FIGURES OF SPACE AND LABYRINTHS OF LANGUAGE:

A STUDY OF JOHN DONNE'S *ANNIVERSARIE* POEMS

by

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ABSTRACT

Donne's deployment of figures of space in the *Anniversaries* is influenced by the sophisticated mathematical methods developed during the Renaissance to explore the trackless expanses of Copernican space. Although not especially sympathetic to the new science, Donne draws upon it to present the highly diagrammatic and conceptual view of the world which we find in the *Anniversaries*. Donne, however, also adapts his figures of space in a particular manner to draw out the religious mystery which the death of Elizabeth Drury represents.

Chapter I deals with the experience of disorientation which was a pervasive consequence of the New Philosophy, and of which the *Anniversaries* give a strong sense. Although disorienting, the Copernican universe was also challenging, and scientists were encouraged to develop more efficient systems of organising data based on spatial models, such as we find in Ramist dialectic. Efficiency in spatial organisation, however, was bought at the price of separation between reason and faith; divine truths are revealed and remain inscrutable to scientific enquiry. Donne's recognition of this aspect of the New Philosophy leads to a painful self-reflexiveness in the *Anniversaries* where he seeks to describe the significance of a symbol of spiritual perfection, Elizabeth Drury. Donne draws the reader into his own perplexity as he explores the inexorably paradoxical relationship between the language of discursive reason and the truths of faith. And in the curious perspectives produced by

Donne's dramatisation of divine mystery through metaphors of space lies the peculiar distinction of the *Anniversarie* poems.

The purpose of Chapter II is to explore Donne's deployment of positive and negative spatial symbols as he sets up an antithesis between the perfection of the circle, suggestive of the imagined completeness of the glorified soul, and the imperfect spiral pattern, suggestive of man's perpetual doubts and uncertainties as he searches out the mysteries of religion along the various and perplexed ways of natural reason. Chapter III continues this line of enquiry by suggesting that the uncertainties implicit in the spatial metaphor of the spiral are reflected in the complex argument of the poetry which follows a deliberately convoluted and tortuous course. Donne invites us to explore the curious perspectives and paradoxical structures produced by the labyrinth of language so that we might come to a better understanding of the relationship between human reason and divine mystery.

The concluding chapter deals with Donne's use of figures of space in the secular and devotional poems, in an attempt to place the *Anniversaries* within the context of Donne's canon, and to show more clearly the function and development of his metaphors of framing.

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CHAPTER I

Rational Frames and Living Sentiments: The Problem of the *Anniversaries*

The *Anniversaries* exhibit a marked preoccupation with metaphors of framing, often expressed in terms of figures of space, which Donne employs to explore the nature of man's attempt to structure and systematise his knowledge of the world.[1] The graphic, spatial analogies that Donne draws as he investigates the possible reasons and causes for the world's frailty and decay reveal an acute awareness of the increasingly sophisticated methods of dealing with quantity and extension which developed in the seventeenth century as man sought to come to terms with a universe that had been radically altered by the discoveries of the New Philosophers.[1]

The New Philosophers had sighted new stars in a firmament previously considered unchangeable, and found the planets to be corruptible. Through these revolutionary discoveries, together with devastating revelation that the earth, like the other planets, enjoyed "motion in corruption"[2] as it revolved around the sun, the New Philosophers had destroyed the notion of the universe as literally anthropocentric and reduced the world picture to a diagram of manifold and bewildering movements of corporeal mass in infinite space. As Donne writes in one of the *Sermons*, it was no longer possible "to look upon the frame of the world" through "Ptolomies Spectacles,"[3] for under the strain of expanding spatial horizons, the Ptolemaic universe with its vast system of inter-locking structures had been split asunder; or as Donne says in the *Anniversaries*, the whole world

> Is crumbled out againe t' his Atomis.
> 'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone;
> All just supply, and all Relation:
> (I.212-14)

When the "Idea of Infinity . . . demolished the Circle of Perfection," as Marjorie Nicolson remarks,[4] a sense of disorientation was a widespread consequence, and Donne expresses such a sense, especially in the *Anniversaries* where he fears that human knowledge has become scattered in space along with the planets:

> And new Philosophy cals all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sunne is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
> Can well direct him where to looke for it.
> (I.205-208)

If the New Philosophy was disorienting, however, it was also challenging, for it entailed the deliberate searching out of directions as all men become explorers in a trackless universe. The first requirement was, therefore, some kind of map or reliable frame of reference with which to organise the seemingly limitless space of the Copernical universe which had replaced the more easily conceivable Ptolemaic and Aristotlian models.[5] For the new scientists, the abstract process of mathematics provided the most efficient method of charting the puzzling, dimensionless spaces of this new universe:

> The great book [the universe] is written in the mathematical language, and the symbols are triangles, circles, and other mathematical figures without whose help it is impossible to comprehend a single word of it; without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth.[6]

Although Donne was not a mathematician,[7] the highly diagrammatic and conceptual view of the world that he presents in the *Anniversaries* shows his sensitivity to a "spatially oriented conceptualisation" of knowledge, as Walter Ong terms it, which characterised the "auditory-to-visual" shift in Renaissance epistemology generally.[8] As Donne maps out

his own particular experience of disorientation in terms of the cosmos, and sees his personal instability in the eccentricity of the planets, he expresses something of that anxiety characteristic of the age itself, having to do with man's need to chart his position in space by means of universal theorems of his own devising.

Coping with such problems, however, entailed not only an external framing of experience; it required, also, some new investigation of the innermost relationship of the soul with God. Since cosmology and theology were intimately linked in the traditional systems of thought, a change in perspective in the former obviously effected a re-shaping of the latter. The Aristotelian-Ptolemaic scheme of things had "offered a thoroughly rational synthesis of the diverse elements, comprising the spheres of both material and spiritual reality,"[9] and so presented a unified conception of the universe both as God's creation and man's habitation. Faith and reason were mutually dependent, for the rational intelligence directed the soul naturally towards God. As Donne puts it, echoing the traditional ideal, man possesses two centres, but "Reason, put to'her best extension, / Almost meetes faith, and makes both Centres one."[10] But in the new order such unification was decreasingly possible; as the idea of the world as machine, mechanically responsive to the laws of nature, supplants the conception of the world as mysterious animate organism, reason and faith are required to go their separate ways.[11] The material world for Bacon, Hobbes and Descartes is less a book of signs than a realm of extension to be read with a mathematical key.[12] While the instruments of reason may render the properties of the physical

world intelligible to man, they provide no information about the truths of faith. The New Philosophers are consistently sceptical about primary causes, stressing God's utter transcendence and indulging a pious licence to leave "to faith that which is faith's,"[13] as they turn their attention to empirical investigation of secondary causes.

Some of these developments, of course, occur after Donne's time, but in the *Anniversaries* he clearly laments this split between theology and philosophy as he nostalgically draws a contrast between men of another age who stood erect and directed their souls towards heaven (I.125-26) and those of the present age who "wouldst but bend" to know the body (II.262-63). Preoccupied by the frame of the world, modern men become sick at heart, their bent and twisted bodies reflecting their stunted souls as, like the new, disoriented sun, they follow a "Serpentine" course (I.272). Philosophy, once a source of comfort to men in search of God, now causes spiritual distress!

For Bacon (as for Galileo) the universe is "framed like a labyrinth," but Bacon is confident that the clear light of reason can rectify its "many ambiguities of way."[14] Donne, however, although he agrees about the labyrinth, departs from the Baconian spirit, for he is sceptical about the usefulness of the new science and sees reason to be darkly perplexing, and the rational pursuit of truth a blind quest as, divorced from the clear light of faith, man pursues a trackless path with increasing ingenuity, but decreasing spiritual returns. In heaven, he assures us by contrast, the pursuit of truth shall not follow a circuitous route, nor shall we "heare through Laberinths of eares" (II.297-

98). And throughout Donne's poetry the twisted design of the labyrinth consistently serves as a metaphor for man's wanderings in the maze of human reason, attempting to chart the material world. For example, in a verse epistle to the Countess of Bedford he urges the need to "shun th'entangling laborinths of Schooles" and direct enquiry to matters of religion; in "The Litanie" he prays that "our eares sickness wee may cure, /And rectifie those Labyrinths aright."[15] Whereas Bacon finds dignity in human learning as, uncorrupted by metaphysics, it advances towards a new golden age, Donne finds only misdirection, indicative of an age of "Iron, and rusty too" (I.426). He sees no progress in knowledge, but an arbitrary accumulation of "fragmentary rubbidge" (II.82), and this sceptical view of rational enquiry echoes throughout the *Sermons:*

> And if there be any addition to knowledge, it is rather a new knowledge, then a greater knowledge; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not knowne at all before, then an emproving, an advancing, a multiplying of former inceptions; and by that meanes, no knowledge comes to be perfect.[16]

In the face of the sheer variety and complexity of human learning, the acquisition of absolute truth would seem to be impossible.

However, although Donne is quick to point out the inadequacies of scientific reason, he also acknowledges the impossibility of abandoning it. The ways of human reason are inevitably circuitous and misleading, but the notion of a deity altogether inaccessible to reason is difficult to endure, and, moreover, as a rational animal, man feels compelled to seek God out through the exercise of reason. In "Satire III" Donne explores the predicament of the man of faith who, in the face of this

inescapable contrariety, goes in search of true religion in a secular world.

> On a huge hill,
> Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
> Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
> And what th'hills suddennes resists, winne so;[17]

The figure of the winding path which Donne employs to express the inevitably tortuous nature of the search for truth in this world is characteristic of the complicated metaphors which he consistently employs to dramatise the erroneous path of human reason. However, this circuitous route does not entail utter misdirection, for, despite the vicissitudes of the path, the traveller keeps the end in sight; he remains intent upon the mystery he is trying to penetrate. Thus, "To stand inquiring right, is not to stray" but a pious action of discovery.[18] Reason alone cannot provide sufficient guidance, but it cannot be renounced, and that is the human predicament. As Donne writes in "Th-Litanie":

> Let not my minde be blinder by more light
> Nor Faith by Reason added, lose her sight.[19]

Donne's third satire, therefore, emphasises the integrity of reasoned enquiry, despite its difficulty; the only truth, he states, is "the truth which thou'hast found."[20] However, considered in terms of the spatial metaphor Donne uses to describe the quest for the religion, this statement is problematic. For if Truth stands fast at the top of the hill, it would surely be visible to all those who stand at the bottom, and there would seem little need to perform such an arduous ascent along the steep and craggy path to be sure of its existence. The crux here

reveals something about Donne's own nature: in him the absolutist who affirms a single, universal viewpoint (and thereby a God who is clearly visible to all men), is perpetually ill at ease with the sceptic who needs to view the truth from all angles, and from every perspective along the spiralling path to the summit.[21] While desirous of universality, Donne's speculative intelligence rebels against it.[22] In the absence of any infallible authority which could silence all controversy, Donne stresses the need for individual enquiry and warns against the danger of accepting dogmas based on partial truths. Hence he berates those who choose the path of least resistance and follow unquestioningly the arbitrary dictates of the Pope, the monarch, or the Lutherans. Similarly, although Donne insists that there can be only one true religion, with the flexibility of the sceptic he acknowledges that there may be more than one road of approach to it and that, ultimately, only God himself can know by what roundabout paths man may seek him out. True salvation, Donne claims, can only be achieved through the "mindes indeavours"[23] as it reaches into the mysteries of religion, guided not by any earthly authority, but by the grace of God alone. Yet compelled to chart as he can the tortuous paths of reason, man must continue his encounter with the doubts, paradoxes and setbacks that inevitably accompany the pursuit of such knowledge in the hope that any turn or bend in the labyrinth may be an occasion for grace and illumination.[24]

A personal and tortuous search for truth in these terms is also the subject of the *Anniversaries*. Although ostensibly a public eulogy for the death of Elizabeth Drury, these poems are peculiarly private,

for Donne applies the dissecting knife to himself as well as performing an anatomy of the world for public purposes. Like "Satire III," these poems record the search of Donne's own "Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthicall soule"[25] to provide a map for negotiating a fragmented world. As we have seen, Donne feels compelled to do this because, simply, of a human need to establish order through the exercise of reason. Moreover, the operation of the mind's endeavour in the *Anniversaries* makes considerable demands on the reader, who is thereby forced to participate in the quest and to search out the reasons and causes for the world's decay along with the poet. In this process, the uncertainties expressed by the metaphor of the winding path to truth in "Satire III" become even more convoluted in the complex argument of the *Anniversaries* which continually change direction and follow a provocatively serpentine course, thereby enacting the predicament "Satire III" describes. The continual shift in perspective, for instance, makes the sentences excessively hard to follow; as one critic puts it, "The reader is not sure where Donne is going, for this complex argument interrupts the flow of thought."[26] Indeed, the direction of these poems, at times, appears so uncertain that they seem to consist of a series of psychological manoeuvres designed at once to engage and thwart the reader, rather than a logical sequence designed to eulogise Elizabeth Drury. As Carol Sicherman points out, the *Anniversaries* project an internal debate in which the speaker seems to be "searching not so much for an answer as for a question; confusion and inconsistency increase."[27]

I should like to suggest that the exploratory structure of the *Anniversaries* has much in common with the similarly structured systems of investigation that Walter Ong claims, under the general heading of Ramism, to be characteristic of the later Renaissance, evident, for instance, in the open-ended structure of Bacon's method of enquiry.[28] In *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*, Ong describes dialectic (as opposed to rhetoric) as "being concerned with resolving questions, with what is doubtful" and progressing towards an end as yet undetermined.[29] This method of investigation would seem to be the natural recourse of the sceptic, for it calls into question the nature of final proof itself, and it is a useful way to approach Donne's poetry.

Ramist method developed, as Ong tells us, in response to a growing awareness of the manifold physical structure of the universe and took the form of a spatially oriented conception of logic which transformed reality into a pattern of dichotomised diagrams. Its purpose was to set out clearly and efficiently the perplexing kinds of questions that man must necessarily encounter as he attempts to negotiate, through reason, a complex world. By mapping out reality in terms of visually comprehensible relationships, often expressed in terms of geometrical configurations in space, it was possible to observe the intricacies of any problem at a single glance and consider them from all points of view simultaneously. This method of tabulation, to which Ramus devoted his life, reduced the mental process to a question of perspective, and was not simply confined to the sciences but was extended to cover the arts; all intellectual activity tended to be viewed in terms of a graphic arrange-

ment of spatial relations.

Under the influence of Ramism, poetry, as a branch of rhetoric, became assimilated into dialectic and so was considered according to the rules governing the application of dialectic to other subjects. Hence in the Ramist conception of rhetoric we find traditional (auditory) ornamentative rhetoric replaced by (visual) imagery which serves as 'argument' and follows spatial models: tropes become "turnings"; figures become "shapes."[30] And as Ong points out, the "brusque spatial manoeuvres" that characterise Ramist conceptualisation obviously share some affinity with the "harsh contrasts and grotesqueries" of metaphysical poetry.[31] Rosemond Tuve in her study of Renaissance imagery has also noted the similarity between the Metaphysical poets' fascination with complex relationships and precise parallels, and the emphasis on spatial relations and disjunctions in Ramist dialectic.[32] She draws a further comparison between the two in that they share a "substitution of intellectual probing for rhetorical persuasion,"[33] citing the complex argument of the first of Donne's *Anniversaries* as a specific example. Expanding on this instance of comparison she writes:

> If logic is no more concerned with 'proving strongly' than with 'framing orderly' and 'expounding playnly' we see that we must understand the Ramist extension of dialectic to cover all forms of discourse, not as impelling a poet to 'prove' something in every poem, but as impelling him to declare reasons and causes, to examine the nature of something, to consider from various sides, to figure out, look into, mull over.[34]

Indeed, the pattern of Donne's anatomical argument, more concerned with considering the nature of the problem from all sides than with stating the answer, has something in common with the Ramist system of

expository logic. The diagram of a universal frame, which Donne draws out as he performs his didactic role as anatomist of the world, recalls the dichotomising diagrams of Ramist dialectic and is achieved by the same means: a movement from the generic to the specific through the process of division and definition.[35] Moreover, Donne's dissection and classification of the world ostensibly shares the same intention as the Ramist method of enquiry—to set out clearly and efficiently the involved nature of the issue in question in order to discover a way of resolving it; the usual purpose of an anatomy is, after all, to come to a better understanding of the machinery of the body by cutting up its complex parts and laying them open to all-round scrutiny. So Donne systematically unjoints the decayed and rotting carcass of the world in order that we might examine its parts from many viewpoints, and so see more clearly the cause of its disease. Furthermore, as in the Ramist system of tabulation, the multiplicity of perspectives of Donne's diagram indicates the intricate nature of the task and, by extension, the intellectual effort required to tackle it.

