. Grierson sees their
relationship as a rare and fine friendship (II, xxiii); Le
Comte sees the Countess of Bedford's influence on him as one
which drew him "to ecstatic freedom from misogyny". 2 H. W.
Garrod 3 vehemently denies any romantic love between Mrs.

2 Le Comte, 114. He ignores here Donne's poses and
his purely Petrarchan pieces of adoring love.

3 "Donne and Mrs. Herbert", RES, XXI(1945), 161-173.
Herbert and Donne, although Grierson seems to leave the question open. Such statements as the following, referring to her "perplexing eye/ Which equally claims love and reverence"("Mad paper stay", 13-14), might raise doubts only if the Petrarchan conventions in which the poem is written are ignored. Moreover, for a poet who can refer to God as a burly rapist, or take stances on all sides of a question, praising a patroness as he would a mistress should not be seen as unusual, especially when the convention in which he writes condones and practises it.

His Petrarchan verse letters are unusual in one way however: many are addressed to men. He addresses his male correspondents and friends in the terms of Petrarchan adoration which he uses to praise and complain to his mistresses in the "Songs and Sonets" and to his patronesses. His apostrophe to his letter, "Hast thee harsh verse"("To M T. W.[Thomas Woodward]"), is like those used often by Petrarchists, and by he himself in "Mad paper stay". As any Petrarchist would, he asks his letter to "Plead for"(1. 5) him. Like any conventional lover wishing grace from his mistress, Donne is "Pregnant again with th'old twins Hope, and Fear" in a letter "To Mr. T. W."(1. 1). Like the veriest Petrarchan lover, when parted from Mr. R. W.[Roland Woodward] his "care" at parting eats both their hearts (1. 4), and will be cured only by some word from him ("Muse not that by thy mind"). In another letter, he asks that Mr. R. W. dream of
him upon receiving his letter, because his letter "Hath my
name, words, hand, feet, heart, minde and wit" (1. 6), and as
such, conveys his heart "as kindly as any enamored Patient/
His Picture to his absent Love hath sent" ("If, as mine is,
thy life a slumber be", 13-14).

Just as Petrarchian ladies and the Countess of Bedford
could with "So many resurrections waken" him, so Mr. R. W.
is told that his verse has a "cherishing sayer which dries
in mee/ Griefe which did drowne mee" ("Kindly I envy thy
songs perfection", 5-6). Moreover, he says, "Oh, I was dead;
but since thy song new/Life did give,/ I recreated, even by
thy creature, live" (11. 13-14). His poem "To Mr. T. W.:
At once, from hence, my lines and I depart" shows complete-
ly the Petrarchism of his verse epistles to men. The sent
letter goes to his (Donne's) heart, now living in T. W. (1. 2).
Donne, heartless, laments that the letter "Shall live to see
that, for whose want" (1. 9), he, like a Petrarchan lover,
dies. His envy of the letter (1. 10) is a stock motif of
the lover who, unable to be near his mistress, envys those
things which are. Finally, like a suing lover he begs, in
half reverential terms (1. 12), for the love of his friend.
Courtly Petrarchism is pervasive, not only to the point of
giving grace and poise to relationships between young would-
be courtiers and patronesses, but also in doing the same
for Donne in his letters to men.

Donne's prose letters, which are not overtly literary,
also reveal how much he uses Petrarchism in what I suppose
is close to everyday intercourse. Sometimes it is revealed
in a conventional claim of originality: "I am no great voy-
ager in other mens works: no swallower nor devourer of vol-
umes nor pursuivant of authors"("To Sir Henry Wotton"), or in
an image: "The whole world is a straights imprisonment to me,
whilst I ame barrd your Lordships sight"("To Sir Thomas
as Egerton"). Sometimes, like in "Twicknam garden", where the
beauty of the garden is painfully contrasted with the lover's
pain, he will write as follows:

The pleasantnesse of the season displeases me. Every thing
refreshes, and I wither, and I grow older and not better, my
strength diminishes, and my load growes, and being to passe
more and more stormes, I finde that I have not only cast out
my ballast which nature and time gives, Reason and discretion,
and so am as empty and light as Vanity can make me; but I
have over fraught my self with Vice, and so am ridd[1]ly
subject to two contrary wrackes, Sinking and Oversetting,
and under the iniquity of such a disease as inforces the
patient when he is almost starved, not only to fast, but to
purge. ("To Sir Henry Goodere")

Accounts of shipwrecks and perilous voyages are common in
the sonnets, but they generally symbolise the Hopelessness of
lovers. Like Petrarch and his imitators who are aware that
their love has driven reason and discretion out (Rime, I);
Donne sees that his unnamed Vice has done the same. The
whole passage, in fact, is a Petrarchan expression of his
state at Mitcham. Sometimes he will, in his witty Petrarch-
an manner, speak of himself as already dead: "The sickness
of which I died is that I began in your Lordship's house
this love [for his wife]. Where I shall be buried I know
Most often the Petrarchan element of his prose letters is adulation. In a letter to the Countess of Bedford, he reveals the same manner that he uses in his verse: "It [the letter] shall tell you truly . . . with what height or rather lownes of devotion I reverence you: who besides the commandment of a noble birth, and your persuasive eloquence of beauty, have the advantage of the furniture of arts and languages . . . To that treasure of your vertues whereof your fayre eyes curtesy is not the least jewell I present this paper". In another letter ("To Sir Henry Goodyer"), taking a fittingly abject posture, he explains his bond with the Countess thus: "[I am bound to her] out of loathness, that so good works should be bestowed upon so ill stuff, or that so much ill-fortune should be mingled with hers, as that she should miss anything that she desired, though it were but for me".

Before we dismiss too lightly the Petrarchan complaints and imagery which make up most of his verse letters, and colour his prose letters, we should recall the special role of the lady and the influential courtier in the life of any suitor such as Donne. The fears of being isolated from

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their favour is understandable enough, especially to a man in Donne's position: with a middle-class background, a ruined marriage, and a frustrated ambition. Moreover, the very real fears, depression and despair which were part of the life of an aspirant at court, and especially an unsuccessful one, are reflected in his letters. To such a person, the Petrarchan plea, complaint, and in fact the whole legacy, presented a living, vital and socially accepted outlet of a safely indirect kind to feelings and emotions, no matter what the source.

The depression of bleak days at Hitecham might easily be expressed in a poem such as "Twicknam garden", or in the letter "To M T. W.: Hast thee harsh verse" in which he laments, "'tis decreed our hell is but privation/ Of him"(ll. 9-10). Such a letter as "Reason is our Soules left hand", while rehearsing the lady's Petrarchan powers, could also covertly remind her of his financial and political dependence on his "first good Angell"(1. 31) -- it is tempting to speculate on the use of the popular pun here-- who could make one "life of two"(1. 36), and do him some good where he is (1. 37). His Petrarchan laments concerning his absence from T. W. and R. W. probably also bemoan his absence from court or court society. His references to his meanness ("nothings, as I am"; "such ill stuff"), while abjectly Petrarchan, are also reminders of his ruined, desperate state. His difficulties in gaining desired appointments might be reflected in
the conventional "Pregnant again with th'old twins Hope, and Feare".

Fluctuations in the patron's regard may also be reflected in, and carried by, the convenient Petrarchan themes. Such a poem as "Mad paper stay" while showing conventional adulation of the lady's powers (l. 20), and jealousy of rivals for her favour of her, also reveals the hazards among intriguing rivals. He instructs the "mad paper" to see

if any, whom we know,
Were sav'd before, and did that heaven partake,
When she revolues his papers, marke what show
Of favour, she alone, to them doth make.

(11. 37-40)

Despite his claim to the contrary ("I/ Would faine love him that shall be lov'd of her"), we know that this probably would not have been the case.