However, just as Donne retreats from Baconian optimism, so he turns Ramist method—born out of a desire for clarity—against itself; the reader who expects to come to an ultimate understanding of the body by way of Donne's anatomy is destined to be disappointed. For although the poem accurately charts the complexity of the issue in question, its diagrammatic presentation achieves anything but the clarity of comprehension that the Ramist logicians sought as they mapped out reality. By contrast, in "The First Anniversarie," Donne presents a deliberately

perplexing experience through a series of multiple and *shifting* perspectives which confound the reader's understanding as he attempts to follow the almost wantonly refracted design of the poem. Donne demands that we expand the narrow chambers of the mind in order to follow his shifting course, but he never permits us the security of an overall viewpoint, nor the total comprehension that accompanies it; the frame of reference repeatedly dissolves only to be constructed from a different angle, and we are forced to change our point of view repeatedly, and, in the end, confusingly.

These poems, then, do not attempt to set things in order, they merely explore the contradictions and inconsistencies which are the necessary consequence of epistemological speculation.[36] Under the guise of 'framing orderly' and 'expounding playnly', Donne dramatises the futility of reason's attempt to frame the world and see it steadily, and exposes it instead as a labyrinth capable only of yielding a limited perspective on a world that lies "all in pieces." A universe dissolved into "Atomis" cannot be framed reliably by an epistemology itself based on spatial models. Man's map-making instruments, Donne would seem to claim, are as crooked as the world he seeks to negotiate and so only increase his sense of disorientation.

Nonetheless, despite Donne's sceptical view of rational enquiry, he remains fascinated by the geometrical grids that man places over the universe and the novel perspectives these produce. This preoccupation, as Charles Coffin points out, is evident in the frequency with which Donne "calls upon 'similitudes' to geometrical figures to express the

'faculties of mind'."[37] (This clearly recalls the Ramists' claim that the conceptualising process could be most efficiently laid out by way of geometrical diagrams.) So in the *Anniversaries* we find Donne offering a geometrical plan as a guide for the process of thought required to read the poems:

> Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
> For once that they the center touch, do touch
> Twice the circumference; and be thou such.
> Double on heaven, thy thoughts on Earth emploid;
> (II.436-39)

The bipartite structure of the *Anniversaries* itself demands that we "double" our thoughts on heaven and earth since the first presents an anatomy of the world and the second describes the progress of the soul to heaven. Thus the line that stretches across the centre as it moves in diametrically opposed directions to "touch / Twice the circumference" represents the need to expand the spaces of the mind in order to encompass the whole in our vision. But the clarity of an all-encompassing vision is undermined simultaneously, for the acquisition of this steady focus is dependent upon a split image, or double vision (stressed by the need to "double" thought), more suggestive of refraction than perspicacity. This presentation of a double thought in a single image is, I think, deliberately perplexing and an example of what Earnest Gilman describes as the "curious perspective" art of the seventeenth century, which reflected the scepticism of the age.[38]

In his study of the relationship between notions of perspective in art and literature, Gilman traces the development from the linear perspective of the early Renaissance which he sees as a confirmation of the

"certainty of human knowledge," inherited from the Middle Ages, towards the "curious perspective" which dominated the later Renaissance, and which reflected the recognition of a more "complex relationship between the knower and the knowable."[39] Gilman takes as his example of uncompromising linear perspective the Albertian "velo," a device for achieving correct perspective in painting which involved placing a grid between the artist and the scene to be painted, directly in his line of vision.[40] The scene was then to be reproduced in accordance with the exact ratio of the grid. A painting produced in such a way achieved a representation of reality which conformed to the firmly fixed viewpoint of the artist and confirmed the expectations of the spectator.

This confidence in the ability to see steadily from a single perspective, Gilman argues, indicates an unequivocal view of the world, for the Albertian linear perspective device implies that man *can* be the master of what he sees. However, such faith in the "power of the artist to frame the world in rectangles"[41] was no longer possible in view of certain epistemological changes that took place in the later Renaissance, creating a new self-consciousness about ways of conceiving space. Art mirrors the mind of the age: linear perspective goes out of favour and is replaced by a fascination with multiple perspectives of the kind found in Baroque art—and Metaphysical poetry.

In the *Anniversaries* we find Donne using a metaphor of the grid variety to expose the fallaciousness of man's belief that he can exercise a rational command over the universe:[42]

> For of Meridians, and Parallels,
> Man hath weav'd out a net, and this net throwne

> Upon the Heavens, and now they are his owne.
> Loth to goe up the hill, or labor thus
> To goe to heaven, we make heaven come to us.
> We spur, we raine the stars and in their race
> They're diversly content t' obey our pace.
> (I.278-84)

As in "Satire III," Donne berates those who take the easy way out, and throw a net upon the heavens, seeking to reduce them to man's ratio in order to avoid grappling with the enigma the visible heavens present. And, as if to bring the lesson home, Donne immediately takes the reader on a lightning trip round the universe. Within the compass of the mere seventeen lines which follow this passage we fly up to the heavens in order to witness the shipwreck of the floating moon, sound out the depths of the sea, descend even deeper on a voyage to the Antipodes and, finally, encircle the whole globe in order to perceive the warts and pockholes which erupt on its decaying surface (I.285-301). Donne violently restructures the world, presenting it from different points of view simultaneously. The reader, like the viewer of the "curious" paintings that Gilman describes, is denied an authoratative point of reference, dislocated from a stable viewpoint, and forced to take a multiple perspective on reality. The experience is both perplexing and demanding, for the view presented subverts rather than confirms the reader's expectations, and he is forced to grapple with a mystery rather than solve a problem.

The visual wit of Donne's art, which is in many respects at one with the art and literature of his sceptical age, consistently delights in undermining the unilateral claims of reason through the presentation of enigmas and paradoxes which reason itself seems always to yield if

pushed far enough. John Carey describes this effect in Donne's poetry as the creation of "conceptual corners," for a "corner unites divergent planes, but it also intrusively separates them,"[43] and thus draws attention to division, even while claiming assimilation. Donne continually delights, that is, in the imagination's power to reveal the impossibilities and perplexities implicit in reason's claims. This helps to explain, for instance, Donne's attraction to maps, for despite their strict rational valence, the conventions of cartography enable him to make contraries meet, paradoxically, in one:

> In a flat Map, there goes no more, to make West
> East, though they be distant in an extremity,
> but to paste that flat Map upon a round body,
> and then West and East are all one.[44]

Through an imaginative manipulation of space distant extremities coalesce; yet this imagined unity also shows elements of strain, for the paradoxical nature of the metaphor also draws attention to the conceptual possibilities which would turn assimilation into its opposite.

The ability of a furled map to resolve contraries again becomes a source of comfort in "Hymne to God my God, in my Sicknesse" as Donne adds another dimension to a flat world in order to make the transition from an earthly to a heavenly perspective. Donne describes his body, laid out on his death bed, as a flat map, explored by his physicians, now "growne / Cosmographers."[45] Their "South-west discoverie" is the sighting of his death, but this extremity does not banish life, rather it embraces it, for

> As West and East
> In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the Resurrection.[46]

This dissolution of distinctions of space also collapses distinctions of time; within the process of assimilation the temporal meets the eternal:

> Looke Lorde, and finde both *Adams* met in me;
> As the first *Adams* sweat surrounds my face,
> May the last *Adams* blood my soule embrace.[47]

Donne finds within the strict map of himself the dimensionless centre of faith where time and space cease to matter, and where the rational co-ordinates by which we 'frame' experience fall away. The imaginative pressure and intensity of the poem thus intimate a spiritual insight in the face of "gluttonous death" which must inevitably "unjoynt" the physical frame of the body, but to which, however, spiritual insight is not reducible.[48] And so death, which was division, becomes all, through the cohesive power of imagination. Donne's dramatisation of the truths of faith through metaphors of space therefore has the effect of showing us simultaneously both how fallible these metaphors are, and yet how useful in signalling the release of the human soul. Although the poem expresses a sense of constriction as time and space draw to a close (implied by the strict limits of the flat map), we must also acknowledge that space assumes a positive value as it brings man to an intuitive, even expanding, awareness of his spiritual destiny. This conflatation of positive and negative values associated with expanding and contracting space suggests, once more, the perpetual paradox of reason in relation to faith, and it is exactly what we find also in the *Anniversaries* as Donne sets up a similarly provocative antithesis between space treated positively and negatively.

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Donne finds within the strict map of himself the dimensionless centre of faith where time and space cease to matter, and where the rational co-ordinates by which we 'frame' experience fall away. The imaginative pressure and intensity of the poem thus intimate a spiritual insight in the face of "gluttonous death" which must inevitably "unjoynt" the physical frame of the body, but to which, however, spiritual insight is not reducible.[48] And so death, which was division, becomes all, through the cohesive power of imagination. Donne's dramatisation of the truths of faith through metaphors of space therefore has the effect of showing us simultaneously both how fallible these metaphors are, and yet how useful in signalling the release of the human soul. Although the poem expresses a sense of constriction as time and space draw to a close (implied by the strict limits of the flat map), we must also acknowledge that space assumes a positive value as it brings man to an intuitive, even expanding, awareness of his spiritual destiny. This conflatation of positive and negative values associated with expanding and contracting space suggests, once more, the perpetual paradox of reason in relation to faith, and it is exactly what we find also in the *Anniversaries* as Donne sets up a similarly provocative antithesis between space treated positively and negatively.

In "An Anatomy of the World," Donne emphasises the disjunction of a universe that is "all in pieces," "crumbled out againe to his Atomis" (I.212-13). Space becomes a "vehicle of imperfection and pain"[49] as spatial difference represents the division and discontinuity of temporal experience. The perplexed motions of the planets tear the firmament as the follow their course through a seemingly infinite space. Confronted with this chaotic, trackless expanse, man feels compelled to conquer it in order to re-establish himself as unchallenged master of an ordered universe. But the cosmic spaces extend beyond the boundaries of whatever frames he uses to limit and define them; the cosmos remains a mystery which eludes the "Meridians and Parallels" of his geometrical grid. Therefore, paradoxically, expansion brings about contraction because this too-vast space dwarfs the human being and everything else it surrounds; "everything which occupies it shrinks and decays."[50] So Donne laments man's own diminution in stature: "'Tis shrinking, not close-weaving, that hath thus,/ In minde and body both bedwarfed us" (I.153-54). And as the expanding spaces of this disintegrating universe fly out beyond man's field of vision, he becomes inordinately preoccupied with the meaningless fragments he can grasp.[51] So Donne criticises the constricted vision of those who "peepe through lattices of eies" (II.296) as he berates those pedants who find a "hundred controversies of an Ant" (II.282), and, indeed, all those who would shrink their stature further by making a preoccupation with the physical universe, a soul-destroying obsession.

The chaotic spaciousness of Donne's labyrinthine universe is, therefore, a constant reminder of man's imperfection and defeated aspirations. However, this pessimistic view has another aspect, for, as Donne follows the progress of Elizabeth Drury's soul to heaven, the desolation of a physically conceived space gives way to space experienced as the context of God's imparting of grace to his human creature. Division is no longer a source of distress but "thy happiest Harmonee," for death brings about the soul's release and expansion: "But thinke that Death hath now enfranchis'd thee, / Thou hast thy' expansion now and libertee" (II.179-80). And as the soul passes through the spheres on its way heavenward, this positive "expansion" brings about an equally positive contraction; the soul's telescopic "long-short Progresse" obliterates distinctions of time as it "Dispatches in a minute all the way / Twixt Heaven, and Earth," and in doing so eliminates distance: "At once is at, and through the Firmament" (II.188-219). Paradoxically, then, the soul's expansion brings us to the still point of eternity where space and time cease to exist, and from this vantage point at the centre of God's circle of unending grace we shall see and experience all things simultaneously; we will no longer suffer the imperfect vision yielded by "lattices of eies" nor the imperfect learning gained by "circuit," for in heaven, Donne assures us, "thou straight know'st all" (II.296-99).

But this complete knowledge of all-encompassing vision is accessible only to those who enjoy the "sight of God, in fulnesse" (II.441). In this life man cannot escape space and time and so remains confined

within the labyrinth, compelled to pursue its bewildering paths and experience the curious perspectives its twists and turns afford. Donne exhorts us to do what we can, in this predicament, to move heavenward:

> Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seeme great
> Below; But up to the watch-towre get,
> And see all things despoyld of fallacies:
> (II.293-95)

From the vantage point of the watchtower of faith, we may at least be able to discern the philosophical confusion inherent in the labyrinthine path of rational enquiry, even though we cannot escape the labyrinth, for faith is not vision.[52] By ascending the watchtower, however, man comes as close to heaven as the secular world will allow.

The extent to which attainment of the watchtower itself requires an illumination of divine grace is a moot point, and the poem does not give us clear advice on the matter. But it must strike us that the image is similar to the depiction of the traveller in "Satire III" whose progress up the hill of truth enables him to see more clearly than those below who are unwilling to risk the journey into uncharted regions. In both cases Donne presents the position of the man of faith who recognising the limitations of natural philosophy is unable to escape it, and who acknowledging his dependency on grace is powerless to attain it. Faced with this impasse, the traveller has no choice but to continue his exploration of every viewpoint along his inevitably circuitous route in the hope that one viewpoint, one turning in the way, by the grace of God, may be the moment of illumination for him. Similarly, the watchman must remain vigilant as he scans the horizon, prepare himself to admit truth from any direction, and wait upon grace.

The recognition that divine truths are revealed and remain inaccessible to reason inevitably leads to a painful self-reflexiveness in Donne's poetry, as is especially evident in the *Anniversaries,* where he seeks to translate a particular occasion—namely the death of Elizabeth Drury—into a poetic symbol which will render her significance as a pattern for life and death universally intelligible. For Donne, Elizabeth Drury's "untimely" and "religious" death[53] provided an unlikely but profound illumination on the twisted path of the labyrinth. Although seemingly an ordinary girl, for Donne she becomes exemplary, for he sees in her God's image restored by grace.[54] Elizabeth Drury comes to represent for him the world in its perfect state, and he discovers in her the spiritual and physical harmony lost to a world radically fragmented by a new, contemporary materialism: All "Harmony was Shee," he claims, who while she lived made this world in some "proportion" (I.303-12). Donne then proceeds to describe this perfection geometrically, in terms of the circle, symbol of divinity and the harmonious form the world enjoyed in its original innocence: "Shee, who by making full perfection grow, / Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so" (II.507-8). She, he claims, was the world soul, "the forme, that made it live" (II.72), as well as the "Cyment which did faithfully compact" the universal frame and "glue all vertues" (I.49-50). But, he laments, she is dead, and deprived of her animating force the world plunges deeper and deeper into decay; the circle of perfection is broken (I.269-77), and the world is "all in pieces."