The battle for favour was often too intense for such fine feelings. Donne and Dr. John Burges (1563-1635), a Puritan cleric and Doctor, were at jealousies over the Countess of Bedford's favour for some time. She did, in fact, patronize Drayton, Florio, and Jonson at various times, but by 1617 the Countess was almost completely won over by Burges. Despite his verse letters to her must be read with this strong competition in mind. This very practical financial interest in her is suggested by the conspicuous use he makes of imagery dealing with money, finances and law in his verse letters, as elsewhere, and by a complaint to Goodere of a
"diminution in her" when she sends only 230 for his verses on the death of her brother, Lord Harrington.7

This Petrarchan adoration could be switched to another subject rather readily. When Donne began to find favour in the Countess of Huntingdon, he refused to contribute praises to the Countess of Bedford, because, as he says, of "my integrity to the other Countess, of whose worthiness, though I swallowed your opinion at first upon your words, yet I have since an implicit faith, and now a knowledge; and for her delight (since she descends to them) I had reserved not only all the verses which I should make, but all the thoughts of women's worthiness."8

With Donne as with Watson, and doubtless with others, the proximity of Petrarchan conventions and court language and behaviour provided a peg on which to hang his feelings, fears, aspirations and complaints. While these poses -- rituals almost -- may to a modern reader appear to be affectations only, they provided a means for the suitor, either for love or for patronage, to express the real character of his experience and to vie for favour with an established and widely pervasive language of sentiment and sophistication.

7Le Comte, 159.
8A letter to Goodere in Le Comte, 161-162.
Donne's patrons were not all women. By 1610 he had
won the favour of Sir Robert Brury with whom he and his fami-
ly eventually lived. When Brury's daughter died in 1610, Donne,
though he did not know her, sent her parents the first
of what were apparently to be yearly tributes to her. His
stated purpose — to connect the "frailty and decay" of the
world with the death of a young lady — was not a new one for
him. In the poems "A Fever" and "A nocturnall", he also saw
in the death of a woman that the whole world vapors with "her
breath"("A Fever",6). Nor is it surprising that he should
do so: in his "The Sunne Rising" and "A nocturnall" and else-
where in his "Songs and Sonets", and in his verse letters,
we have seen how much his world was focused on and depended
upon women, in both a poetic and a practical sense. If she
(whoever she might be) dies, his world is robbed of its
focus and means of support.

It is not surprising for another reason. Because of
the central position of women in Petrarchan poetry, poems on
their deaths were generally accompanied by hyperbolic grief
and signs of cosmic disturbance. Mario Praz has already
pointed out the similarity in theme between "A Feaver" and
Sannazaro's poem inspired by the death of a young girl: the poet says, while heaven has gained an angel, "tu ben puoi dolerti, o cieco mondo; / Tua gloria è spenta, il tuo valor è morto". [thou, blind world, hast reason to complain; thy glory has faded, thy valour is dead]. All laments of this kind ultimately trace back to Petrarch: his "Sonetto I, in morte" reveals the following:

Per voi conven ch'io arda e 'n voi respiri:
Ch' i' pur fui vostro; e se di voi son privo,
Via men d'ogni sventura altra mi dole.
Di speranza m'empieste e di desire
Quand' io partii dal sommo piacer vivo;
Ma 'l vento ne portava le parole.

(ll. 8-14)

[Still I must burn in you, in you respirate! / I was yours utterly; my stricken heart/ Can feel no other hurt, after today,/ You showered hope upon me and desire/ In our last moment, ere we came to part; / And then the wind blew all your words away. (CCLXVII, 8-14)]

Many of the statements of those who followed him owe a great deal to Petrarch's poems on the immense significance of Laura which is exaggerated by the presence and pressure of mortality. The following poem illustrates the point:

Chi vuol veder quantunque può Natura
E 'l Ciel tra noi, venga a mirar costei,
Ch' è sola un Sol, non pur agli occhi miei,
Ma al mondo cieco, che vertù non cura.
E venga tosto, perché Morte fura
Prima i migliori, e lascia star i rei:
Questa, aspettata al regno degli Dei,
Cosa bella mortal passa e non dura.
Vedrà, s' arriva a tempo, ogni virtute,
Ogni bellesa, ogni real costume.

1Præm, 199.
Giunti in un corpo con mirabiltempre.
Allor dirà che mie rime son mute,
L'ingegno offeso dal soverchio lume:
Ma se più tarda, avrà da pianger sempre.

("Sonetto CXX")

You seek the best that Nature can confer? Upon our universe? Then come and see! That beauty shining like a sun on me! And on the world, virtue's disparager. Only, come soon; Death ever is astir! To seize the best, leaving the wicked free.
She is too lovely for mortality; The gods are looking eagerly on her. Come soon, and you will see all comeliness; All virtue, and all gentle-mannered ways; Sweetly conjoined past any power to sever; And you will vow my rimes are valueless; You'll stand so dazzled in delicious maze; -- But if you linger, you will weep forever. (CXXLXVIII)

While also rehearsing stock Petrarchan epithets -- she is like a sun, she embodies all virtues, he is unable to praise her properly -- it illustrates many ideas which were to become common to eulogies of dead ladies: the blind, indifferent world; death stealing away the best first; the transitoriness of beauty. Moreover, it makes clear the importance of the Petrarchan lady: "she embodies the refining power of earthly beauty; one suffers if one has not seen her. This sonnet dramatizes in its tone of dazzled admiration the kind of life-giving effect she has upon the poet and upon a world faced with the prospect of her absence."²

When we recall that about one third of Rime was written "in morte di Madonna Laura", we can see why all succeeding Petrarchans found it easy to lament the death of real or imagined ladies. Some sixteenth century sequences, such as the Rime di diversi eccellenti autori in vita e in

morte dell'illustrissima S. Livia Colonna (Rome, 1555), were compiled solely in commemoration of some deceased young lady of noble family by supposedly lamenting suitors. Whereas Petrarch, above, and in "Sonetto II, in morte", "Rotta è l'alta Colonna e 'l verde Lauro"[Both, broken, lofty column, laurel green(CCLXXIX)], shows the tears and displacement caused by the deaths of Cardinal Colonna and Laura in the same year, his imitators often use highly hyperbolic variants of his grief. On the occasion of Bembo's death, for example, in 1547, "a whole literature of elegies and monodies, Latin and Italian, saw the light... in a typical sonnet by Domenico Veniero the tears shed on the great man's tomb grow into a flood that almost drowns the whole world."\(^3\)

As we have seen, Donne was attracted to the death and transitoriness theme, and that he was also extravagant at times in his use of Petrarchan clichés. It is not surprising, then, that his poems on the first and second anniversaries of Elizabeth Drury's death fit squarely in the Petrarchan tradition.

While Miss Nicolson says that the decay of the world is either parallel to, or analogous with Elizabeth's death, and while Manley and Praz\(^4\) believe that there is no literal


\(^4\)For their arguments see Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle, 84-86, and Manley's introduction to The Anniversaries.
relation between the decay of the world and her death, these contemptions are not completely supported by the text. Donne says that "the worlds subtlest immateriall parts / Feele this consuming wound [her death], and ages darts [inherited mortality]" (F.A., 247-248). In addition, in "A Funerall Elegie", also on Elizabeth Drury, he says, "wee may well allow/ Verse to live so long as the world will now,/ For her death wounded it" (ll. 19-21). As he did earlier in his "Songs and Sonets", Donne here takes the conceits literally: her death does not merely cast a pall over the world, it actually is the final blow which ruins an already sick world.

It is also felt by some that the poems are "unable to support the weight of their own hyperbole". This is interesting because it echoes Ben Jonson's claim that they are too fulsome; they were "profane and full of blasphemies" and if they had been "written of the Virgin Mary it had been something". It is also interesting because this is quite possibly the effect that Donne was trying to achieve:

And, Oh, it can no more be questioned,
That beauties best, proportion, is dead,
Since even griefe it selfe, which now alone
Is left us, is without proportion.

(F.A., 304-307)

The quotation from "A Funerall Elegie", above, has an interesting ambiguity relating to this point. The referent for

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5The Anniversaries, edited by Manley, 10–11.
6Leishman, 73, cites Jonson.
"it" (l. 21) could be either "the world" (l. 20) or "verse" (l. 20), or both. Hence, her death equally distorts the world and the proportions of versified grief.

Whatever else they may be -- they have been read as poems of the new science and poems of meditation -- The Anniversaries are within the tradition of poems in the Petrarchan manner. Such poems have "a particular function and form a kind of important supplement to those lamenting the lover's sufferings and praising the lady's beauty -- only after the death of the beloved is it possible fully to realize the extent of beauty, charm, goodness and celestial virtue of which the mortal world was cruelly deprived when Death tore the veil of beauty and Heaven opened its gates." 7 Elizabeth Drury's importance to the poet and to the world is outlined in standard Petrarchan terms: she is a "Queene" (l. 7), "a strong example" (l. 48), the world's "Soul" (l. 54), its "heart" (l. 174), "the first originall/ Of all faire copies" (ll. 227-228), "the worlds beauty" (l. 249). She has, like Laura, "all comeliness, all virtue, and all gentle-mannered ways/ Sweetly conjoined" (CXXVIII. 8-11).

Her death makes the poet realize, by means of his "anatomie", how "corrupt and mortall" (l. 62) the world is. As Petrarch does in Rime CXXVIII, Donne sees the world as blind and unknowing and says, "thou sickle World, mistak'st thy selfe to bee/ Well, when alas, thou'rt in a Lethargie" (ll. 23-
24]. Because she, who was the "Cyment"(1.49), the "intrin-
sique balm" and "preservative"(1. 57), is now dead all the
inherent weaknesses of the world become evident. Each eulogy
—in Martz's five section division — is preceded by an ex-
amination of one aspect of these now evident weaknesses. Af-
ter relating the sickness, the shortness of life, the smallness
of stature of man, he says,

If man were any thing, he's nothing now:
Helps, or at least some time to wast, allow
This other wants, yet when he did depart
With her whom we lament, he lost his heart.
(F. A. 171-174)

Man was sick; now he is worse.

Moreover, the world was decaying from its first hour
(1. 201) to the point that now "'Tis all in peeces, all co-
haerence gone"(1. 213), but, despite this it could have been
held together by her: "She that should all parts to reunion
bow, / She that had all Magnetique force"(ll. 220-221). But
she is dead. Similarly, with beauty "that's colour, and
proportion"(1. 250), she who was the measure, gauge and idea
of proportion (ll. 308-309) is dead. But, he points out
"Perchance the world might have recovered, / If she whom we
lament had not beene dead"(ll. 359-360). When we consider
the well-established, and apparently popular contemporary
theory of the decline of the world, this is an immense hyper-
bole.

After Laura's death Petrarch realizes that to think
on the world was meaningless (Time, CCCXLVI) and he turns his
attention to heaven. Similarly, Donne says that it is vain
to sorrow for the world; it is past that (E.A. 130-133); man should turn to "those rich joyes, which did possess her heart, / Of which she's now partaker, and a part" (ll. 133-134). With this passage The Second Anniversary is introduced.

The First Anniversary is Petrarchan in other ways than in making the world aware of the great loss it suffered in Elizabeth Drury's death. Woman as the cause of man's destruction is a common theme of Petrarchan lament, as Donne's "dying" poems testify. The First Anniversary reveals it too -- in the complete poem and in one passage in particular:

One woman at one blow, then kill'd us all,
And singly, one by one, they kill us now.
We do delightfully our selves allow
To that consumption; and profusely blinde,
Wee kill our selves to propagate our kind.

(ll. 106-110)

This section reveals not only woman's power over man, but man's willing compliance in his destruction. This desperation-fascination paradox is inherent in the Petrarchan tradition of poems on "cruel fairs", and "fair warriors". Love, while elsewhere a redeemer and refiner, in these poems hastens the lover's death; so it does here. The dying of l. 110, while having religious overtones, in this context is the same dying as in "Loves Warre".

The First Anniversary is also rhetorically in the Petrarchan tradition. Donne uses in each section the periodic structure commonly used by Petrarch and his followers: the sentence beginning "She, of whom th'Ancients seem'd to prophesie" (l. 175) and ending "Thou knowest how poore a trifling
thing man is” (l. 184) is typical. In addition, each of the
major sections has the general direction of thought of the
"by (or the world's) paine -- your blame" theme: ll. 91-170
reveal the physical frailty of the world, followed by the
eulogy which shows that her death administered the final
blow (ll. 171-184). This approximates the sentiment and di-
rection of the sonnet, also in periodic structure, which con-
cludes: "Vostro, donna, il peccato, e mio fia 'l danno" ("Son-
etto CLXIX", 14) [Lady, the fault is yours, the hurt is mine.
(CCXXIV)].

While the poem seems to allow only for despair, Donne
turns it around at the end, making his complaint a song.
Elizabeth Drury is to be immortalized because his verse will
yearly resurrect her to "celebrate [her] second birth" (l. 450).
More importantly, she is to be immortalized by the Petrarchan
monument of song which sounds louder than mortality. After
voicing a conventional doubt about his ability to praise her
adequately (ll. 469-470), Donne, like those sad singers before
him in the Petrarchan tradition, says,

when I saw that a strict grave could doe,
I saw not why verse might not do so too.
Verse hath a middle nature: heaven keepes Soules,
The Grave keepes bodies, Verse the Fame enroules.
(ll. 471-474)

The poem to The Second Anniversary, Donne's second
year's rent, recognizes that the poems and the sentiments ex-
pressed in them are Petrarchan, when it exhorts the poem to
"let thy Makers praise/ Honor thy Laura, and adorn thy laiies"
(ll. 35-36). The Second Anniversary, while it does become
more didactic, does not desert Donne's Petrarchan vein. Martz says that Donne gives up "except in the brief Introduction and First Eulogy, the Petrarchan hyperbole which in parts of the Anatomic attributed the decay of the world to the girl's death." While this is true to the extent that the particular hyperbole is largely abandoned, it is not completely true. Donne uses other images and hyperboles which are likewise Petrarchan.

Elizabeth Drury's beauty is extolled in the same imagery as the mistress's beauty in "The Sunne Rising":

Shee, in whose body (if we dare preferre This low world, to so high a marke as shee,) The Western treasure, Eastern spicerie, Europe, and Afrique, and the unknownrest Were easily found, or what in them was best. (S.A. 226-230)

Similarly, just as in Petrarchan verse the lady is often spoken of as queenly and a sovereign, so here Elizabeth Drury "to her selfe a State, injoy'd/ All royalties which any State employ'd" (ll. 359-360). These "royalties" include making war and peace, dispensing justice, and minting money (ll. 361-370).

Petrarch tells that Laura "questa, aspettata al regno degli Dei,/ Cosa bella mortal passa e non dura" ("Sonetto CXC", 7-8) [She is too lovely for mortality;/The gods are looking eagerly for her. (CCXLVIII)], so Donne tells us that Elizabeth Drury is waited for, and even anxious to go to Heaven ("Long'd

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8 The Poetry of Meditation, 238.
for, and longing for it, to heaven is gone,"l. 509). Petrarch also sees Laura as anxious to go to heaven, and anxious for him to follow:

Ella contenta aver cangiato albergo,
Ci paragona pur col più perfetto;
E parte ad or ad or si volge a tergo
Mirando s' io la segu, e par ch' aspetti:
Ond' io voglio e pensier tutti al ciel ergo;
Perch' io l' odo pregar pur ch' i' m' affretti.