Through the agency of grace, in short, the poet discovers in Elizabeth Drury a point where the paradoxes of reason encounter the truths of faith, and where geometry and mystery coalesce. Elizabeth Drury, therefore, represents a particular epiphany, but as a poet employed to commemorate her death in verse, Donne is faced with the problem of making a highly particular and private experience public by translating the truths of faith into the universal language of discursive reason. That Donne is acutely aware of the difficulties of this task partly explains his attack on the cosmic geometry of the New Philosophy. For if, as Donne claims, man's instruments of representation are incapable of framing the world and seeing it clearly—or in the round, to continue the geometrical analogy—then, implicitly, they must prove even more woefully inadequate to present the mysteries of religion. Donne's attempt to capture the eternal significance of Elizabeth Drury by the strict continuities of a rational framework is thus equivalent to rational man's attempt to impose a geometrical grid on the immeasurable space of the Copernican universe.

Poems, however, are not just units of rational discourse, and achieve their end by forcing us to feel the weight of the problems they raise. If the significance of the dead girl presents unsolvable problems to reason, a wholly rational being will simply turn to something else. But the loss of a young life, of beauty, and innocence claims us emotionally and will not let us rest. Neither do Donne's poems; we recall that as Ramist exercises they are disappointingly opaque. The simple binary structures of the Ramist diagram become, in Donne's hands, exciting

explorations of positive and negative spatial symbols. Likewise, the strictness of his anatomy, the deployment of geometrical language, and the convolutions of logic remain too much in tension with the poet's awareness of the organic perfection of a living, breathing girl, and the inexplicable horror of the world as decaying, rotting mass. In this disturbing juxtaposition lies the ultimate success of the poetry which, rooted in contrariety, challenges us by the highly energetic and ingenious combination of logic and imagination that Donne employs as he compels us to explore the inextricably paradoxical relationship between the language of discursive reason and the mysteries of human life and death.

CHAPTER II

Figures of Space

We have seen how Donne deploys the negative and positive values of expanding and contracting space to set up an antithesis between the chaotic, disintegrating realm of extension, and the imagined completeness of the glorified soul which the geometric perfection of the circle suggests. That Donne should use the circle as an image of perfection is not surprising; it was a favorite emblem of the Renaissance for suggesting unity in a divided and complex world.[1] For Donne, too, "One of the most convenient Hieroglyphicks of God, is a Circle, and a Circle is endlesse."[2] The circle also represents the divine perfection to which man might aspire; as Donne assures his congregation at St. Pauls, "God is a circle himselfe, and he will make thee one."[3]

Thus, in the *Anniversaries,* Donne invests Elizabeth Drury as a regenerate Christian with all the proportion and harmony of a perfect circle, of which the temporal circumference, her body, reflects the eternal centre, her soul:

> Shee, who left such a body, 'as even shee
> Onely in Heaven could learne, how it can bee
> Made better; for shee rather was two soules,
> Or like to full, on both sides written Rols,
> Where eies might read upon the outward skin,
> As strong Records for God, as mindes within;
> Shee, who by making full perfection grow,
> Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so.
> (II.501-508)

While she lived, it seems, Elizabeth Drury possessed the most perfect of bodies; yet in heaven, Donne claims, she will enjoy an even greater perfection. The circle is deployed here to represent her perfection which transcends complete description. Donne's "round circles," as he says elsewhere, are but "poore types of God,"[4] and by analogy poor types of

the glorified Elizabeth Drury too, for she has become a "partaker and a part" of the heavenly "Quire, and Song" (I.10). Her condition is beyond imagining, and so she transcends geometry, for geometry (even though used in a positive sense) is self-contradictory when applied to her: "To whose proportions if we would compare / Cubes, th' are unstable; Circles, Angulare" (II.141-42). Her incomprehensibleness is thus analogous to the divine incomprehensibleness itself, which Donne, using the ancient neo-Platonist figure, conceives of as "a circle whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference nowhere."[5] The mysterious circularity of the image is paradoxical, in short, because our minds cannot grasp divine perfection.

Although the paradoxical circle is a traditional ring of perfection, Donne's peculiar fascination with it is also characteristic of the intellectual climate of Ramism which, as we have seen, to some degree influenced the practice of seventeenth-century poets. As Ong points out, Ramist thought is especially attracted to spatially-oriented conceptualisations, not only of the physical world, but also of the incomprehensible mysteries which lie at the heart of basic religious truths.[6] In the later Renaissance, he claims, "words became suspect of failing to 'let through' the meaning of the scriptures as well as method and diagrams could."[7] Certainly, Donne is fascinated by the notion of mapping out man's relationship to God with the aid of mathematical diagrams, but the result rarely achieves the plainness and perspicacity that the true Ramists sought.[8] Here, for instance, is a passage from one of the *Sermons:*

> Here is a new Mathematiques; without change of Elevation, or parallax, I that live in this Climate, and stand under this Meridian, looke up and fixe my self upon God, And they that are under my feete, looke up to that place, which is above them, And as divers, as contrary as our places are, we all fixe upon one God, and meet in one Center.[9]

Throughout the *Sermons* Donne explores God's paradoxical existence both at the centre and the circumference of the mysterious circle and, by extension of this figure, Christ becomes a compass, the instrument employed by a mathematical God to circumscribe his creation:

> Here is the compass, that the essential Word of God, the Son of God, *Christ Jesus*, went: He was God, *humbled in the flesh;* he was Man, *received into glory*.[10]

> *A Resurrection there shall be*, for, that makes up *God's circle*. The *Body* of Man was the first point that the foot of Gods Compasse was upon: First, he created the body of *Adam*: and then he carries his Compasse round, and shuts up where he began, he ends with the *Body of Man* again in the glorification thereof in the Resurrection.[11]

The Holy Ghost, we learn, is also a compass, having "one stemme in [man's] eare, and the other in his heart,"

> For the Holy Ghost, as he is a *Cloven tongue*, opens as a Compasse, that reaches over all our Map, from our East to our West, from our birth to our death.[12]

"So Death and conception in mankinde is one" as Donne says elsewhere.[13] The circle of our existence is completed in death, but in this life we cannot conform to the pattern of perfection, nor can we grasp its significance. We have difficulty in seeing clearly the completeness of God's providential plan for our experience is too full of twists and turns and illusions.

It is the special distinction of Donne's rhetoric to catch this obliqueness and uncertainty. Not only does the paradoxical geometry

rebuke the mind's desire for strict certainty, but it also faces us with a lived sense of the contrariety of human experience by presenting a curious conjunction of incompatibles: the strict lines drawn by the compass with the mystery of the incarnation, and the divine conceptual map with the actual terrain of the earth. We experience a similar confusion in the *Anniversaries* as we are presented with a girl who is both a pristine, immutable circle, and a living organism which decays. For man, the mysterious circularity of the image of perfection is always paradoxical for his own personal centre was corrupted by the Fall when the image of God in his heart was shattered by Adam's sin.[14] But, as Donne tells us in the *Anniversaries*, man's condition is not wholly inglorious or totally without hope, for the divine image in his heart may be restored by grace, as it is in Elizabeth Drury. Thus perfected at the centre, he may fulfil the circle and so experience God completely and without impediment.[15]

In the *Anniversaries*, through Elizabeth Drury, Donne attempts to reconcile the paradoxical concepts of his geometrical images with the heartfelt passions occasioned by the subject of the poem in a manner communicating the perplexities and confusions, as well as the hopes, which seem, unavoidably, the lot of ordinary humanity. In this human predicament, Elizabeth Drury, the fifteen year old girl, has a place, and Donne asks us to accept that "what decay was grown" in her heart "was her first Parents fault, and not her own" (II.457-58). But the girl is also the symbol of a regenerate Christian in possession of the divine image restored by grace. She is thus transformed by a "true

religious Alchimy" (I.182), and so captures the innocence that man enjoyed previous to the Fall, before the image in his heart was deformed by sin. "Shee," Donne claims, could drive out "The poysonous tincture, and the stayne of *Eve*" and "purifie / All" (I.179-81). And in her state of new-found innocence she is able to come straight to God, moving, as it were, radically from the centre of her renovated heart to meet the circumference of God's circle as she hurtles through the spheres with a speed that suggests the directness of the communication of the rectified heart with God.[16] Furthermore, perfected at heart, she also perfects a circle: "Shee, who by making full perfection grow / Peeces a Circle, and still keeps it so" (II.507-508). Hence, in the *Anniversaries*, Elizabeth Drury's geometrical perfection helps to indicate man's lost innocence that is sick at heart and devoid of all proportion and symmetry.

Elizabeth Drury, then, is more than just an ordinary girl. According to Donne's hyperbole she is the universal soul (I.314) as well as mankind's heart (I.174), and, as such, the world's circular perfection and spiritual harmony are dependent upon her. "Shee," Donne tells us, was "measure of all Symmetree" (I.310), and as a result of her death "what for me so'er we see" now "Is discord, and rude incongruitee" (I.323-24). With her passing the sickness that infects the heart of the world intensifies; it spreads from the centre throughout the circumference:

> And [thou] learnst thus much by our Anatomy,
> That this worlds generall sicknesse doth not lie
> In any humour, or one certaine part;
> But as thou saw'st it rotten at the hart,
> Thou seest a Hectique fever hath got hold
> Of the whole substance, not to be contrould,
> And that thou hast but one way, not t' admit
> The worlds infection, to be none of it.

> For the worlds subtilst immateriall parts
> Feele this consuming wound, and ages darts.
> For the worlds beauty is decayd, or gone,
> Beauty, that's colour, and proportion.
> (I.239-49)

No part of the universal frame can escape the corruption that infects the centre, for, as Donne tells us, "The heart being perish'd, no part can be free" (I.186). With the death of Elizabeth Drury the world has lost its heart and so cannot conform to the circular pattern of perfection. Man no longer enjoys even the illusion of harmony suggested by the Ptolomaic model of the heavenly spheres "Their round proportion embracing all" (I.252), but rather finds out "so many'Eccentrique parts" (I.255).

In such a predicament man, too, is sick at heart, for he lost all "sense and memory" of his original perfection with the death of Elizabeth Drury, the world soul who, Donne claims, gave him "forme and frame" (I.37). Infected at the centre, he is incapable of perfect circular motion; his heart in bondage to sin, his course, like that of the planets, becomes eccentric and perplexed. Without the guidance of Elizabeth Drury, the "compasse" which "wise nature" invented when "she observ'd that every sort of men / Did in their voyage in this worlds Sea stray" (I.223-25), mankind is incapable of searching out a certain direction. "So strugles this dead world, now shee is gone," Donne laments, "For there is motion in corruption" (II.21-22).

Donne's presentation of Elizabeth Drury in such a fashion is provocative, but also exasperating, for it is important that we preserve some sense of her as an ordinary young girl, and yet the claims Donne

makes for her are extraordinary and hyperbolic. We are asked to see her as being blessed by perfection because God's image is restored in her by grace. We are then asked to see her as a symbol of man's prelapsarian innocence, and the two sets of significances are not easily reconcilable. Moreover, as we have seen, the geometrical language Donne uses to describe this perfection also causes problems for the reader as we are presented with a young girl who is both a decaying organism and an immutable circle. On the one hand, then, the geometrical image of perfection is paradoxical; on the other, the hyperbole which suggests that she is mankind's heart is preposterous, and in asking us to reconcile the paradoxical and accept the preposterous Donne both tests our understanding and strains our tolerance. Placed on trial in such a way, some readers have found it easy to lose sympathy with these poems and question their validity. One of Donne's earliest critics, Ben Jonson, is reported to have found the hyperbolic claims Donne makes for Elizabeth Drury "profane and full of Blasphemies," complaining that if the poem had been about the Virgin Mary "It had been something."[17] One of the poems' most recent readers, John Carey, dismisses them as nothing more than an exercise in hyperbole, and sees the death of Elizabeth Drury as significant only in so far as it gave Donne poetic licence to "drive his imagination to its limits."[18]

In reply to those who would doubt Donne's integrity, defenders of the *Anniversaries*, however, will point out that Elizabeth Drury, like all images of perfection, is, in the end, elusive, because perfection is beyond our grasp. Against this, in turn, it can be argued that a poem

ought to express that difficulty and not become inchoate and unsatisfactory itself, as Donne's treatment of Elizabeth Drury tends to be. At best, the balance of opinion on this subject is delicate, but I should like to suggest that a complex of spatial images throughout the *Anniversaries* does successfully express the human difficulty of appreciating the mysteries suggested by Donne's circles through presenting human reason as a kind of spiral or serpentine motion, at once suggestive of man's approximation to the circle and his failure to complete it. The *Anniversaries* are not, therefore, irresponsibly paradoxical, but deliberately and carefully so, because Donne is in control of the perplexing effects which lead us to the limits of human comprehension in the face of religious mystery.

One of Donne's favorite images for drawing out the path of man's existence is the compass. In the "Obsequies" written on the death of Lord Harrington, Donne laments that the compass of Harrington's soul has drawn the small circle of his life to a close and drawn him into the "great circle" of "endlesse happinesse," thus depriving the world of his influence:

> O Soule, O circle, why so quickly bee
> Thy ends, thy birth and death, clos'd up in thee?
> Since one foot of thy compasse still was plac'd
> In heav'n, the other might securely'have pac'd
> In the most large extent, through every path,
> Which the wole world, or man the'abridgment hath.[19]

As these lines suggest, the ability of the compass to complete a perfect circle depends upon the constancy of the fixed point. In spiritual terms, the soul's fixity with God governs the wandering foot and so, however far man travels in his exploration of the world, he will not

suffer a separation from Him.[20] This centred motion somehow leads to the eventual conformity of Harrington's soul to God. But Donne's point is that he does not know why the circle of Harrington's life is so quickly drawn; since his soul was centred in heaven, why should his life not have described a larger circle? However, if the progress of Harrington's soul had continued in "most large extent," rather than been closed up in God, the direction would have been less clear, and it is this uncertainty, the perennial human experience, which the poet's question articulates. Only in death is the circle completed and when we are in the midst we cannot judge the bend in the curve or whether the fixed foot remains constant; we cannot determine whether we really pursue a life centred in God or merely follow the wayward path of our own inclinations.

The *Anniversaries* also describe this radical insecurity and uncertainty implicit in the human condition. Corrupted by sin, man's unregenerate will is unfixed; nor is his reason sufficient to describe a circle —to construct, that is, a reasonable life centred in God and in imitation of the divine paradigm.[21] Rather, the movement of the soul in the fallen world is a series of shifting points and incomplete circles such as we find in spiral motion where the circle never achieves closure or fixity. A synthesis of line and circle, the spiral represents man's middle state as neither regenerate nor totally lost, for although inferior to perfect circular motion, the movement of the spiralling line is neither inchoate nor incomplete; it suggests a mixture of rational order and restless open-endedness. "This life," as Donne says in one of the *Sermons*, "is a Circle, made with a Compasse, that passes from

point to point; That life is a Circle stamped with a print, an endlesse, and perfect Circle, as soone as it begins."[22] A compass moving from point to point (with a shifting centre and uncertain direction presumably) does not complete a circle; nor does a spiral. Interestingly, Plato deployed a similar model to represent the movement of the heavenly bodies as well as of the soul incarnate and, in the *Anniversaries*, Donne perhaps adapts Plato in a particular manner to Copernicus.