("Sonetto LXXIV, in morte", 9-14)

[She, glad to have exchanged her spirit's place,/ Consorts with those whose virtues most exceed;/ At times the while she backward turns her face/ To see me follow — seems to wait and plead:/ Therefore toward heaven my will and soul I raise;/ Because I hear her praying me to speed. (CCCXVI)]

In like manner, Donne says that Elizabeth Drury "is gone:/ And chides us slow-pac'd nai les who crawl e upon/ Our prisons prison, earth." (S.A., 24.7-24.9).

Perhaps the most pervasive Petrarchan aspect of The Second Anniversary is the educative power of Elizabeth Drury. Petrarch alludes to these powers in Laura when in "Sonetto I, in morte" he speaks of her as mending the wicked and teaching honour to the base. It is within this tradition that Donne says of the Countess of Bedford, "You have refin'd mee".

The tradition has another aspect: Laura dead also teaches Petrarch in "Sonetto XXII, in morte"("Come va' l mondo:" [so goes the world]):

Ma 'l cieco Amor e la mia sorda mente
Mi travavi san ch' andar per viva
Forza mi convenia dove morte era.
Benedetta colei ch' a miglior riva
Volve 'l mio corso, e l' empia voglia ardente,
Lusingando, offreno, perch' io non pera.

(11. 9-14)
Blind love and a deaf mind had made me stray;/ So far abroad
that in the search for life/ Needs through death's confines I
must travel still./ Blessed be she who taught me the better
way, / And checked with gentle hand, 'mid ardent strife;/ So
that I perish not, my headstrong will! (CXC)

Teaching him the "better way", she saves his soul. Similarly,
Donne sees Elizabeth Drury as teaching the world. She,
like Laura, is the exemplar of indifference to distracting
worldly questions: "She carries no desire to know, nor sense;/
Whether th'ayres middle region be intense" (ll. 191-192).
She is interested solely in reaching heaven. She is exemplary
of the fact that ignorance of this life, even indifference
to it, is no bar to heaven and a finer knowledge: "In heaven
thou straight know'st all, concerning it,/ And what concerns
it not, shalt straight forget" (ll. 299-300).

Elsewhere, Donne spoke of the Countess of Bedford as
a book from which men could read and learn ("Though I be dead,
and buried", ll. 23-25); here he speaks of Elizabeth Drury as
having read all libraries "in her owne thoughts" (l. 304),
and as having been the original of all virtuous actions just
as in "Sonetto CXC" Laura is all virtue, all gentle manners.
As such, Elizabeth Drury is the source for learning and in-
struction, just as Laura and her successors were for other
Petrarchans. She is, Donne concludes, a divine example: "Since
his [God's] will is, that to posteritie, / Thou should'st for
life, and death, a pattern to bee" (ll. 523-525).

Donne's role, according to the poem, is to sing her
song. She becomes not only the subject but the song itself:
"Thou art the Proclamation"(l. 527). He becomes not only the singer; he is, at the end, the "Trumpet" (l. 528). She will have the immortality of all immortalized Petrarchan ladies: her fame entombed in verse. She will, however, have another kind of immortality: he asks that she be the father of his muse, "since her chaste Ambition is, /Yearly to bring forth such a child as this [poem] "(ll. 35-36). Moreover, he says, perhaps hoping for imitators and a legacy such as Petrarch had, "These Hymnes may worke on future wits, and so/ May great Grand children of thy prayses grow"(ll. 37-38). The prospect is dizzying.

As suggested above, these poems have provoked varying critical interpretation -- especially as to the "real" identity and significance of "she", who is not named in the poems themselves. I believe that "she" is Elizabeth Drury, first and foremost, and, because the individual beauty was often seen as a manifestation of an ideal beauty, I believe that "she" is "the idea of a woman". The Petrarchan tradition of praise for the lady, because of the stereotypes, the clichés, and the stock images, never demanded a one-for-one correspondence between the lady written about and the lady in the poem. Laura herself is the subject of similar conjecture, and was in Petrarch's time. Morris Bishop feels he has a certain identification -- Laura de Sade⁹; however, many see her as an abstraction of love or philosophy -- the name Laura lends it-

⁹Bishop, 65-66.
self to puns: "il lauro", the laurel-tree; "l'aura", the breeze; "l'aura", gold. Even Giacomo de Colonna, Petrarch's good friend, doubted her existence, perhaps facetiously. The suggestion prompted a sharp reply from Petrarch. 10 Similarly, Shakespeare's mistress and friend have remained unknown; doubts about the identity of Spenser's lady persist; even Sidney's object of love has been questioned. 11 The reason is, partly at least, in the nature of the Petrarchan tradition which calls for stereotyping and for idealization.

Moreover, the First and Second Anniversaries make no claim to "sincerity". Just as the "Songs and Sonets" and verse letters are often poses, "caps", or dramatic inventions in a convention which did not demand — even shunned — sincerity, so with these poems. In a letter from Paris in April, 1612, Donne, referring to criticism of the two poems by jealous lady friends, says the following:

But for the other part of the imputation of having said too much, my defence is, that my purpose was to say as well as I could: for since I never saw the Gentlewoman, I cannot be understood to have bound myself to have spoken just truths; but I would not be thought to have gone about to praise her, or any other in rime: except I took such a person, as might be capable of all that I could say. If any of those Ladies think that Mistris Drewry was not so, let that Lady make her self fit for all those praises in the book, and they shall be hers. 12

The fact that he did not know her is unimportant; many Petrar-

10 Bishop, 68.
12 Complete Poetry and Prose, 382.
chists, if they had a real person in mind at all, often did not know the ladies they praised.

Similarly, to take the famous passages on the decline of the world and the ravages of the new science as ones of unalloyed high seriousness is to risk biographical and literal extensions which are not justified. It was by now traditional to see the world in decline. Earlier, Spenser, for purposes of his narrative saw the world "runne quite out of square" and "being once amisse grows daily worse and worse" (F. Q. V, Proem, 7, 9). Moreover, just as Donne could fell and disintegrate a waning world with Elizabeth Drury's death, so he could just as easily restore it again:

Faire, great, and good, since seeing you, wee see
What Heaven can doe, and what any Earth can be:
Since now your beauty shines, now when the Sunne
Grown stale, is to so low a value runne,
That his disshevel'd beames and scattered fires
Serve but for Ladies Periwigs and Tyres
In lovers Sonnets: you come to repair
Gods book of creatures, teaching what is faire.

("To the Countess of Salisbury", 1-8)

Besides being nearly an answer to Petrarch's rhetorical question, "Chi vuol veder quantunque può Natura/ E 'l Ciel tran noi" ("Sonetto CXC") [You seek the best that Nature can confer/ Upon our universe? (CCXLVIII)], it employs a similar rhetorical to The Anniversaries. A passage on the loss of value of the sun (ll. 3-7) is followed by her restorative effect (ll. 7-8); this is an inversion of the my paine -- your blame pattern of The First Anniversary. Similarly, like the refrain "Shee, she is dead", we have here "since now" (ll. 3, 9, 31),
and a variant "since these times" (l. 22). Moreover, the whole poem is an example of the periodic style drawn out to sonorous paragraphs such as Petrarch commonly used in his sonnets, and as Donne himself did with singular effect in The Anniversaries.

Like Elizabeth Drury, the Countess has refining and educative powers (ll. 23, 32) sometimes (ll. 33-34) strikingly similar to hers (2.2., 303-305). Donne is aware of the similarities. He explains the fact that "things like these have been said by mee/ Of others"(ll. 37-38) by a long argument (ll. 38-70) which he put more succinctly earlier: "Twice or thrice had I loved thee,/ Before I knew thy face or name"("Aire and Angels", 1-2). This is the stock Petrarchan excuse and compliment that all other loves, all other praises, are but an anticipation of the present one. He might have added that these "things" have also been said of Laura and countless adored ladies.

While The Anniversaries may exploit various learned traditions, they are essentially Petrarchan — mannered, courtly and posed. They make use of elements of praise and lament employed in the Petrarchan tradition of "In Morte di Madonna Laura", and rest squarely, but enigmatically, in the line of eulogies written to commemorate countless other real or imagined deaths of real or imagined young ladies of noble families.
THE SACRED VERSE

Donne's poetry being so diverse, allusive, and having a religious and an amorous face like so much Petrarchan poetry, it is difficult to categorize it. Moreover, one cannot safely date the poems merely on the assumption that the religious are late and the secular early, because he may well have written some love songs and some "Holy Sonnets" during the same period.¹ However, for the purposes of discussion such a division must be essayed.

Donne's verse letter "To the Countess of Salisbury" and his argument explaining the similarity between things said earlier and things said to the Countess, help to illuminate his religious verse. Written as it was in August, 1614, just short months before his decision to take orders, the poem may also describe his practice in the praise of God in Petrarchan terms:

I adore
The same things now, which I ador'd before,
The subject chang'd, and measure; the same thing
In a low constable, and in the King
I reverence; His power to work on mee.

(11. 57-61)

It is the same love, merely the subject of it has changed;

¹Martz discusses this, 216-217.
it is the same courtly position -- the dependent suitor and the dominant patron or lord.

Platonized Petrarchian love leads the lover upwards to a greater love. Though they celebrate on one level a passion either fulfilled or unfulfilled, the loves and their praises lend themselves simultaneously to a love in which the beloved prefigures the divine. Petrarach says to his soul,

Sforzati al cielo, o mio stanco coraggio,
Per la nebbia entro de' suoi dolei adegna
Seguendo i passi onesti e 'l divo raggio.

("Sonetto CLII", 12-14)

[Upward, faint soul, thy heavenward path incline;/ Through clouds of her sweet wrath pursue thy quest;/ Following the seemly steps and ray divine. (CCIV)"

It is in this tradition that Donne says,

So am I debtor unto them, whose worth,
Enabled me to profit, and take forth
This new great lesson, thus to study you;
Which none, not reading others, first, could doe.

(ll. 67-70)

Each succeeding love leads to, and makes apprehensible, a greater one.

Although the Biblical "Song of Songs" gave the classic example of the marriage of secular and sacred loves, it was the medieval worship of the lady carried on in Petrarch's love for Laura that the English Petrarchists gainfully

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2Martz says that "devotion to the Virgin . . . was one of the strongest resources cultivated by the Counter Reformation", p. 96. How much its success may have depended upon, or was built upon, the thousands of poems, studies and commentaries on Laura and her daughters, he does not speculate on.
employed in their transporting of Petrarchan ardour to the
service of religion. Robert Southwell, particularly, made
this attempt. In Marie Magdalena Funeral Tears (1591),
Mary is "presented as a pattern of the 'perfect lover,' with
frequent echoes of devices familiar to love poetry."\(^3\) His
aim is presented in his "Epistle Dedicatorie" quoted in Martz
(184-185):

> Passions I allow, and loves I approve, onely I would wishe
> that men would alter their object and better their intent ..
> Love is but the infanty of true charity, yet sucking
> natures teate, and swathed in her bandes, which then groweth
> to perfection, when faith besides naturall motiues proposeth
> higher and nobler groundes of amitye.

Martz sees this as an attack on profane literature; however,
I do not see any significant conflict between this statement
and Pietro Bembo's "ladder of love" speech in The Courtyer,
or Petrarch's sentiments in "Sonetto CLII". If Southwell
was successful in his attempts to "woe some skilfuller
pennes from unworthy labours", the reason for his success
might be that for many Petrarchists, like Donne, earlier
loves were but preludes to a higher one which they could now
worship without repudiating the former completely.

Southwell's own "The Death of Our Ladie" and "The
Assumption of Our Ladie" are phrased in the hyperbolic
language of Petrarchan praise used by Donne in the praise of
Elizabeth Drury.\(^4\) Indeed, Southwell's poems are preceded by

\(^3\) Martz, 184. Subsequent Southwell citations are also
to Martz.

\(^4\) See Martz, 105, where the poems are printed.
and surrounded by a whole legacy which also deals with nature weeping at the death of the lady (1. 1), the lady's sovereignty in heaven and on earth (1. 2), the lady as the sum of virtues (1. 6), stars in the lady's eyes (1. 7), the forsaken earthlings' displacement, and cosmic disorders (11. 8-12).

In such a milieu, Spenser on the one hand (Acorbith, XXII) might use religion in the service of secular love, or he might conclude that "Such heavenly formes ought rather worship be,/ then dare be lov'd by men of meane degree" (LXI, 13-14). The two loves, secular and sacred, are here, as in much Petrarchan literature, so closely interpenetrated that often we are unsure to which the writer refers. The ambiguity is enhanced by the natures of the loves: the emotion of an adoring love, absorbed in the contemplation of its object, or of penitence overwhelmed by, and often despairing of, the sense of personal unworthiness, are by their very natures both Petrarchan and Christian. As Donne says, relating to his progressively higher loves, "I adore/ The same things now, which I ador'd before"; he "reverence[s]" what both the Petrarchan lady and God have in common -- "power to work on mee."

In an early sermon, the newly ordained (January 23, 1615) Dr. Donne reveals that Solomon's "disposition was amorous, and excessive in the love of women: when he turned to God, he departed not utterly from his old phrase"; 5

5Quoted in Le Comte, 151.
neither, he intimates, will he. Nor did the Petrarcan courtliness disappear in his ordinary correspondence: in a letter to Sir Edward Herbert, written apparently on the day he took orders, Donne alludes to his "unworthynes", Herbert's "power" over him, in fact his "possession" of him. Similarly, in a letter to Sir Robert Carre, written in April, 1619, he concludes with an abjectly Petrarcan reference to the refining power of Carre's love: "Love me still, thus farre, for your own sake, that when you withdraw your love from me, you will finde so many unworthinesses in me, as you grew ashamed of having had so long, and so much, such a thing as . . . J. Donne." The witty Petrarchist does not change his manner, his idiom, merely because his position in life changes. A man as interested in his public image as his verse letters and his portraits show he is, does not so readily forsake a publicly popular convention; he uses it. Just as he, a former Roman Catholic, will use elements of predominantly Roman Catholic meditations in such widely different works as his "Holy Sonnets" and The Anniversaries, so he will use Petrarchan elements in both his secular and sacred verse.

Donne commonly mixed secular and sacred loves in the "Songs and Sonets", applying to the love relationship religious language and motifs. He echoes Paul's words to

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6The Complete Poetry, 383-384, 386, respectively.
the Corinthians (I, 15: 31) in "A Valediction: of my name": "since I die daily, daily mourn" (l. 42). In "Twicknam garden" he minglesthe tears and sighs of the Petrarchan lover with religious images: "Manna", "Paradise", "the serpent". In "A nocturnall" the beloved is a saint and "This houre her Vigill" (l. 44). One of his favourite religious motifs is that of the miraculous resurrection: he uses it in "The Relique" and in "The Canonization".

Whereas the form of Donne’s secular verse is often highly individual, when he turns to religious subjects he becomes more conventional. He returns to the sonnet, the amatory vehicle generally associated with the Petrarchan tradition, in ‘La Corona’ and the ‘Holy Sonnets’. Similarly, he uses anadiplosis, the end-linking of stanzas or poems, known to a large number of contemporary and earlier poets in the Petrarchan tradition, in ‘La Corona’. While probably also linked with English rosary-treatises, this device is a "synthesis of the methods and materials from both religious and profane poetry". Indeed, "corone di sonetti" were used by Serafino, Tasso, and Guarini, and by Daniel in his sequence "To Delia", in poems in the Petrarch- an manner. While it is, of course, possible that Donne is here using religious precedents, it is more characteristic of him, and quite plausible because of his knowledge of

7 Martz, 107. The subsequent quote is also from here.
Italian writers, to have been thinking of secular Petrarchan precedents.