According to Plato's micro-macrocosmic analogy in the *Timaeus*, the perfect circling of the fixed stars corresponded to the revolutions of the speculative reason in the divine soul, the rectilinear motion of the elements to the movement of the lowest human faculties (the soul of growth or animal soul), and the movement of the planets to the spiral motion of the human soul.[23] The planets were thought to follow a spiral course for, like the soul incarnate, they experienced contrary motions.[24] The planets rise and set each day, but at the same time gradually make their course along the zodiac and thus, from the perspective of the earth, they seem to create a spiral pattern. This is exactly the movement which Donne attributes to the sun in the *Anniversaries* as he draws out a diagram of the eccentric geometry of the universe. The "free-borne Sunne" he complains has been "empayld within a Zodiake," and so controlled by "Goat and Crabbe," the circularity of its motion becomes impaired:

> For his course is not round; nor can the Sunne
> Perfit a Circle, or maintaine his way
> One inche direct; but where he rose today
> He comes no more, but with a cousening line,
> Steales by that point, and so is Serpentine.
> (I.264-72)

The sun can neither move in a straight line, maintain his way "One inche direct," nor perfect a circle; rather, his spiralling path forms a synthesis of the two, drawing the irregular lines of a "Serpentine" circle. Furthermore, even the perfect circling of the fixed stars, Donne claims, has been corrupted by the chaotic activity which deranges the universal order:

> So,of the starres which boast that they doe runne
> In Circle still, none ends where he begunne.
> (I.275-76)

Despite the similarity of the deployment of spiral motion, Donne, however, also clearly departs from Plato who thought the universe geocentric; the "Serpentine" motion and "cousening" line of Donne's labyrinthine universe may preserve the lineaments of rationality, but its course is truly eccentric, for, as he tell us, not only is the sun lost, but the earth too, "and no mans wit / Can well direct him where to looke for it" (I.207-8). With all geocentric correspondence lost, "All just supply, and all Relation" (I.214), we can never be sure of the centre, for, as we map out the heavens with "Meridians and Parallels" of our own devising, we cannot be certain that the axis we choose is not merely arbitrary and of our own invention.

Lost in this relative and directionless universe, man, too, is incapable of conforming to the pattern of perfection, for he is uncertain of his own centre, the heart. Donne tells us that mankind lost all sense and memory of its original perfection with the death of Elizabeth Drury, "With her,whom we lament, hee lost his heart" (I.174). Man is now "Corrupt and mortall" in his "purest part" (I.62). The divine image

deformed by sin, man's centre is no longer constant with God, and so the energies of his heart become misdirected.[25] The following passage from one of Donne's *Sermons* on the need for purity of heart perhaps best describes man's plight in the *Anniversaries:*

> The heart is *vafrum and inscrutabile, Deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* It is uncertain and unsearchable; And it is so, because it pursues those things which are *in fluxu,* ever in motion . . . if a man suffer his heart to issue upon any of these fluid and transitory things of this world . . . He shall not know where to finde his own heart.[26]

In the *Anniversaries,* too, man is corrupt at heart, and so is incapable of knowing where his true centre lies. His will in bondage to sin, he has no fixed centre and lacks a concerted direction; working towards a multiplicity of transient and self-centred goals, man becomes as scattered out as the quantified world he pursues. No longer centred in God, he is destined to follow a wayward course as he pursues a rational exploration of the spaces of the world, following a roundabout course which goes nowhere for certain. So Donne mocks those who expend their energy searching out the "permanent effect / Of transitory causes" (II.388-89), for, although they labour under the illusion that they "bee / Constant," they cannot help but be "howrely in inconstancee" (II.400). As Donne shows us through the paradigm of Elizabeth Drury, the only hope of fixity in this "fluid" universe is to be found in a God-centred life. Such was Elizabeth Drury's unwavering devotion to "essentiall joye," that "no chance could distract, much lesse destroy" it (II.449-50). Dismissing the "casual joy" of this world, she, Donne tells us, "crucified / Every first motion of rebellious pride" (II.365-

66), and so "reson still / Did not o'erthrow, but rectifie her will," constant with God (II.361-62). This centred motion, associated with the reparation of God's image within her heart (II.454-57), Donne suggests, finally leads to her conformity. But only "perfect motions are all circular,"[27] and so the rest of mankind, corrupt at centre, follows a course as eccentric and perplexed as the distracted planetary motion of the universal frame with which he preoccupies himself.

But although inferior to the circle, the spiral motion itself is not wholly negative. We recall that the winding path to truth in "Satire III" suggests the pilgrim's endeavour, despite worldly distractions, to seek out true religion. His route is inevitably circuitous because he is unregenerate (he can neither go straight, nor perfect a circle), but nevertheless he is not totally without direction, for despite the wavering path he remains fixed in the contemplation of heavenly mystery, and so achieves a truly centred motion as he works toward the attainment of truth. Moreover, as his position half way up the hill would suggest, although the summit has not been reached, some progress has been made. "To stand inquiring right" into matters of faith, Donne tells us, "is not to stray," but "To sleep, or runne wrong, is"[28]—and this is the condition of both man and the macrocosm in the *Anniversaries*.

The sun is fatigued by its erratic serpentine course and "seeming weary with his reeling thus, / He meanes to sleepe, being now falne nearer us" (I.273-74). Man, too, is weary and mirrors the lethargy of the universe. The misdirected energies of his sick heart bring about

spiritual enervation, and he is unwilling to take the way of hard ascent which must necessarily accompany the pursuit of religious truths. Unlike the pious traveller of "Satire III," we are, Donne tells us, "Loth to goe up the hill, or labor thus," and so "To goe to heaven, we make heaven come to us" (I.281-82). Disinclined to direct his attention heavenward, and preferring instead to "bend" to know the body (II.263), man becomes lost in the labyrinth of human reason; uncertain of his direction, his course is destined to "runne wrong." His erratic spiral motion thus becomes a kind of negative parody of the positive spiral motion we find in "Satire III." The movement of the pilgrim as he goes in search of *sapientia* describes a spiral which moves away from the uncertain line of an imperfect circumference and up towards a centre fixed with God. By contrast, man's distracted and uncertain course in the *Anniversaries* is a reversal of the pattern; preoccupied with the universal frame and refusing to "Looke upward" (II.65), man's rational bent describes a spiral which moves away from an uncertain centre in the human mind, and follows a restless, open-ended serpentine line, characteristic of those who attempt to discover, through a scientific exploration of the world, the fulfilment that is only to be found through a life centred in God. Man, therefore, pursues a trackless path which reflects the instability of the centre; he goes round in circles, but, unlike the traveller who has added faith to his reason, makes no progress. For as Donne observes in one of the *Sermons*, "All knowledge that begins not, and ends not with his glory, is but a giddy, but a vertiginous circle, but an elaborate and exquisite ignorance."[29]

As he pursues the egocentric spiralling path of scientific ambition, man works towards self-aggrandisement but, paradoxically, brings about his own reduction:

> And as our bodies, so our mindes are cramp't:
> 'Tis shrinking, not close-weaving, that hath thus,
> In minde and body both bedwarfed us.
> We seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
> Of nothing he made us, and we strive too,
> To bring our selves to nothing backe; and we
> Do what wee can, to do't so soone as hee.
> (I.152-58)

Rooted in corruption, man's self-regard brings about a narrow self-centredness, a circular return of nothing to nothing,[30] and a mere parody of the mysterious circle where, paradoxically, contracted unto the still point of eternity, "neither hee / Can suffer Diminution, nor wee" (II.444-45). Man seeks to magnify himself by expanding his knowledge of the world, but only succeeds in creating a false sense of his own immensity; as Donne tells us scornfully,

> Thou art too narrow, wretch, to comprehend
> Even thy selfe: yea though thou wouldst but bend
> To know thy body.
> (II.261-63)

An expansive force centred in earthly power must necessarily be illusionary; we are, as Donne tells us, "By being a greater" here, "growne to be lesse Man" (II.476). Only in heaven may we discover our true capacity, and so Donne compares our shrunken state with the glorified Elizabeth Drury who, even though filled with grace here on earth, "strove to bee / Both where more grace, and more capacitee / At once is given" (II.465-68).

Mankind, Donne laments, is now "Contracted to an inch, who was a span" (I.136), and he recalls a more pious age "So spacious and large,

that every soule / Did a faire Kingdome, and large Realme controule" (I.123-24); he rebukes us for the perversity of will which has caused us to lose that former glory: "Where is this mankind now?" he asks (I.127). Centred in the sphere of scientific knowledge rather than the sphere of God, mankind, once "so great," is "nothing now" (I.169-71), for "Except *God*," as Donne tells us elsewhere, "man is but a *diminutive* to nothing."[31] So Donne exhorts us to cease our soul-destroying preoccupation with the universal frame and direct our enquiry to matters of faith, for

> except thou feed (not banquet) on
> The supernaturall food, Religion,
> Thy better Grouth growes withered, and scant;
> Be more then man, or thou'rt lesse then an Ant.
> (I.187-90)

Divorced from the steady light of faith and guided only by the refracted half-light of natural reason, man views the world not from a true spiritual viewpoint, but from various and inconsistent points within the labyrinth of the physical universe. Although "God hath made all things in a *Roundnesse* . . . wrapped up all things in circles," man is incapable of understanding this image of perfection;[32] rather, he looks upon the frame of the world only to discover a reflection of his own infirmities.

> We thinke the heavens enjoy their Sphericall,
> Their round proportion embracing all.
> But yet their various and perplexed course,
> Observ'd in divers ages doth enforce
> Men to finde out so many'Eccentrique parts,
> Such divers downe-right lines, such overthwarts,
> As disproportion that pure forme:
> (I.251-57)

Without faith, man's vision is fragmented and distorted. Thus, from his perspective, the heavens fail to respond to the perfect circle; they

appear, instead, to be involuted and entangled. Their course is found to be perplexing by the observer, who, in turn, increases his own confusion by finding "out so many'Eccentrique parts." His heart disfigured by sin and unable to conform to the circular pattern of perfection himself, man fashions the universe after his own image rather than that of its Creator.

Man, therefore, the *Anniversaries* would seem to assure us, is unescapably corrupt, but as Donne writes in one of the *Sermons*, although "my wayes have not beene right, nor my heart right, there is yet mercy for mee."[33] No matter how erroneous or distracted the route man follows, conversion by grace may occur at any twist or turn in the spiralling path. Donne, therefore, does not despair entirely of man's rational impulse; as we see, the spiral is not wholly negative, for the lineaments of the circle are preserved in it, and as Donne shows us through the paradigm of Elizabeth Drury, the potential to fulfil a circle lies in every human heart. Man is not totally without hope, but he may only conform to the circular pattern of perfection when the image in his heart is restored by grace, which is the gift of God, and beyond man's control. How, then, are we to rectify our wayward path in this life?

Donne's answer to this question in the *Anniversaries* is clear although, again, paradoxical: our restoration depends wholly on God's grace; nevertheless, we, like Elizabeth Drury, must strive for a mediation between the fallen and the divine by cultivating purity of heart and seeking to know our predicament clearly, even if we cannot escape it. In our fallen state we must endeavour to come as close to the geometrical

perfection of the circle as the infirmities of our heart will permit by pursuing a life centred in God. Or, as Donne sets it down in a sermon on the pure of heart: "if the heart can fix itself upon that which is fixt, the Almighty and immoveable God . . . it will finde the means of cleansing."[34] Thus we may prepare for "Gods great Venite" (II.44), which will signal man's entry into the presence of Christ when we, like Elizabeth Drury, will be perfected at both centre and circumference by the final restoration of the image in our hearts.

The first step, then, in the soul's approach to God is a turning inward to the heart, seat of the soul, because the pursuit of worldly knowledge for its own sake, as the *Anniversaries* make clear, only exacerbates the human sickness by distracting man further from his true centre of value. Preoccupation with the frame of the world and the machinery of the body is, in the end, futile, because such knowledge must always be relative and uncertain:

> Poor soule, in this thy flesh what do'st thou know?
> . . . . . .
> . . . Have not all soules thought
> For many ages, that our body'is wrought
> Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?
> And now they thinke of new ingredients,
> And one soule thinkes one, and another way
> Another thinkes, and 'tis an even lay.[35]
> (II.254-68)

Man's knowledge in this world is inevitably fragmentary and inconsistent; true knowledge is only to be found in God's presence where we shall no longer "learne / By circuit, or collections to discerne," but shall "straight know'st all, concerning it" (II.298-99). Why then, Donne concludes, should man expend his energy on "unconcerning things, matters

of fact" (II.285) when in heaven they shall be straight away forgotten as of no importance?

As the great passage on the soul's hurtling through the spheres makes clear, discursive learning is beside the point:

> she staies not in the Ayre,
> To looke what Meteors there themselves prepare;
> She carries no desire to know, nor sense,
> Whether th'Ayrs middle region be intense;
> For th'Element of fire, shee doth not know,
> Whether shee past by such a place or no;
> . . . . . .
> But ere shee can consider how shee went,
> At once is at, and through the Firmament.
> (II.189-206)

What matters here is not the geography of the journey, but rather the speed at which it is completed. The swiftness of the soul's translation suggests the directness of the flight and the immediacy of the communication. The movement through the spheres again puts before us the paradoxical and mysterious circle, for the desired centre, the still point of eternity, is somehow outside of the circumference of the spheres, and yet somehow already present in Elizabeth Drury's heart, the centre of her being and of all the spiritual and physical perfection which the rest of us have lost.

Donne repeatedly draws our attention to the discrepancy between her sublime state and our own, urging the need to conform to the pattern of perfection she represents. We should not, therefore, be surprised that Donne's second *Anniversarie* poem is filled with imperatives and exhortations directed at the poet's own soul, urging it to turn away from this "rotten world" (II.49) and turn in upon itself in order to contemplate the heavenly joys in comparison with which the casual

happiness of this world is "not worth a thought" (II.83). So, at the climax of the *Progress*, Donne reinforces the lesson we learnt from his *Anatomy:*

> no thing
> Is worth our travaile, griefe, or perishing,
> But those riche joyes, which did possesse her hart,
> Of which shee's now a partaker, and a part.
> (I.431-34)

Only in the still centre of the heart may man find what he needs to grow to "full perfection" like Elizabeth Drury; for, as Donne tells us, "it is not enough to have knowledge and learning . . . it must shine in our hearts, in the private testimony of the spirit there."[36]

Thus Donne's final exhortation to his soul in the *Anniversaries* is to cease the futile search for a stable centre through mere physical exploration, for the "whole solid Earth" is a "Center . . . far too little" to be a "Base" on which "I' erect true joye, were all the meanes in one" (II.421-24). Only within its own depths does the soul rediscover its true centre and, paradoxically, achieve its full expansion:

> Then, soule, to thy first pitch worke up againe;
> Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
> For once that they the center touch, do touch
> Twice the circumference; and be thou such;
> Double on Heaven, thy thoughts on Earth emploid;
> All will not serve; Onely who have enjoyd
> The sight of God, in fulnesse, can thinke it;
> For it is both the object, and the wit.
> This is essentiall joye, where neither hee
> Can suffer Diminution, nor wee;
> 'Tis such a full, and such a filling good;
> Had th'Angels once look'd on him, they had stood.
> To fill the place of one of them, or more.
> Shee whom wee celebrate, is gone before. . .
> She who had Here so much essentiall joye,
> As no chance could distract, much lesse destroy;
> (II.435-50)

This passage marks the culmination of the *Anniversaries* as the poet envisions the "essentiall joye" experienced by Elizabeth Drury, and which he himself desires. Donne commands his own soul to rediscover its original state of perfection, the perfect "pitch" or harmony of its highest elevation before the Fall, and enjoyed by Elizabeth Drury who is now a part of the heavenly "Quire, and Song."[37] But the word "pitch" in this instance carries a geometrical as well as a musical meaning, for "pitch" is also the centre, or point, from which one describes a circle.[38] The centre here is Donne's own soul which, when described by God will experience the "full, and . . . filling good" of everlasting grace. But the circle cannot yet be fulfilled, for the poet's soul is still present in this world, and thus may only strive for a mediation between the fallen and the divine. Recognising this, Donne shatters the harmony of his own circular conceit, exposing the imagined unity as temporary and incomplete. "All will not serve," he tells us, for "Onely who have enjoyd / The sight of God, in fulnesse, can thinke it." The multiplicity of the poet's vision implied by the necessity to "double" thought cannot sustain the instantaneous and all-embracing vision of the mysterious circle, for it is inconceivable except to those, like Elizabeth Drury, who have experienced it. In heaven, there is no distinction between God as object of realisation and man's method of perceiving him, for he is both "the object, and the wit" of discovery; subject and object become fused in the reciprocal plenitude of theocentric space.