Donne does use, of course, many images and motifs from his secular Petrarchan verse in his religious verse. His famous compass image, which has Petrarchan resonances, is used in his occasional and his religious verse. He uses it in "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington" when rhetorically questioning why the span of man's life was so shortened in Lord Harrington: "one foot of thy compasse still was plac'dd/In heav'n"(ll. 107-108); the other could have paced about the whole world with security. He returns to it also in "Expostulation XX" in his Devotions to illustrate man's need to set the foot of his compass on God, his true centre.

He is aware that the Petrarchan storms and tears will have their counterpart in religious love:

O Holy Ghost, whose temple I
Am, but of mudde walls, and condensed dust,
And being sacrilegiously
Halle wasted with youths fires, of pride and lust,
Must with new storms be weatherbest;
Double in my heart thy flame,
Which let devout sad teares intend.

("The Litanie", 19-25)

His poem "The Crosse" plays with the word and idea of the cross in an audacious manner typical of that in his secular verse: "crosse thy heart"(l. 51), "Crosse those dejections" (l. 53), "Crosse and correct concupisence of witt"(l. 58), and finally, "children, which our Crosses are"(l. 64).

His "Resurrection"(imperfect) is, like "The Sunne
Rising", an aubade: "Sleep sleep old Sun, thou canst not have repast/ As yet" (ll. 1-2). In place of the carnal death and rising implied in "The Sunne Rising", he has the religious death and rising of Christ (ll. 2-4). As in "The Sunne Rising" where the mistress could easily eclipse the sun, here Donne says, "A better Sun rose before thee today" (l. 4). This sun-eclipsing Son not only shines to greater and vaster worlds, it also has the "power to make even sinfull flesh like his" (l. 16) -- a restorative power held also by eulogized Petrarchan ladies.

At times the interplay is less obvious. Donne's curse of Eve in "The Progresse of the Soule" owes something to the Petrarchan curse of the cruel fair who causes suffering in her lover, in the "my pain--your blame" theme: "Shoe sinn'd, we beare; part of our paine is, thus/ To love them, whose fault to this painfull love yoak'd us" (ll. 95-100). As in Petrarchan uses of this theme, the fascination despite the pain is also there. The virulence of the curse in ll. 501-510 has precedent in Petrarchism: in Spenser's animal imagery (Amoretti, XX, XXXI); in Watson's curse, imitating Serafino: "I curse her hollowe heart and flattering eyes,/ Whose sly deceyte did cause my mourning cryes" (Hek., XCIII, 5-6); in Wyatt's "Farewell, love, and all thy laws for ever"; and in Jodelle's "Fute, traitresse, fierce, horrible, & charmeresse" ("Contr' Amours", V, 13). 8

8 Jodelle quoted in Schaar, Sonnet Themes, 75.
Grierson speculates (II. 219) that the date of the poem, August 16, 1601, and the sardonic handling of women, point to its being intended as a castigation of Queen Elizabeth because of the Essex affair. If this is the case, it gives an excellent example of Donne's use of Petrarchan materials which, because they are conventional, allow him to make a private and covert complaint with relative impunity.

Even in his most personal, occasional, poetry, he employs some elements from the Petrarchan legacy. He seems to transform Sir Thomas Wyatt's refrain to "The lover complaineth the unkindnesse of his love" to his purposes in "A Hymne to God the Father"(ll. 1-6). In "A Hymne to Christ, at the Authors last going into Germany", he makes use of the lover-ship imagery (ll. 1-4, 31-32) and the same argumentative tone used in his secular verse in ll. 21-24.

It is, however, in his "Holy Sonnets" that Donne's Petrarchism is most noticeable, and in which his particular use of it is best displayed. These sonnets are, like much of his religious and secular verse, relational. They are not poems about God, or solely in praise of God, but they are about himself in relation to God. In them he explores his relationship with and feelings toward God as he and Petrarch explored their feelings toward their mistresses.

\[9\textit{Kirszen points this out, 211, and illustrates it, 177.}\]
Moreover, a recognition of his conscious intentions "takes us some way towards appreciation of his achievement, and can save us from too simple a correlation between the experience of the poet and his translation of it into poetry." While this may be true of other traditions exploited in the sonnets, it is also true of his stated intentions concerning the use of amatory language in his religious works, and of statements as the following: "to day/ In prayers, and flattering speeches I court God"(XIX, 9-10). It is by the use of the language of the courtier and of amatory courtship -- Petrarchism -- that his relationship with God is illuminated.

In "Holy Sonnet XIV" ("Batter my heart, three person'd God") Donne makes use of the familiar theme of love as war. All the images of a secular love-war are here: "batter", "o'erthrow", "breake", "blowe", "burn", "a usurpt towne", "reason your viceroy", "captiv'd", "imprison", "enthral". While the octave concentrates on the battle theme, the sestet sees the relation between the poet and God as a secular siege and seizure -- the basis of the metaphor of war. As in "The Preake of Day", the speaker here takes the woman's part, which Donne and other Petrarchists felt to be the more inconstant role in the love relationship (ll. 7-8). The pleasure-pain principle of love is also evident.

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10 Gardner, The Divine Poems, 1v.
here, especially in I1. 12-14: "For I/ Except you'enthral
me, never shall be free;/ Nor ever chaste except you ravish
me."

Similarly, the "my pain-your blame" theme may be
seen in the following: "Then turne/ O pensive soule, to God,
for he knowes best/ Thy true griefe, for he put it in my
breast"(VIII, 12-14). Indeed, the pain of the poet in his
relationship with God is generally expressed in hyperbolic
Petrarchan terms: most often it is in a flood of tears, as
in, "Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might/ Drowne
my world with my weeping earnestly"(V, 7-8); or in, "of
thine onely worthy blood,/ And my teares, make a heavenly
Lethean flood"(IX, 10-11). Sometimes the pain is express-
ed in the complaint of the unsatisfied lover ("A holy thirsty
dropsy melts mee yett", XVII, 8). While in the secular
Petrarchan verse, the woman generally exercises her power
without reprieve, day and night, to drive the lover to end-
less tears, sighs, despair and death, in the "Holy Sonnets"
God does.

Donne's use of many Petrarchan themes of praise is
also evident. As we have seen, sonnets on the Platonic theme
of immanent ideal beauty in the beloved are common enough
in Petrarchan literature. In this tradition, the beauty is
seen as the outward manifestation of inner virtues; Spenser
says, "But mercy doth with beautie best agree,/ as in theyr
maker ye them best may see"(LIII, 13-14). Similarly Donne,
fearful that judgment may be imminent, looks into the face of Christ and hopefully asserts, "This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde" (XIII, 14). Christ's face, impossible to be seen otherwise, is, like a picture of a Petrarchan lover's mistress, in Donne's heart: "Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell;/ The picture of Christ crucified" (ll. 2-3). This face, while bespeaking mercy, also shows the potent eyes so common to the sonnet lady's, in "the amazing light" (l. 5) of his eyes.

The Platonic "ladder of love" theme seen elsewhere in Donne and Petrarch is also present here. Since the death of his wife, Donne says, "Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett" (XVII, 4), just as Petrarch, after the death of Laura, says, "Onde' io voglie e pensier tutti al ciel ergo" ("Sonetto LXXIV, in morte", 13) ["Therefore toward heaven my will and soul I raise." (CCCXLVI)]. Just as the love of Laura drew Petrarch's soul heavenward ("Sonetto CIII"), so here (XVII) Donne says, "the admiring her my mind did whett/To seeke thee God; so streams do show their head" (ll. 5-6).

The relationship with God is, however, no easier or more re-assuring than the relationship with the mistress. As such, it promotes in Donne, as it did in Petrarch, a searching introspection rather than a pictorialization as in Southwell and Crashaw. In fact, Donne's "Holy Sonnet I", especially lines 6-14, and his XIX, 9-14, are quite similar to portions of Petrarch's "Canzone XVII": 
I' vo pensando, e nel pensier m' assale
Una pietà si forte di me stesso,
Che mi conduce spesso
Mi altro lagnito di' i' non solleva:
Che vedendo ogni giorno il fin più presso,
L'ulte fiaste ho chieste a Dio quell' ale
Con le qui di del mortale
Caster nostr' intelletto al ciel si leva;
Ma infin a qui miene mi rileva
Prego o sospiro o lagnito ch' io faccia:
E così per ragion convien che sia;
Che chi possendo star, cadde tra via,
Degno è che mal suo grado a terra giaccia.
Quelle pietose braccia,
In ch' io fido, veggio aperta ancora;
Ma temenza m' accora
Per gli altrui esempi; a del mio stato tremo;
Ch' altri mi sprona, e son forse all' estremo.

(11. 1-18)

[As thought succeeding thought within me springs:/ Such keen self-sorrow in my mind is bred/ That I am moved to shed/ Far other tears than those I went before:/ Till, every day drawn nearer to the dead,/ From God a thousand times I seek the wings/ Whereon to heavenly things/ The spirit, freed from earthly bonds, can soar;/ Yet strive in vain, for in the end my store/ Of sighs and tears and prayers must fruitless prove,/ And justly so, For if we let our feet/ Stumble when we have strength to stand, 'tis meet/ We sink, how'er we long to rise above./ The outstretched arms of Love/ Are open still, on which my trust is fixed;/ And yet I pause perplexed;/ Fearful to see my own in others' fate;/ A prey to sins I may repent too late. (CCLXIV)]

Ma quell' altro voler, di ch' i' son pieno,
Quanti press' a lui nascon par ch' adugga;
E parte il tempa fugge.

(11. 73-75)

[A third desire thereafter fills my brain:/ Shadowed by which no other thought can grow;/ While seasons come and go]}

Che con la morte a lato
Cerco del viver mio novo consiglio,
E vèrrio 'l meglio ed al peggior m' appiglio.

(11. 134-136)

[Death bears me company;/ Who, seeking counsel for amendment still;/ Perceive the good yet choose perforce the ill]}

All the doubts, the encircling despair and death, the complete
awareness of their feeble flesh, the look to God for wings to soar to heaven, the rising and falling back to the old ways; the continuing claims of the tempter, the complete dependence upon God, and the "fear of his rod"—all are here in both writers.

Out of a long tradition of the contrary and painful delights of love, imitated from Petrarch's "Pace non trovo, e non ho da far guerra;/ E temo e spero, ed ardo, e son un ghiaccio" ("Sonetto XCV", 1-2) [I find no peace and bear no arms for war;/ I fear, I hope; I burn yet shake with chill(CXXXIV)], comes "Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one" (XIX, 1). This poem, while apparently autobiographical, is in the Petrarchan tradition. His religious is like his profane love: "as ridingly distemper'd, cold and hot" (1. 7). Full of those two old twins, hope ("In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God") and fear ("To morrow I quake with true fear of his rod"), his love for God breeds the same result as his love of mistresses—inscurity and complaint.

One major reason for this inscurity is his full knowledge of himself and his "fantastique Ague". To most Petrarchians a time came when a retraction seemed in order. Petrarch himself affected to scorn his "trifles"; he even preceded his Rime with a palinode (probably written later in life and inserted):

Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono
Di quei sospiri ond’ io madriva il core
In sul mio primo giovinile ercro,
Quand’ era in parte altr’ uom da quel ch’ i’ sono;
Del vario stile in ch’ io piango e ragiono
Fra le vani speranze e ’l van dolore,
Ove sia ch’ io prova intenda amore,
Spero trovar pietà, non che perdono.
Ma ben vegghi’ or si come al popol tutto
Favola fu gi gran tempo; onde sovente
Di me medesmo meco mi vergogno:
E del mio vaneggiar vergogna e ’l frutto,
E ’l pentirsi, e ’l conoscere chiaramente
Che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.

("Sonnetto I")

Thus ye who in these scattered rhymes may hear/The echoes of the sighs that fed my heart/In errant youth, for I was then, in part/Another man from what I now appear:/If you have learned by proof how love can scar,/Then for these varied verses where I chart/Its vain and empty hope and vainer smart/Pardon I may beseech, nay, Pity’s tear./For now I see how once my story spread/And I became a wonder to mankind/So in my heart I feel ashamed—alas,/That nought but shame my vanities have bred,/And pence, and the knowledge of clear mind/That earthly joys are dreams that swiftly pass. (I)

The differentiation here between youthful profligacy and aged wisdom, sobriety and maturity which represents the youthful sensuality, becomes a decorum in the legacy. We see it in The Courtier, Book IV, in which the throes of the Petrarchian lover are associated with youth, but the aged man in sensual love deserves "with an everlasting shame to be put in the number of unreasonable living creatures, because the thoughts and ways of sensual love be far unfitting for ripe age." 11 In this vein, Wyatt says in "Farewell, love, and all thy laws for ever", "go trouble younger hearts"(l. 9), and "With

11 Tudor Poetry and Prose, 697.
idle youth go use thy property;/ And thereon spend thy
many brittle darts"(11. 11-12).

It is in this tradition that Donne's palingen
"Holy Sonnet III" must be read, especially if Miss Gard-
ner's dating of the sonnets -- from the latter half of 1609
to the early 1611 -- is accurate (and I am satisfied that
it is). Coming at such a time, it would not be prompted
by any concerns for his clerical position (gained in
1615) to retract his earlier erotic poetry. Even after
his ordination, while he apparently tried to collect his
scattered manuscripts, there is no indication that he
wished to destroy them or to completely suppress them.
His instructions to Sir Robert Carre, in a letter of April
1619, asked that certain pieces be not published or burned,
but that any persons who saw them be aware that they were
written by Jack Donne, not by Dr. John Donne.12

In "Holy Sonnet III" Donne repents the tears shed
and the sighs expressed, just as Petrarch did; he regrets
the fruitless mourning (l. 4) as Petrarch regretted the
"vain and empty hope and vainer smart". Just as Donne
"must suffer paine"(l. 8), so Petrarch saw his vanities
breed "penance". Moreover, Donne's continuing pain (11.
13-14) was felt also by Petrarch, who sees in age that
"earthly joys are dreams that swiftly pass". The unspoken,

12 The Complete Poetry, 387.
but unmistakable impression that these tears and griefs of "Idolatry" were in the past, rather than a lapse from one of his "devout fits" (XIX, 12), puts this palinode in the tradition of Petrarchan retraction.

One of the causes and, no doubt, one of the results of the palinode is the awareness of "Despair behind; and death before" (I, 6). While all Petrarchists seek death as an erotic completion of love, and as the final release from their fleshly thralldom, in a religious context their indulgence of the thralls gives many reason to pause on the brink. Petrarch, nearing death, in fear and hope asks the following:

Si che, s'io vissi in guerra ed in tempesta,
Mora in pace ed in porto; e se la stanza
Fu vano, almen sia la partita onesta.
A quel poco di viver che m' avanza
Ed al morir degni esser tua man presta.
Tu sai ben che n' altrui non ho speranza.