The poet's geometry, then, may suggest the completeness and perfection of the glorified soul, but it cannot declare it directly, for

geometry is inadequate to capture the experience of absolute simplicity and simultaneity which is the still point of eternity.[39] It is not, therefore, surprising that the geometrical concepts Donne deploys fail to clarify the significance of Elizabeth Drury's perfected state as the divine image restored by grace; the mysteries of religion must remain veiled to human reason. Donne's anatomy may succeed in drawing out an eccentric geometry of serpentine, spiral motions, but it cannot lay open the secrets of the rectified heart; for, as the poet himself admits: "None can these lines or quantities unjoynt, / And say this is a line, or this a point" (II.133-34); Elizabeth Drury as the perfected heart of the world is beyond reach of the instruments of human reason, and this is precisely Donne's point. Through the repeated failure of his own attempts to clarify her mysterious circularity, Donne succeeds in demonstrating how radically decentred the world is. That we cannot grasp her significance as an image of perfection therefore becomes evidence of the imperfection of our own centre, as, uninformed by grace, we struggle to comprehend the mysteries of faith.

CHAPTER III

The Labyrinth of Language

Although Donne would seem to discover in Elizabeth Drury a personal symbol of lost harmony and restoration which reconciles geometry and mystery, the spatial concepts he employs to communicate this perfection fail to clarify her significance for the reader; on the contrary, the reader is confounded in his attempts to grasp it. In short, through the creation of paradoxical geometric concepts, Donne demonstrates to us that the instruments of discursive reason are inadequate to describe the perfect circle which is the condition of the glorified soul, and that we, in turn, are incapable of understanding such completion. Donne's poems, like ourselves, are limited to the spiralling path of human reason and the curious perspectives it twists and turns afford. The uncertainties implicit in this spatial metaphor, I should like to suggest, are analogous to the complex argument of these poems which follows a deliberately convoluted and tortuous course.

We recall that Donne's *Anatomy* which promises to lay open the heart of the world, Elizabeth Drury, for our all-round inspection, shares many of the characteristics of the Ramist dialectic with its emphasis on spatial disjunction. And as we have seen, the purpose of this method of enquiry is to shed light on a problem by drawing it out in such a way that it could be considered from all points of view simultaneously, allowing the complexities of the issue to be understood at once. However, although Donne's dissection seems to operate in such a fashion, it fails to illuminate the heart of the world, because it never permits us the security of an overall viewpoint. As we attempt to negotiate the fragmented world Donne's anatomy maps out, we are confronted by a

succession of multiple and shifting perspectives which frustrate our attempts to maintain a steady focus on Elizabeth Drury and attain the all-encompassing vision required to understand her perfection.

Although Donne claims that Elizabeth Drury's "incomprehensiblenesse" could not "deterre" him from his "thus trying to emprison her" (I.469-70), he is acutely aware that the language of discursive reason may approach the truths of faith only by circumlocution. From the first, Donne's presentation of Elizabeth Drury is consistently paradoxical. As we recall, he does not disguise the fact that she was an ordinary young girl; yet he simultaneously invests her with an extraordinary significance as the universal soul and mankind's heart. While she lived she was the centre of the world's spiritual and physical perfection, but now she is dead, and deprived of its life force, the body of the world decays and dies. The death of Elizabeth Drury, Donne would claim, has caused the death of the world.

But as if this hyperbole were not sufficient to overtax the reader, the *Anniversaries* unfold a further paradox: the death of Elizabeth Drury is not only the cause, but also the consequence of the death of the world.[1] For as mankind's heart, Elizabeth Drury, too, is implicated in the corruption which began with the Fall and cracked the world's whole frame (II.196-98). Donne's central conceit, then, in which he invests the power to glue this anatomised world back together again (II.221-22), does, in itself, split apart. And as Harold Love points out, the tension caused by the double perspective we are asked to take on Elizabeth Drury as both enlivening force and corruptible body puts a considerable

strain on the structure of Donne's *Anatomy*.[2] It would seem impossible to accept the extravagant claims that Donne makes for the dead girl—that the world is perishable because she dies—when the poem asserts equally forcibly the antithetical view, that she dies because the world is perishable.

The argument that Donne puts forward as to the frailty and decay of this world shifts according to this paradoxical presentation of Elizabeth Drury which denies reduction to a single, rational viewpoint. Yet the natural impulse when reading the *Anniversaries* is to rationalise Donne's central conceit in the hope of discovering a fixed definition for Elizabeth Drury and producing a clear-sighted view of these difficult poems: for Richard Hughes she is symbolic of the Christian virtues embodied in St. Lucy; for Frank Manley she represents *sapientia;* for William Empson she is to be justified in terms of the *Logos*.[3] These various readings of the same symbol would seem to suggest that the question of Elizabeth Drury's identity cannot be answered in any definitive sense, and, indeed, that the question itself is misleading. To rationalise a paradox is not, ultimately, to resolve it, and the fact remains that we are constantly forced to "double" our "thoughts" in order to follow the shifting course of the argument which pivots upon her dual status.[4]

Barbara Lewalski offers perhaps the most successful reading of these difficult poems by countering Donne's paradoxical presentation of Elizabeth Drury with another paradox, that of the Protestant doctrine of justification which characterises the regenerate Christian as at once

both radically corrupt and perfect.[5] Lewalski vindicates Donne's deification of Elizabeth Drury by seeing her as a regenerate Christian in possession of the divine image restored by grace, "the Idea of a Woman and not as she was."[6] However, since the process of justification involves not a cleansing of our sins, but the imputation of Christ's merits to cover them, even a regenerate Christian infused with grace is still radically corrupted by original sin. Thus the poet is able to look at the girl through God's eyes as she presents to view not her own sins, but the cover of Christ's merits, while at the same time taking into account her fallen state. By seeing the *Anniversaries* as the analysis of a regenerate Christian as the restored image of God, Lewalski is able to justify the curious perspectives the reader is asked to maintain on the dead girl.

Lewalski does not quite succeed, however, in resolving the difficulties we experience in reading these poems; as John Carey so rightfully points out: "The obvious objection to [Lewalski's interpretation] is that the image of God is restored in all regenerate souls, whereas Donne treats Elizabeth Drury as unique."[7] These poems, I would suggest, deliberately frustrate our attempts to bring Elizabeth Drury into a steady focus, forcing us, instead, to grapple with a multiple enigma if we are to follow the tortuous course of Donne's argument which turns upon the paradoxical presentation of his central conceit. For example, in the following statement two possible arguments emerge which, although contradictory, are of equal validity:

> Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowst this,
> Thou knowst how lame a cripple this world is.
> (I.237-38)

Either Donne is claiming that the world has been reduced to a cripple because it has been deprived of its heart, Elizabeth Drury, or else that the world must recognise itself as helplessly crippled by original sin because even its "purest part" has been unable to escape death.[8] No simple answer can be found; Donne displaces us from the centre, claiming our attention from both sides of the paradox, but leaving us to reconcile these opposing claims.

Donne's highly complex and provocative conceit drives us forward in the face of contrariety only to aggravate our uncertainties; however, although perplexing in the extreme, his presentation of Elizabeth Drury is not irresponsibly paradoxical. Donne engages the reader in a perpetual encounter with paradox in the hope that he may discover for himself the futility of seeking out a centre of meaning along the labyrinth of human reason, which is found only to be capable of generating perplexities and not of resolving them. The poet recognises that he can find no words to state clearly the significance he himself discovered in Elizabeth Drury; indeed, he makes language fail in order to express how any experience of such significance is, in the end, inescapably private. By exploring the endless refractions of language Donne deliberately induces in the reader the kind of crisis, or experience of isolation, which precedes conversion. The truth that Donne seeks to deliver in the *Anniversaries* is, in short, non-discursive, and so in order to turn the reader toward it, he must turn him away from finding solace in reason itself.[9] Donne, then, purposefully disorients the reader in order that he may reorient him, systematically frustrating his attempt to follow the

convoluted path of the rational discourse in the hope that, worn out by the effort, he will be thrown upon a better path—the way of faith. This is the lesson Donne seeks to teach as he instructs us how to read Elizabeth Drury, "our best, and worthiest booke" (II.320). Emulating the eloquence of the witty Creator, the figurative and metaphorical God who reveals himself only indirectly in the Scriptures, Donne makes of Elizabeth Drury a dark text, perplexing and enigmatic to the darkened glass of natural reason, and only to be illuminated by the clear light of faith.[10]

Donne begins his *Anatomy* by claiming that, with the death of Elizabeth Drury, the world has lost its heart, and deprived thus of its vital organ, has fallen into a fever from which it may never recover.

> Sicke world, yea dead, yea putrified, since shee
> Thy'ntrinsique Balme, and thy preservative,
> Can never be renew'd, thou never live,
> (I.56-58)

Moreover, the world even fails to recognise its sickness for, in forgetting Elizabeth Drury, it has forgotten the health it enjoyed while she was alive. "That wound was deepe, but'tis more misery," Donne laments, "That thou has lost thy sense and memory" (I.27-28). Our only hope of recovering the health our hearts have lost is to try and recall the restorative power of Elizabeth Drury by remembering her name; we must turn away from the world and meditate upon her virtues. Thus Donne instructs us to "see, and Judge, and follow worthinesse" (I.4) in order to fashion a new world after the pattern of the dead girl. The poet, through his act of commemoration in verse, promises to aid us in the fulfilment of this task by presenting her to our sight and helping us

to understand her significance.

There is hope for our restoration, Donne tells us, for although she herself is gone, a shadow of her world still remains in the good that remember her:

> Her Ghost doth walke; that is, a glimmering light,
> A faint weake love of vertue and of good,
> Reflects from her, on them which understood
> Her worth; And though she have shut in all day,
> The twi-light of her memory doth stay;
> (I.70-74)

Donne tells us that those who perceive the glimmering light of her goodness, despite the darkness of the decaying world, will be able to create a new world free from the carcass of the old (I.75-76). However, since even the best creatures can only glimpse her dimly in the "twi-light of her memory," the hope of restoration Donne offers would seem to be, at best, paradoxical. We, too, are implicated in the creation of this new world, for we are the elect to whom Donne promised to present Elizabeth Drury's pattern of perfection in order that we might imitate it. But we attempt to follow the poet's command to "see . . . worthinesse" only to learn that our vision is impaired; earthly sight, although "the noblest sense of any one, . . . hath onely colour to feed on" (I.353-54), and as the poet has already told us, with the death of Elizabeth Drury, "Beauty, that's colour, and proportion" is "decay'd, or gone" (I.249-50). How then may we hope to see clearly one who is "all colour, all Diaphanous" (I.366)? This question remains unanswered as we continue our struggle to catch sight of Elizabeth Drury as we follow the refracted design of Donne's *Anatomy*.

Donne also promises that those who keep Elizabeth Drury present in their memory will be able to recover her condition of perfection, for she, the original "unvext Paradise" (I.363), by her influence, will transform the creatures of the world so that they might

> So many weedlesse Paradises bee,
> Which of themselves produce no venemous sinne,
> Except some forraine Serpent bring it in)
> (I.82-84)

But this promise of restoration is already qualified by the threat of the serpent, and we follow Donne's argument only to find that he further undermines our hope of restoration. For although he distinguishes the new world from the old, the creatures who are to create this "weedlesse Paradise" are inescapably rooted in the corruption of the old world (as was Elizabeth Drury herself). The crooked serpent, then, has already entered. In this life we cannot hope to attain the perfection of the prelapsarian universe, for as Donne declares, there is "no health"; we are "borne ruinous," scarred by original sin (I.91-95). Donne has demanded that we "follow . . . worthinesse" only to show us that, except in death, it is impossible to conform to the pattern of perfection Elizabeth Drury represents. And as if to perplex us even further, Donne doubles the serpent conceit and uses it against us. For the serpent, its significance inverted, serves as a figure for Elizabeth Drury, paradoxically, for the "unvext Paradise" herself:

> But as some Serpents poison hurteth not,
> Except it be from the live Serpent shot,
> So doth her vertue need here here, to fit
> That unto us; she working more then it.
> (I.409-12)

And so, as our perspective on the conceit shifts, we discover that our

only health is to admit the serpent—but to do this is to achieve the impossible, because the serpent on whom our cure depends is already dead.[11] Again, Donne raises our hopes only to deflate them: "Perchance the world might have recovered, / If she whom we lament had not been dead" (I.359-60). But she is gone, and her virtue can have no effect upon us, for since "her influence the heav'n forbeares" (I.378), the world is incapable of receiving it.

Donne has demanded that we "see, and Judge, and follow worthinesse" only to prove the task to be impossible. We are incapable of seeing her clearly, for Donne's refracted language reveals little more than a glimpse of "the twi-light of her memory"; nor are we capable of following her, for since "commerce twixt heaven and earth" is "embarr'd," conformity is only achieved in death; nor are we capable of judging her, for in the perpetual encounter with paradox, reason goes the way of the world's lost proportion and harmony. Donne only succeeds in showing us that our minds are too cramped (as is his language) to encompass one who is part of the heavenly "Quire, and Song." If we are incapable of imitating her pattern of perfection, then the creation of the promised new world is impossible, and so Donne abandons us to the decaying carcass of the old.

Nothing is resolved, for Donne raises our expectations only to frustrate them. His *Anatomy* promised to cut through the chaos and confusion of the diseased world in order to give us a clear-sighted view of our sickness and enable us to discover a means of curing it, but the poet's dissection only serves to darken our vision and confound our understanding. Donne's *Anatomy* is as distracted and perplexed as the

world it describes, and although we follow its course, searching for the heart on which our recovery depends, we can find no centre to the labyrinth. Nor do we make any progress; the place at which we arrive is the same world with which the poem started—a sick world, sunk into lethargy which mistakes itself to be well. As it began (I.23-24), so the *Anatomy* ends:

> So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
> Were punctuall in this Anatomy.
> Nor smels it well to hearers, if one tell
> Them their disease, who faine would think they're wel.
> Here therefore be the end:
>
> (I.439-43)

Donne promises a restorative but provides no cure; while we are here on earth, Elizabeth Drury's virtue can have no effect on us. And so we remain rooted in our own corruption, for unless we can come to know the heart, we are incapable of making a motion towards spiritual health. Thus, as we turn to the *Progres* we are left hanging on the poet's words as he promises to restore the split between nature and grace by bringing Elizabeth Drury's heavenly state hither.

It is a little easier to credit the hyperbolic praise Donne affords Elizabeth Drury in the *Progres* than it was in the *Anatomy*, for whereas in the earlier poem we are asked to accept divine restorative powers as residing in a creature herself a part of the fallen world, in the second poem Donne shifts the focus and celebrates her state of heavenly perfection. Thus his praise of Elizabeth Drury properly becomes a celebration of divinity itself, for considered as a part of God's circle of everlasting grace, she is properly a symbol of "essentiall joye." Conversely, however, Elizabeth Drury's perfected state increases our difficulty in

crediting the claims Donne makes for his art, the power to restore the split between nature and grace. In the *Anatomy*, the poet's words could barely reveal Elizabeth Drury's twilight presence in the decaying world; yet in the *Progres*, by virtue of the same fractured medium, Donne aspires to describe her heavenly perfection. The paradoxical nature of the symbolising process intensifies with the restoration process. And in the *Funerall Elegie* which bridges the two poems, Donne questions the plausibility of the task he has assumed, and at the same time, draws the scepticism of the reader:

> May't not be said, that her grave shall restore
> Her, greater, purer, firmer, then before?
> Heaven may say this, and joy in't, but can wee
> Who live, and lacke her, here this vantage see?
> (F.E. 45-48)

Donne is acutely aware that his words can only yield a temporal perspective on the mysteries of heaven, and that his labyrinthine language must fail to encompass her perfection. Can she, he asks, "dwell in an Elegie?" (F.E. 18).

The perceptive author of the "Harbinger to the *Progres*" also warns the reader as to the spurious nature of the claims Donne makes for his art.[12] As he anatomises Donne's *Progres*, Hall asserts that no earthly soul dragged down by the *"luggage of this clay"* can follow Elizabeth Drury's soul even *"halfe way"* to heaven. *"Or see thy flight; which doth our thoughts outgoe / So fast, that now the lightning moves but slow"* (11-12). The discursive nature of fallen language, the poem implies, cannot capture the immediacy of this flight, nor relate her *"glorious Journals in that blessed state"* (16). By stressing the

impossible nature of the task, Hall thereby subverts his subsequent assertion that Donne has followed the progress of Elizabeth Drury's soul and *"From this worlds carcasse having mounted hie / To that pure life of Immortalitie"* (29-30). And so the reader, already sceptical of the preposterous nature of Donne's claim that he can bring "heaven hither," makes his own progress towards the second of Donne's *Anniversaries*.

Describing Elizabeth Drury's experience of the sight of God, Donne tells us that,

> Heaven is as neare, and present to her face,
> As colours are, and objects, in a roome,
> Where darknesse was before, when Tapers come.
> (II.216-18)

But the taper which brings such illumination is not to be found in the refracted images of the poet's language; paradoxically, it is only to be achieved through the darkness of death itself. We recall the earlier lines of the poem where Donne foresees his state of contemplation on his death bed:

> Thinke then, my soule, that death is but a Groome,
> Which brings a Taper to the outward roome,
> Whence thou spiest first a little glimmering light,
> And after brings it nearer to thy sight:
> For such approaches doth Heaven make in death.
> (II.85-89)

Only death can pave our way to the "sight of God, in fulnesse" (II.441) and "unlocke the doore" of heaven (II.157). The reader, despite his attempts to follow Elizabeth Drury's progress, can never move beyond the endless refractions of the poet's language as it attempts, unsuccessfully, to reflect the incandescent quality of the divine image. We have, in effect, followed the poet into the second *Anniversarie* only to make no

progress beyond the twilight vision of Elizabeth Drury which was our experience of the *Anatomy*. We discover the truth of the warning given by the author of the "Harbinger"—*"better eyes"* are needed to follow her flight than those possessed of the *"vulgar sight"* of earthly vision. It is impossible for either the poet or the reader to acquire the heavenly perspective required to enjoy the sight of Elizabeth Drury in her condition of heavenly glory until we, like her, are "growne all Ey" (II.200).[13]

If the nature of Donne's task, to bring heaven hither, would seem to be impossible, its validity is also questionable. We recall Donne's castigation of the cosmic geometers who seek to reduce the visible heavens to the arbitrary ratio of their mathematical grids:

> For of Meridians, and Parallels,
> Man hath weav'd out a net, and this net throwne
> Upon the Heavens, and now they are his owne.
> Loth to goe up the hill, or labor thus,
> To goe to heaven, we make heaven come to us.
> (I.278-82)

Implicit in Donne's condemnation of the folly of those who think their instruments of representation capable of bringing the mysteries of the universe into a steady focus is an even greater censure of his own presumptuous claim. For in attempting to describe Elizabeth Drury's glorified state Donne seeks to reduce the mysteries of a *spiritual* heaven to man's ratio by ensnaring them in a lattice woven from the disintegrating thread of fallen language. But Elizabeth Drury's mysterious circularity cannot be encompassed so easily, and the reader who presumes to think so is destined to be disappointed, for the course he pursues in the *Progres* proves to be no less tangled than the one he followed in the *Anatomy*. Donne does not provide us with an easy route to the truth,

but, as in "Satire III," advocates the way of tortuous ascent, demanding that we exercise the mind's endeavour as we reach towards the mysteries of faith.

Indeed, the reader remains continually perplexed by the contrary claims he finds at work in the *Progres* which does nothing to alleviate the strain of the double perspectives he was asked to take on Elizabeth Drury in the earlier poem. Returning to her inviolable purity on earth, Donne asserts that she was immune from all disease: her "even constitution might have wonne / Any disease to venter on the Sunne / Rather then her" (II.137-39). Yet almost immediately the poet claims "Shee, shee embrac'd a sicknesse, gave it meat, / The purest Blood, and Breath, that ere it eate" (II.147-48). By presenting her in this way, Donne telescopes in the young girl the paradox of the Fortunate Fall. Paradoxically, even one whose form was so perfect that none could "these lines or quantities unjoynt" (II.133), a circle so complete that "No Accident, could threaten any linke" (II.146), could only achieve her "happiest Harmonee" through the division of death (II.92). Donne's disenchanted, labyrinthine language fails to shed a clear light on the mysteries of faith; it can only attempt to signify the celestial meanings which translate sickness into health and life into death through the creation of double perspectives. The poem, then, as it forges a relationship between the truths of faith and the language of discursive reason, inevitably confronts the reader with the fractured language of paradox and confounds his understanding.

Donne's painful self-reflexiveness is especially evident in his explicit, virulent attack on human reason. Meditating upon the soul's ignorance in this life and knowledge in the next (II.251-320), Donne involves the reader in a rigorous scrutiny of the established frames of reference and the conventional ways of knowing on which his trust in the power of human learning depends. Donne catalogues the various fields of scientific enquiry only to expose their relativity and uncertainty, and forces the reader to confront his own ignorance by assaulting him with a battery of questions which must (at least for Donne's contemporaries) remain unanswerable:

> Knowst thou but how the stone doth enter in
> The bladders Cave, and never breake the skin?
> Knowst thou how blood, which to the hart doth flow,
> Doth from one ventricle to th'other go?
> And for the putrid stuffe, which thou dost spit,
> Knowst thou how thy lungs have attracted it?
> (II.269-74)

So Donne triumphantly ends his attack:

> Why grasse is greene, or why our blood is red,
> Are mysteries which none have reach'd unto.
> (II.289-90)

Implicitly, if our anatomies prove incapable of disclosing the physical motions of the body, then now much more ineffectual must be Donne's own anatomy as it seeks to lay open the spiritual motions of the heart? Similarly, if there are yet "mysteries" in the physical world "which none have reach'd unto," what hope have we of comprehending the heavenly mystery that Elizabeth Drury's perfected state represents? Looked at in this light, the act of reasoning itself would seem to be presumptuous.

So Donne exposes the relativity and uncertainty of human learning in the hope that we may come to recognise the limitations of human reason with respect to divine mystery, and so attain the condition of humility necessary to an acceptance of truth by faith alone. For, as Thomas Browne writes in the *Religio Medici*,

> Since I was of understanding to know that we know nothing, my reason hath been more pliable to the will of faith; I am now content to understand a mystery without a rigid definition, in an easie and Platonick description.[14]

Browne, here, states his preference for the fluidity of the Platonic mold against the inflexible framework of the Aristotelian scholastic definitions when describing mystery. And Donne, too, in the *Anniversaries*, wants us to be wary of a philosophy of definitions, for such a system gives only an illusion of completion and fixity.[15] And so by pointing to the insufficiency of his own attempts, Donne forcibly demonstrates to the reader how the incandescent quality of Elizabeth Drury as the restored image eludes the strictures of a rigid definition. The inflexible frames in which he seeks to encompass her mystery, whether the configurations of Euclidean geometry or the rigid forms of language itself, enjoy, at best, an uneasy relationship with one who is an object of "Wonder and love" (F.E. 29).

Immediately after exposing the fallacies inherent in human understanding, Donne makes his final bid to rid us of our reliance on the rigid structure of the rational discourse:

> When wilt thou shake off this Pedantery,
> Of being taught by sense, and Fantasy?
> Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seem great
> Below; But up unto the watch-towre get,
> And see all things despoyld of fallacies:

> Thou shalt not peepe through lattices of eies,
> Nor heare through Laberinths of eares, nor learne
> By circuit, or collections to discerne.
> In Heaven thou straight know'st all, concerning it,
> And what concernes it not, shalt straight forget.
> (II.291-300)

The poet here is criticising the temporal perspectives and spatial metaphors of his own medium, and implicit in this criticism is a condemnation of the reader for failing to recognise the lattices and labyrinths of language as he struggled to follow the convolutions of Donne's logic. We are criticised for depending on "sense, and Fantasy," the very faculties which enable us to read the poem (and the poet to create and instruct us), because they only serve as a deceptive mediator between man and the world of external forms, and can provide no introduction to the interior world of grace. We are condemned for having tried to discern Elizabeth Drury's mysterious circularity by "circuit, or collections" as we labour to follow the tortuous path of the poem, for the labyrinth of language is incapable of yielding a steady perspective on the mysteries of faith. Finally we are censured for having peeped through "lattices of eies," when a partial vision is all that the refracted design of Donne's poem will afford. Again, the poet has trapped us neatly by the very mechanisms which were to have served us, for by advocating the need to take a heavenly perspective on truth, Donne has directed us towards a vantage point that can only be attained by ascending the watch tower of faith, and which the rational discourse itself cannot provide.

Donne's energetic and fascinating conceits stimulate us intellectually and drive us forward, only to show us the deficiencies of the

intellect, however much stimulated; the mysteries of religion may only be approached by the way of faith, made clear by grace. So Donne admits the impossibility of bringing us to the still point or complete circumference where we might attain the all-encompassing vision necessary to maintain a steady focus on the circular perfection of Elizabeth Drury's glorified state (II.435-41). Since it is impossible for us to experience the "sight of God, in fulnesse," we must be content to "double" our "thoughts" on heaven.

Finally, then, despite the poet's elaborate design, our understanding must be the gift of God; for, as Donne tells us elsewhere, "the *Mysteries* of our *Religion,* are *not* the *objects* of *our reason,* but *by faith we rest* on *God's decree* and purpose,"[16] And after completing our temporal and spatial voyage through the poem, Donne leaves us dependent upon grace.

> And where, what lawes of poetry admit,
> Lawes of religion have at least the same,
> Immortall Maid, I might invoque thy name.
> Could any Saint provoke that appetite
> Thou here shouldst make mee a French convertite.
> But thou wouldst not; nor wouldst thou be content,
> To take this, for my second yeeres true Rent,
> Did this Coine beare any'other stampe then his,
> That gave thee power to doe, me, to say this.
> Since his will is, that to prosperitee,
> Thou shouldst for life, and death, a patterne bee,
> And that the world should have notice of this,
> The purpose, and th'Autority is his;
> Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame
> The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came.
> (II.514-28)

Concealed in the jibe at French Catholicism and its celebration of saints is the expression of the poet's longing for a public language which would enable him to invoke Elizabeth Drury's name and render her

significance universally intelligible; the satire betrays Donne's nostalgia for a less critical attitude towards man's methods of representation. Donne not only refuses to seal the poem with Elizabeth Drury's name, but also denies it the authority of his own. The poet is simply "The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came"; "the purpose, and th' Autority" belong solely to God, and only his "stampe" can give value to the misshapen "Coine" of the poem and reveal its worth to the reader. And so Donne gives up the burden of our instruction, acknowledging that the significance of Elizabeth Drury as a "patterne" for life and death may only be made clear by God's grace, of which he is merely the instrument as he serves to give the world notice of her death.

Nevertheless, some consolation is to be found in Donne's recognising his dilemma and formulating it in poetry. And so "succour'd then with a perplexed doubt" (I.14), Donne's verse truly "hath a middle nature" (I.473), for although it cannot lead us to the truth, it can, perhaps, direct us to the place where the truth may be sought. Donne's own justification for these perplexing poems is to be found in the analogy he draws in the *Anatomy* between the song of remembrance God gave to Moses, and his own song of commemoration for Elizabeth Drury, the perfect heart the world has lost:

> He spake
> To *Moses*, to deliver unto all,
> That song: because hee knew they would let fall
> The Law, the Prophets, and the History,
> But keepe the song still in their memory.
> Such an opinion (in due measure) made
> Me this great Office boldly to invade.
> Nor could incomprehensiblenesse deterre
> Me, from thus trying to emprison her,
> (I.462-70)

Moses knew that after his death the people of Israel would forget God's law, and so he bade them to set the words of his song in their hearts in the hope that they would remember God's goodness.[17] And commenting on this biblical passage in the *Essays in Divinity*, Donne emphasises the significance of the heart:

> But one benefit of the Law was, that it did in some measure restore them towards the first light of Nature. For, if man had kept that, he had needed no outward law; for then he was to himself a law, having all law in his heart.[18]

Donne's song of commemoration for the lost heart of the world is also an attempt to rectify a "perverse and crooked generation" by turning them away from their wayward path and turning them back towards their God.[19] And as we have seen, it is to this movement towards conversion that Donne directs us as we follow the crooked path of his labyrinthine poems. By repeatedly displacing us from the centre as we attempt to search out Elizabeth Drury, Donne seeks to turn us away from the solipsistic gyrations of the human mind in order to turn our attention to the motions of our own heart and our means of spiritual recovery. For the only temple in which God reveals himself is the faithful heart; as Donne writes in one of the *Sermons*, "nothing but the *first motions* of the heart are for him."[20] Man may discover all that God requires of him in his own heart, because, there, in the Christian memory, the whole process of providential history is incarnated.[21] Donne's message in the *Anniversaries* is made explicit in the following passage taken from one of his sermons on the light of faith.

> Of these two lights, *Faith* and *Grace* first, and then *Nature* and *Reason* . . . because contentious spirits have cast such clouds upon both these lights, that some have said, *Nature*

> doth *all* alone, and others, that Nature hath *nothing* to do at all, but all is *Grace* . . . [but] by this light of *Faith*, to him which hath it, all that is involved in *Prophecies*, is clear, and evident, as in a History already done; and all that is wrapped up in *promises*, is his own already in *performance*. . . . [Man] hath a whole *Bible*, and an abundant Library in his own heart, and there by this light of *Faith* . . . he hath a better knowledge then all this.[22]

Our darkened natural reason, the faculty through which we interpret the world (and the world of Donne's poem) tends towards obscurity; but guided by the clear light of faith, we may discover, through grace, the illumination of God's divine plan within our hearts.

Donne cannot clarify for the reader the significance he himself discovered in the death of Elizabeth Drury, the occasion of his personal revelation of the mysteries of faith; the poet's understanding was the gift of grace, and so must be the reader's. And so it is to our own hearts that we must look in order to discover the significance of Elizabeth Drury, the lost heart of the world which Donne's anatomy fails to reveal. Only there we may find a means of reconciling the multiple perspectives we are asked to take on Elizabeth Drury as we follow the distracted and perplexed course of Donne's argument. For the contrary conditions of original perfection, fallen creature and restored image that Donne telescopes in the figure of Elizabeth Drury, the "heart" of the poems, are also simultaneously present in the heart of every individual; in so far as it makes present the past and presents a pattern for the future, the Christian memory recalls to us, in our fallen state, the condition of original perfection and the final promise of restoration.[23] We cannot look to the fractured design of the poem to resolve the difficulties we experience in understanding Elizabeth Drury, for her

mysterious quality eludes the strictures of the rational framework; Donne can only anatomise the paradox she must represent to rational thought. Finally, her significance as a "patterne" for "life, and death" may only be discovered within ourselves, through grace.