("Sonetto LXXXV, in morte", 9-14)

Out of the battle, out of the hurricane, /I come to harbour; may my passing be /Worthy, as all my dwelling here was vain;/ And may Thy hand be quick to comfort me /In death, and in the hours that still remain./ Thou knowest, I have no other hope but Thee. (CCCLXV)

Similarly, Donne, in "A Hymne to God the Father", fears that he will perish "on the shore" (l. 14), but hopes that Christ will "shine as he shines now, and heretofore" (l. 16). The tone of hopeful beseeching and complete dependence, the sense of fatigue after a long, stormy journey to the shore of heaven, are in Donne's poem as they are in Petrarch's.
Petrarchism, therefore, offers Donne more than a disguise for his religious feelings or a storehouse of images. With its concern for personal feelings, Petrarchism developed into a technique for expressing courtly sentiments, polite conversation, and a range of emotions. As such it had a real meaning. In the pulpit Donne seemed to speak the language of his audience: at Lincoln's Inn, sometimes he joked, sometimes he was facetious about his audience's profession (the law), sometimes he argued more than one side of a proposition. Likewise, in his religious verse he used the idiom of Petrarchism because it was his and his audience's idiom, because it had poise and currency, and because to do so was within the tradition. Consequently, he gave his religious verse a special reality and significance for his select audience. Such a poet as Southwell did no more than he said: he turned secular forms to devotional use. Donne did much more. Whereas Catholic and Puritan religious poetry often makes sense of God by making nonsense of man and life, Donne does not. In relating the Petrarchan and Christian ideals of service, humility, adoration, yearning and dependence, and, in relating the Petrarchan and Christian uncertainty, hopes and fears, he makes sense of religion and man's religious experience.

His religious poetry, like Petrarch's, does not try to delineate God or ineffable religious experiences;
rather, it deals with Donne's own struggles with himself and with God. Partly because of the demands of the meditative conventions, but more certainly because it is characteristic of him, Donne speaks in a living voice which gives the conflict an illusion of present experience. In the drama of the conflicts of character, and the tensions of sometimes surprising secular-sacred analogies, he does something which few religious poets before or since have done: he makes religious poetry human and interesting.

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CONCLUSION

There is a good modern game, to buy an ancient church or house in Europe, to number its stones, demolish it, and set it up again in New York, California, or Florida. But something is always missing in the rebuilding. The ghost of the house has been left behind; the church has lost its Holy Ghost. Similarly the biographer tries to demolish a man, number his qualities, and put them together again. He always fails, for half the qualities are always mislaid or wrongly numbered. And even if the structure crazily stands, the ghost comes not to inhabit it.

Although this statement was originally made in reference to the biography of Petrarch, it has an equally forceful and fitting application in the case of the modern re-establishment of John Donne. The rebuilding of his reputation in this century has been fashioned using the plans and specifications, not of his own age, but of the modern age and poetic. This poetic has erected a modern Donne, radically out of place beside his contemporaries. While it is true that each succeeding generation, from the distance of history, seems to be in rebellion against the values and extravagances of its predecessors, it is also true that it is less a rebellion than it appears to be. Miss Rosemund Tuve, speaking of the generalizations about Donnean rebellion, asserts: "to leaf through Donne or Sidney or Carew is to make a list of the old conceits -- fire and ice, sighs and winds, heart

\[1\] Bishop, 370.
wounded or besieged or made a temple, Cupid (Love with or without the capital), the eyes, the altar, and so on. But what poet (or lover) ever did otherwise than claim that the old ways of pleading his cause or praising his lady are sufficient? And, if he wishes to calumniate her, that the old ways are falsifications?"²

Petrarch's legacy is not, however, a formula. While it is true that to work in a tradition demands some limitations, and that a Petrarchan poet expresses his feelings through a set of responses and stylized situations, to say that and that only is unjust and unfair. It ignores that the legacy of Petrarch is the product of a highly individual poetic personality -- that of Petrarch himself. It ignores that the legacy allowed for as many variations of style as there were good poets to write in them. It suggests that one should judge the tradition by its worst practitioners and most servile copiers, rather than by its most inventive and adventurous artists.

John Donne is such an artist; he explores completely the rhetorical possibilities and postures of the legacy, adapting it to his own needs and situation. With an unwavering command of it, he stamps every line with his own utterly individual rhythm. In substance, however, most of what he says in the verse that we have surveyed can be accommodated to the tradition, either to Petrarch himself,

²Tuve, 1420.
to those in his line, or to the peripheral accumulations of the legacy. But he does use the tradition for his own ends, as Chaucer did, or Wyatt, or Spenser did, because it had become the standard for the expression of the vagaries and joys of love. He uses it as the Pastons did, and as Watson did in his "Protrepticon", because it had become for him and for those with whom he did, or wished to, associate with, the vehicle of expression for so many manners, sentiments, and social feelings. As such, however, he "does not provide what many critics demand of poetry: a broad, radically new conception of life."³

The assumption is that every writer or serious artist, to be worth his salt in the twentieth century, must create his own world and style from scratch, for himself and of himself, with no common values to lean on. Working from this assumption, and convinced that Donne is a modern, critics have explicated his works with the view that his poetry comprised of meditations on the meaning of things. But the poetry that we have looked at is not primarily meditative, except perhaps the sacred verse. It is mannered, social, witty, extravagant, and Petrarchan. Moreover, it springs from a variety of situations: perhaps personal, perhaps public and courtly, perhaps whimsical. I say "perhaps" because it is difficult, now, to determine what his

³Guss, 107.
motivation was, then, in each case. It is especially
dangerous to make some judgment about an individual poem's
subject or motivation by its tone. The poem "Eccologues", which celebrates the marriage of the Earl of Somerset to
Frances Howard, in December, 1613, contains an "Epithalamion" which ends,

This is joyes bonfire, then, where loves strong Arts
Make of so noble individually parts
One fire of foure inflaming eyes, and of two loving
hearts.

(11. 223-225)

As Le Comte says, the poetry "has more nobility than the
alliance it celebrates." Despite the rumours, and the
known facts, Donne "carefully adheres to the Epithalamion
tradition that the bride and groom's confrontation on their
wedding night was their first." Such discrepancies should
should warn us against demanding what we call sincerity or
expressions of his personality in his poetry.

Because of his penchant for poses, we should stop
taking his poetry as seriously as we do. He certainly did
not, if the wit, the poses, the inconsistencies, and the
uses of Petrarchism for practical ends are any evidence.
We are never allowed to rest in one attitude or gesture as
we read his poetry, one poem after another. Each succeed-
ing poem might, and often does, give the contradictory
attitude to the preceding one. He is able, therefore, to

4 Le Comte, 143, 144.
affect a freshness, a rebellion, although he himself does not seem to be committed to any of the contradictory attitudes.

He, moreover, thinks of tradition and other writers as useful. In the "Epistle" to "The Progresse of the Soule" (1601) he writes the following:

None writes so ill, that he gives not some thing exemplary, to follow, or flie. Now when I beginne this booke, I have no purpose to come into any man's debt; how my stocke will hold out I know not; perchance waste, perchance increase in use; if I doe borrow any thing of Antiquitie, besides that I make account that I pay it to posterity, with as much and as good: You shall still finde mee to acknowledge it, and to thanke not him onely that hath digg'd out treasure for mee, but that hath lighted mee a candle to the place.

Whereas modern critics too often see the writing of a poet as self-expression, Donne and his contemporaries saw it as the culmination of high civilization -- its materials dug up, burnished to a new brightness, and thankfully acknowledged.

And so John Donne's poetry is not the utterance of an iconoclast, not the crystallization of a great discovery. Through the use of fashionable Petrarchan language and situation, in a charade of poses, in the chess-game of court and patron preferment, or in the mixed passion of religious complaint and song, he shows that the Petrarchan tradition need not be stifling or enervating. Discarding for a moment what A. J. Smith calls our "inward-focused modern spectacles".

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we must see that in much of his poetry, John Donne -- notwithstanding the evidence in his work of a strongly gifted personality with a fine dramatic sense -- is a poet who re-presents, and poses in, received positions which he and all Elizabethan poets were bequeathed in the legacy of Petrarch.

If the numbering of the stones of a demolished John Donne building were to take place, one of the cornerstone stones would have to be marked "Petrarchan". If the building is to be re-erected with justice and proportion to-day so that his ghost lives there, this cornerstone must be placed at the front, not out back where the flawed stones are set. Moreover, the building must be erected, not in a neo-Jacobean split-level style, but as a traditional Elizabethan structure which at times expresses and perhaps epitomizes all the inventiveness that the times and the style produced. Only after such a balance is achieved, will the ghost of Donne animate any reconstruction of him.
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