CHAPTER IV

Spatial Metaphors and the *Anniversaries:* The Poems in Context

We have seen how Donne, in the *Anniversaries*, consistently associates the language of geometrical space and discursive reason with rational man's desire to master the mysteries of the universe and the truths of faith. As a devotional poet, Donne is acutely aware that our proper condition in the face of a transcendent God is not one of mastery, but one of submission, and in order to instruct us in this matter he purposefully seeks to undermine the security of the ego as it attempts to grasp the mysteries of religion, through the creation of curious perspectives and paradoxical structures. However, despite Donne's insistence that we rid ourselves of a reliance on reason and turn instead towards the way of faith, the poems themselves reveal a marked preoccupation with the ways in which rational man seeks to frame his knowledge of the mechanistic universe, and express a fascination with spatial metaphors which would seem to belie Donne's professed desire to "advance these thoughts" (II.220) beyond mere epistemology in order to reach towards divine mystery.

As a result of this tension, the reader, too, is pulled in opposing directions. For while it is continually impressed upon us that the rational pursuit of truth is inevitably paradoxical and misleading, Donne brings about reason's collapse with such energy and ingenuity that we become thoroughly engaged in the curious perspectives engendered by these labyrinthine poems, even while they serve to perplex us. I should like to suggest that we experience such contrariety in reading the *Anniversaries* because these poems reflect not only the understanding of Donne the religious poet who recognises the need to dissolve the ego

in order to achieve complete submission to the will of God, but also that of Donne the love poet, whose practice has been to exercise a self-dramatising control over the world of personal relationships. My aim in this chapter is to set the *Anniversaries* within the context of Donne's canon in order to arrive at a better understanding of the differing claims we find at work in these poems.

The highly quantitative and diagrammatic view of the world which the *Anniversaries* present is prevalent throughout Donne's work; his imagination is consistently drawn to the abstract and geometrical precision of scientific language.[1] Thus, despite the inevitable shift in focus which occurs in the transition from secular verse to devotional writings, we find that Donne's central conceits remain basically unchanged, being adapted, at different points in his career, to suit the needs of his subject matter.[2] The "stiffe twin compasses" of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," for instance, become modified to describe the method of the mathematical God of the *Sermons* who works on the body of mankind to carry "his Compasse round."[3] Similarly, the geometric perfection of the circle which in the *Anniversaries* suggests Elizabeth Drury's glorified state, also serves as a figure for the completeness of earthly love in "Loves Growth." However, despite the consistency of the images, I feel that Donne's attitude to the shaping power afforded by geometrical space and discursive reason in the secular poetry, where his primary concern is the exploration and dramatisation of his own mind, is significantly different from that which he expresses in the devotional poetry, where his main concern is no longer to establish the identity of

the ego, but to discover a means of framing the interior communication of the soul with God. An examination of these differing attitudes will, I believe, help to explain the curious tension we find at work in the *Anniversaries* between Donne's fascination with metaphors of framing and his recognition of the need to dissolve them.

Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* are characterised by a highly developed egocentricity and a celebration of variety; as George T. Wright points out, "The speaker of Donne's love lyrics is usually a much more substantial character than the speaker in the poems of praise," and we see him in "a particular experience, or a series of experiences subject to change."[4] Indeed, these poems display a dazzling variety of personae and an extraordinary diversity of mood as Donne dramatises the multiple perspectives of his personality and explores his complex and varied experience of love. The language of discursive reason becomes a means whereby this self-dramatisation is achieved, and when Donne seeks to establish his own identity we discover that his scepticism has a liberating effect on the poetic imagination; in the secular verse, the instruments of measurement and representation, which Donne elsewhere exposes as rigid and restrictive, become the flexible tools of a manipulative ego, enabling him to explore every facet of experience and fashion reality after the pattern of his own desires.

Throughout the *Songs and Sonnets*, Donne describes qualitative values in quantitative terms. But his objectivity frequently serves merely to disguise the arbitrary designs of the will. For example, in "Loves Infiniteness" we find Donne playing with the notion of quanti-

tative evaluation as the speaker of the poem attempts to define and impose a limit upon the immeasurable quality of love. In the first two stanzas we find the speaker despairing of ever achieving all his lady's love for since love is subject to change, it can never be securely possessed; however, the final stanza signals a change in tone and a reversal of direction as the speaker confidently declares "Yet I would not have all yet" because "Hee that hath all can have no more."[5] This reversal reveals the double edge of Donne's egotism which desires to master the experience of love by imposing a rational framework upon it, while simultaneously demanding that his love be boundless and exceed all limits. So the poem turns the language of quantification against itself in order to achieve a more complete expression of the complexities of "Loves riddles."[6] A similar effect is achieved in "The Computation" where the speaker seeks to measure the grief he feels at being separated from his mistress. Again, mathematical precision is undercut, for in the attempt to quantify the infinite, indivisibility becomes confused with extension:

> A thousand, I did neither thinke, nor doe,
> Or not divide, all being one thought of you;
> Or in a thousand more, forgot that too.[7]

In both poems the mysteries of love prove irreducible to simple mathematical formulae and, as John Carey points out, this breakdown of the rational framework to reveal confused passions is the source of the invigorating complexity of Donne's love lyrics.[8]

The peculiar fusion of organic complexity and the language of quantification which we find in "Loves Infiniteness" and "The Compu-

tation" is characteristic of Donne's poetry. It occurs again in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mouring," where Donne employs a mathematical method to draw out the expansive quality of love. The pristine geometrical image of the "stiffe twin compasses" becomes animated, serving to express the longings of separated lovers:

> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiffe twin compasses are two,
> Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
> To move, but doth, if th'other doe.
>
> And though it in the center sit,
> Yet when the other far doth rome,
> It leanes, and hearkens after it,
> And growes erect, as it comes home.
>
> Such wilt thou be to mee, who must
> Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;
> Thy firmnes makes my circle just,
> And makes me end, where I begunne.[9]

We see here how geometry becomes a fascinating device of a manipulative ego, the means whereby the speaker can impose his will and protect himself from the unstable forces that threaten him. The figure of the compass serves to overcome the fear that the lovers' bodily separation will bring about isolation and loneliness; although lacking each other's physical presence, the two souls will be united as one, just as the two points of a compass are articulated at the apex. This being so, the speaker confidently proclaims, they will "Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse."[10] Through the deployment of geometrical language, the speaker obliterates the fear of trackless wanderings in which the poem itself is rooted. Since he and his lover are "interassured" at the apex of the mind, no matter how far he roams his swerving motion is controlled by her constancy at the centre, the fixed point

which will eventually make his "circle just" and draw him back to the place of departure.[11] Thus, through an imaginative manipulation of space, the speaker draws a magic circle around his love which protects it from any threat posed by time or circumstance.

The immutable form of the circle as a protective frame against a world of change and flux recurs in "Loves Growth." The speaker cannot endure the notion that his love must share the vicissitudes of the seasons, for if this is so, then although love will grow with the spring, then winter must necessarily abate the spring's increase. But the speaker resolves his fears and asserts his power to dominate mutability by drawing a parallel between his love and the map of the heavens provided by the astronomers of the old philosophy:

> And Yet no greater, but more eminent,
> Love by the spring is growne,
> As, in the firmament,
> Starres by the Sunne are not inlarg'd, but showne.
> Gentle love deeds, as blossomes on a bough,
> From loves awaken'd root do bud out now.
> If, as in water stir'd more circles bee
> Produc'd by one, love such additions take,
> Those like so many spheares, but one heaven make
> For , they are all concentrique unto thee.[12]

Donne ingeniously introduces the principles of cosmic geometry (without detracting from the metaphors of organic growth) in order to provide the speaker with a convenient rationale for the constancy of love. The quality of love, the speaker insists, does not increase with spring, but merely experiences greater emanations due to the heat, just as "Starres by the Sunne are not inlarg'd, but showne." Therefore, when winter comes, love will not diminish; rather, its concentric circles will constrict to create a more concentrated centre.

In both "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" and "Loves Growth" the dominating ego employs the language of discursive reason and geometrical space in order to provide his love with a stable framework which will protect it from any external threat: the image of the compass 'proves' that the lovers will be able to transcend the barriers of space and time and so endure "not yet / A breach, but expansion";[13] the geometric image of the concentric heavenly spheres 'proves' that love may change without inconstancy. Nevertheless, we see that the logic of Donne's spatial metaphors is firmly grounded in the irrational fears and desires which it seeks to stabilise. Although the recourse to reason provides an illusion of objectivity, its instruments are nothing more than the tractible contrivances of a protean self searching to establish its identity and protect itself from an unaccountable world which threatens its stability.

In the love poetry, then, spatial metaphors are employed to establish the ego in a position of dominance. The speaker circumscribes his own reality and, since he places himself at the centre, experiences an all-encompassing vision which promotes self-confidence. For example, in "Loves Progress" Donne uses metaphors from the science of cartography to express his wanderlust as he explores the various plains of his mistress' body. And unlike the trackless spatial voyages made in the *Anniversaries*, this journey is destined to end successfully: the speaker arrives at the desired "Centrique part" and exits from the poem as the unchallenged conqueror of the little world he has mapped out for himself upon the surface of the woman's body.[14]

The scale of vision in the love poetry is often seen to be cosmic, but these seemingly infinite spaces exist only in so far as they can be filled and measured by Donne's love or grief. In "The Sunne Rising" we find the completeness of the love described in terms of solar unity: "Shine here to us, and thou are every where; / This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare."[15] Conversely, in "A Nocturnall upon St. Lucies Day," the tears of the two lovers have the power to engulf the globe: "Oft a flood / Have wee two wept, and so, / Drownd the whole world."[16] Throughout the *Songs and Sonnets* the logic of egotism would seem to propound that if love contains the whole world, then the world can pose no threat to that love. But we continually find that the expansive space which frames the lover's universe also contains the signs of that world's subversion or loss. An example of such subversion occurs in "The Good-morrow" where the speaker dismisses the need to chart the heavens and discover new worlds, for he and his mistress create a perfect world unto themselves:

> My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares
> And true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest,
> Where can we finde two better hemispheares
> Without sharpe North, without declining West?
> What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;
> If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
> Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.[17]

The flexibility yielded by the conventions of cartography enables the speaker to dissolve extremities and unite himself and his mistress as one. The geometrical perfection of the sphere symbolises the immutable quality of love which has the power to reconcile contraries. However, the spatial metaphor is disruptive of the speaker's intention in that it

also draws attention to the impossibilities implicit in the claims it makes for perfection and completion: since the extremities of "sharpe Northe" and "declining West" must necessarily be supposed to exist in any two hemispheres the harmonious conceit simultaneously posits the threat of imbalance.[18] The space the speaker creates for his love proves insufficient to contain or stabilise it, and the final lines of the stanza betray Donne's fears of the unstable humours which the rational framework would seek to suppress.

In the secular verse we consistently find a tension at work between the commanding voice of the dramatic personae who believe that, by strength of will (and aided by reason), they can shape their own world, and the sceptical voice of the poet who recognises that the very establishment of the ego necessarily depends upon an acute perception of all that threatens its stability.[19] This tension is rarely resolved; rather, we witness a fascinating play between the two as Donne's scepticism allows him to penetrate the rational facades he constructs and show their foundations to be laid in potentially disruptive passions.

Occasionally, we find that the personae themselves express doubts as to the reliability of the frames they construct in order to establish themselves in a position of dominance. In "The Triple Foole" the speaker feels that if he can objectify his grief by fettering it in verse, then it will cease to threaten his stability:

> Then as th'earths inward narrow crooked lanes
> Do purge sea waters fretfull salt away,
> I thought, if I could draw my paines
> Through Rimes vexation, I should them allay,
> Griefe brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,
> For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse.[20]

The speaker reasons that since the crooked path of the earth's rivers filter away the salt from sea water, he will be able to purge his grief by drawing it through the vexed course of poetry. He claims that he will control grief by fettering it in verse but, paradoxically, employs a metaphor which is more suggestive of fluidity than restraint. The rationalising device fails even by analogy. And we find that just as the flow of the rivers is only temporarily frozen in the static spatial metaphor of the poem, so the speaker's grief is only momentarily arrested. This assertion of control over a world of flux is subverted by the singer who "frees againe / Griefe, which verse did restraine" and follows the tortuous course of "Rimes vexation" only to misinterpret its meaning. So the poem closes with the speaker reflecting upon his futile attempt to imprison grief within the crooked and unreliable framework provided by discursive reason.

In "The Triple Foole" the speaker complains that the space afforded by the rational discourse is insufficiently constrictive to restrain his grief; conversely, in a verse epistle "To Mr. T.W." the speaker discovers the same space to be too restrictive when, unable to visit his friend in person, he seeks to communicate his melancholic disposition by mapping it out in verse:

> Yet as a firme house, though the Carpenter
> Perish, doth stand: as an Embassadour
> Lyes safe, how e'r his king be in danger:
>
> So, though I languish, prest with Melancholy,
> My verse, the strict Map of my misery,
> Shall live to see that, for whose want I dye.[21]

"My verse," the poet claims, is the "strict Map of my misery," suggest-

ing that the poem is an exact and vigorously drawn representation of the man himself. But, as the figurative language of the poem reveals, the poet is simultaneously aware that the quality of his experience cannot be so easily defined and must, in the end, elude the strictures of verse: the house may represent the carpenter, but it is not the carpenter; the ambassador, although the kind's representative, is not the king himself; the "strict Map" of verse, however accurately drawn, can provide no real insight into the complex emotions of the man who created it. Finally, the poet's "lines" are reduced to "a Picture, or bare Sacrament." So Donne draws a self-portrait which fails to capture the essence of the artist; rather, its value is defined and limited by the frame which contains and objectifies it.[22]

We find, then, that even in the secular poetry Donne expresses an acure awareness of the limitations frames impose—either because they prove too elastic to restrain the forces he seeks to master, or else too rigid to capture the elusive quality of his experience. Yet, more often, we witness the poet's delight in exploiting the flexible spaces of discursive reason because they provide him with a means of exploring every aspect of his multifarious personality and afford him the power to shape the world at will. These opposing attitudes to metaphors of framing, which contribute to the enlivening complexity of the secular verse, obviously prefigure the tension we experience in the *Anniversaries* between Donne's fascination with spatial metaphors and his recognition of their inadequacy to frame divine truths and present them in a steady light. But, in the *Anniversaries,* Donne's figures of space serve a very

different purpose, for the poet is no longer concerned with exploring the multiple facets of his own personality. Rather, he seeks to frame an immutable truth (the religious significance of Elizabeth Drury), and to communicate to the reader the necessity of imitating her.

Consequently, it is not Donne's intention in the *Anniversaries* to confirm the ego's confidence in the power to shape its own world, but to bring the reader to a recognition that true stability may only be achieved by the faithful conformity of the soul to God—that is, through a life fashioned after the pattern of Elizabeth Drury. So, he invites us to explore man's instruments of representation and measurement in order that we might discover for ourselves that such frames of reference only give the illusion of fixity and completion to a radically disoriented and fragmented universe. And, as we have seen, the spatial metaphors Donne employs to communicate Elizabeth Drury's perfection serve to undermine the dominating ego further by showing us the futility of attempting to master, through reason, the truths of faith. No centre of stability is to be found in these labyrinthine poems, for Donne's paradoxical geometrical conceits and the curious perspectives they produce repeatedly frustrate our attempts to grasp Elizabeth Drury's significance and perceive in a steady light the mystery that she represents. Donne endeavours to show us that man may only be truly centred when he relinquishes the sense of his own shaping powers and acknowledges his dependency on grace.

However, although Donne seeks to turn the reader towards the infallible way of faith, he, himself, remains inordinately preoccupied with

the various and perplexed ways of reason, as his treatment of Elizabeth Drury reveals. The devotional context of the *Anniversaries* would suggest that the young girl represents an objective value to which Donne, the man of faith, strives to conform; yet we also witness the poet's delight in fashioning her perfection and in exploiting every reasonable means of doing this. Despite the theocentric direction of these poems, then, we continue to find evidence of the secular poet who, as we have seen, is fascinated by the shaping power which reason affords his imagination. And in his treatment of Elizabeth Drury, Donne displays the same energy and ingenuity which claims our attention in the love poetry.

In both sets of poems we find a similar deployment of the language of materialism to explore the complexities of organic perfection, and experience the peculiar fusion of the rigid with the pliant and the quantitative with the qualitative which such a synthesis achieves. The poet who animated the pristine geometrical compasses of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" to express the yearnings of separated lovers also composed the following description of Elizabeth Drury:

> She, of whose soule, if wee may say, 'twas Gold,
> Her body was th'Electrum, and did hold
> Many degrees of that; wee understood
> Her by her sight, her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheekes, and so distinctly wrought,
> That one might almost say, her bodie thought,
> (II.241-46)

Donne describes the immutable perfection of Elizabeth Drury's soul and the only slightly less perfect condition of her body by invoking the purity of gold, and its alloy, electrum. These metaphors, while suggesting her refinement, do not render her lifeless, for the infusion of

"eloquent blood" brings a vital blush to cold metallic purity. Electrum turns to flesh and gold to spirit as Donne simultaneously expresses Elizabeth Drury's double status as symbol of divine perfection and living, breathing organism.

Furthermore, Donne's use of the geometrical perfection of the circle to suggest Elizabeth Drury's incandescent quality as the restored image achieves a similar effect to his deployment of the language of quantification to express the quality of love in poems such as "Loves Growth." In both poems the rational framework proves to be considerably less restrictive than it would first appear; the mysteries of faith, like the mysteries of love, elude the strictures of a rigid definition and resist reduction to the purely mathematical. In the secular verse reason's collapse proves entirely rewarding, for it provides an entertaining means of revealing the confused and variable emotions in which the poetry is rooted. However, in the *Anniversaries*, the breakdown of reason, although equally engaging, proves somewhat less satisfactory; for, in that it fails to clarify the dead girl's significance, it renders impossible our task of conforming to her pattern of perfection. Donne's employment in the *Anniversaries* of his understanding as a love poet undoubtedly contributes to the fascinating complexity of these poems; nevertheless, as we see, it also raises certain kinds of problems for the reader.

Louis Martz points to a further tension which arises from Donne's exercising his talents as a love poet in a devotional poem when he describes the *Anniversaries* as "Donne's daring attempt to combine the

hyperbolic imagery of Petrarchan love poetry with powerful, and in fact dominant, religious themes."[23] Indeed, we find a striking similarity between the preposterous claims Donne makes for Elizabeth Drury and those made by the speaker for his mistress in "A Feaver." The woman of this poem, like Elizabeth Drury, becomes the universal soul, and her death has the power to cause the death of the world:

> Oh doe not die, for I shall hate,
> All women so, when thou art gone,
> That thee I shall not celebrate,
> When I remember, thou wast one.
>
> But yet thou canst not die, I know;
> To leave this world behinde, is death,
> But when thou from this world wilt goe,
> The whole world vapors with thy breath.
>
> Or if, when thou, the worlds soule, goest
> It stay, tis but thy carkasse then,
> The fairest woman, but thy ghost,
> But corrupt wormes, the worthyest men.[24]

The resemblance here between the absurd claims the speaker makes for his mistress and those Donne makes for Elizabeth Drury is all too obvious, and we witness the same urge for transcendence; yet the two poems create very different effects. In "A Feaver" we do not even attempt to make logical sense of the speaker's claims, for we recognise immediately that the poem is not really about the girl, or the effect her death will have on the rest of the world, but about the consuming egotism of the lover, to which logic is irrelevant. We experience little difficulty, then, in accepting the speaker's hyperbole; it is merely an attempt to manipulate his mistress and argue out of existence the threat that her death poses to the stability of *his* world. By contrast, the extraordinary claims that Donne makes for the significance of Elizabeth Drury's death in the

Anniversaries cannot be explained away quite so easily. Since we acknowledge that the young girl represents a pattern of perfection to which the poet seeks to conform, we can hardly justify the claims he makes for her in terms of irrational egotism. The devotional context of the *Anniversaries* demands that we take Donne's preposterous assertions of her universal importance seriously, even while they serve to perplex us; consequently, we feel compelled to rationalise them—indeed, we are encouraged to do so—only to find the task to be impossible.

The juxtaposition of Petrarchan egotism and devotional piety, although evidence of the poet's wit and imagination, is also disturbing—as is Donne's deployment of geometrical language to express the organic and spiritual perfection of a young girl. These curious conjunctions of incompatibles contribute much to the success of the poetry in so far as they challenge us and engage our interest; however, they also place a considerable strain on our understanding and our tolerance by continually drawing our attention to dissonance as we strive to grasp the significance of Elizabeth Drury's physical and spiritual harmony. We might, perhaps, endeavour to explain the contrariety we experience when reading the *Anniversaries* in terms of a conflict within the poet himself. For we recognise that despite Donne's humble acknowledgement of his inability to frame Elizabeth Drury's "incomprehensiblenesse," his treatment of the young girl betrays a keen sense of his own shaping powers. The poet's exciting exploration of the curious perspectives of geometrical space cannot fail to entertain the reader, but it also serves to perplex him; for, finally, Donne's egocentric delight in the display of his own art

and ingenuity remains a little too much in tension with the theocentric direction of the poem. Although Donne seeks out conformity and the certainty of faith, the struggle for subordination which this entails has yet to be resolved.

An examination of the *Holy Sonnets*, which directly precede the *Anniversaries*, helps to clarify the contest for conformity which we experience in the later poems. That the *Holy Sonnets* are essentially private communications whereas the *Anniversaries* are set in the public mode forms an obvious point of contrast between the two, and yet, in so far as they both voice an acute consciousness of the lack of correspondence between the fallen and the divine, they share the same central theme. The *Holy Sonnets* express the speaker's personal anguish at his estrangement from God; the *Anniversaries* express Donne's concern for a sick world, which, deprived of grace, would seem to have no hope of recovery. And in both sets of poems a similar tension is created between the desire to repair this split between nature and grace with the aid of reason, and a painful awareness that since the mysteries of religion present unsolvable problems to reason, such an enterprise must prove impossible.

In the *Holy Sonnets*, as in the *Anniversaries*, discursive reason and spatial metaphors comprise the language whereby the self asserts its power, and the employment of this language comes into constant conflict with the recognition that in matters of faith man has no choice but to submit to the will of God. For, while the speaker repeatedly acknowledges that salvation is wholly determined by grace, his egotism rebels against

this seemingly arbitrary sway and demands the right to shape its own destiny. The ego's attempts to achieve this, however, are doomed to end in failure, for such self-assertion has no place in the soul's communication with God; so, in one of his sermons, St. Augustine warns against such acts of presumption: "Hands off yourself," he declares, "Try to build up yourself, and you build a ruin."[25] And, as we shall see, in the *Holy Sonnets*, as in the *Anniversaries*, Donne's recourse to the secular spaces of reason to shape the truths of faith precipitates the collapse of the frames he constructs.

Attempting to draw out the plans of a seemingly absent God, Donne frequently calls upon the methods of measurement and representation employed by rational man to frame his knowledge of the universe. And in Sonnet V, we find that the speaker, striving to marshal the forces of grace, calls upon the aid of the cosmographers who claimed to have discovered a region of seas beyond the fixed stars; they, the speaker confidently claims, will be able to supply him with sufficient tears to cleanse his "little world" of the "black sinne" which has infected it:

> You which beyond that heaven which was most high
> Have found new sphears, and of new lands can write,
> Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
> Drowne my world with my weeping earnestly,
> Or wash it, if it must be drown'd no more:[26]

We hear the voice of the egoist in the love poetry for whom only the vast expanses of the cosmos provided sufficient space to contain his grief. And here, as there, this imaginative manipulation of space only provides an illusion of mastery, and the speaker's assertion of control is subverted as the spatial metaphor collapses. The conventions of the

cosmographer's art may succeed in mapping out the physical heavens, but they prove inadequate to draw out a pathway to spiritual salvation; the speaker recognises that even if he could command all the seas of the world to expand his tears, there would be insufficient water to cleanse him of his guilt, for righteousness must be the gift of grace:

> But oh it must be burnt! alas the fire
> Of lust and envie have burnt it heretofore,
> And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,
> And burne me ô Lord, with a fiery zeale
> Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heale.[27]

The poem that begins with a desire to consume the spaces of the universe ends with a plea to be consumed by God.

The poet of the *Holy Sonnets* repeatedly affirms the necessity of a willing commitment to faith; nevertheless, the dominating voice of the speaker betrays Donne's desire for a God whom he can understand through reason. But the poet constantly demonstrates in the love poetry that logic is nothing more than the ready servant of the will—"Vain lunatique, against these scapes I could / Dispute, and conquer, if I would," he tells one of his more unfortunate mistresses[28]—can hardly feel confident that reason will provide a reliable arbiter of absolute truth. And in the *Holy Sonnets*, as in the *Anniversaries*, where Donne seeks to construct a stable relationship with God, the flexibility of reason proves a source of frustration.

The sonnet form itself is perhaps significant here for, as Anthony F. Bellette points out, the English sonnet lends itself readily to a kind of syllogystic reasoning; its intricate structure is such that it seems "above all, to require that something be not merely stated, but

proved or demonstrated."[29] However, we discover that the tight deductive reasoning Donne employs in the *Holy Sonnets* is nothing more than a rationalising device, contrived to make the arbitrary designs of the will appear reasonable. Although the argument the speaker constructs is inflexible and therefore seemingly reliable, its structure is self-referential; thus it can be made to 'prove' the validity of a conclusion which is untrue because based on false premises. While masquerading as a rhetoric of truth, it functions as a rhetoric of persuasion. Donne the love poet demonstrates this playfully in poems such as "The Dreame" and "The Flea," where he employs such reasoning to manipulate women and accomplish his will. But it is one thing to dominate a passive mistress with a skilful argument; it is quite another to seek by such means to persuade an omnipotent God to respond to the heart's desires—as the speaker of Sonnet XIII discovers. Terrified by the vision of the crucified Christ who has the power to condemn as well as to redeem, the speaker endeavours to shape an argument which will prove the certainty of his salvation.

> And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
> Which pray'd forgivenesse for his foes fierce spight?
> No, no; but as in my idolatrie
> I said to all my profane mistresses,
> Beauty, of pitty, foulnesse onely is
> A signe of rigour: so I say to thee,
> To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd
> This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde.[30]

In his desperate appeal for grace, the speaker confuses the sacred with the profane, attempting to solicit the pity of the crucified Christ with an inane argument which he recalls using to win over faint-hearted ladies. But the logic that would perhaps have succeeded in persuading

a reluctant mistress is disturbingly inappropriate here, and it fails to reassure the speaker. The tightness of the reasoning merely creates the illusion of control where in fact it is most lacking, and we feel the weight of the emotional and spiritual conflict it seeks to restrain. The speaker's attempt to force a solution to a question unanswerable to all except God reveals nothing more than a painful awareness of the limitations of natural reason.

Throughout the *Holy Sonnets* the recognition of the need to submit is inevitably tempered by the urge to dominate. For example, in Sonnet XIV the speaker asks God to shatter his sinful heart and fashion it anew, but the commanding tone with which the request is expressed bears an uneasy relationship with the humble profession of the desire for conformity:

> Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
> As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
> That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee,'and bend
> Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.[31]

Moreover, despite his acknowledgement that the initiative must come from God, the speaker feels compelled to argue Him into taking the necessary action. But, once again, the employment of reason to manipulate the divine will precipitates reason's collapse and the sonnet ends with a violent paradox:

> Divorce mee,' untie, or breake that knot againe,
> Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
> Except you' enthrall mee, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.[32]

As with the paradoxical presentation of Elizabeth Drury, Donne attampts here to transcend reason in order to attain the certainty of faith. But,

as Carol Sicherman points out, this necessary "denial of reason fails, ultimately, to satisfy so rational a man; victory is temporary" and incomplete.[33]

However, although both sets of poems express a struggle for subordination, the fact remains that the exploratory structure of the *Anniversaries* marks a considerable departure from the highly structured *Holy Sonnets*. It could, perhaps, be argued that Donne's abandonment of tight, deductive argument is a gesture of humility, a recognition that in matters of divinity man is unable to discover a rhetoric of truth. As we have seen, the tortuous course of these poems brings the reader to a recognition that we must always be uncertain of our direction as we pursue the mysteries of religion, for, finally, only God can know by what path we may find him out. We recall how Donne effectively admits that his spatial metaphors and labyrinthine language fail to clarify the significance of Elizabeth Drury, and he leaves us dependent upon God's grace to reveal the truth in our hearts. As in the *Holy Sonnets*, however, this denial of reason is itself found to be incomplete, and, despite the gestures of humility, the poetry remains peculiarly assertive. Donne's highly inventive paradoxical and geometrical conceits display the poet's delight in his own inventiveness and ingenuity as he shapes the myth of Elizabeth Drury and manipulates the reader. This conflict between the egocentric drive of the language (the inheritance, as it were, of the *Songs and Sonnets*) and the theocentric direction of the poems (the inheritance of the *Holy Sonnets*) is especially fascinating, even though, in the end we cannot claim that it is entirely satis-

factory. As a measure of their deficiency let us look briefly at perhaps Donne's most successful devotional poem, "Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward," which postdates the *Anniversaries* by approximately as many years as the *Holy Sonnets* predate them.

Donne's "Good Friday" poem is, like the *Anniversaries*, structured around the idea of turning or conversion.[34] However, in the later poem, the experience is presented directly, rather than through an arbitrarily chosen symbol, such as Elizabeth Drury. In "Good Friday," the wayward path of the poem is the speaker's own. The poem opens, however, with a general presentation of the chaotic motions of microcosm and macrocosm, in a manner strikingly similar to the *Anniversaries:*

> Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this
> The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
> And as other Spheares, by being growne
> Subject to forraigne motions, lose their owne,
> And being by others hurried every day,
> Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey:
> Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
> For their first mover, and are whirld by it.[35]

As in the *Anniversaries*, man's distracted course is described in terms of vexed planetary motion: just as the planetary spheres are unable to perfect a circle or run in a straight line because contrary motions interfere with their course, so the sphere of the speaker's soul, which should be controlled by the intelligence of devotion, is distracted by the contrary claims of business and pleasure:

> Hence is't, that I am carryed towards the West
> This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the East.[36]

The soule is bent westward by sin, while its form, devotion strains towards the east.

We see that "Good Friday, 1613," opens by expressing a sense of the same estrangement from God that we find in the *Holy Sonnets* and the *Anniversaries*. The speaker encounters the same doubts and perplexities as the claims of reason pull him one way and those of faith another. But these contrary motions are resolved more fully by the poetry here, for the outward movement of the westward journey is counteracted as the speaker turns inward to his own heart to discover the vision of the crucified Christ:

> Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
> And turne all spheares at once, peirc'd with those holes?[37]

Here, in the memory of the crucified Christ is the point where the distant extremities of East and West become reconciled. The distracted whirling motion of the planets and the speaker's soul conform again to perfect circular motion, as Christ, the centre of the universe, turns all the spheres at once.

The speaker, in short, discovers within his own heart the true centre which creates a harmonious whole. The figure who turns the spheres and spans the poles is the illuminating Logos whose absence from the *Anniversarie* poems leaves a graceless world that is sick and "Quite out of joynt," dislocated from its centre of meaning and stability. But his presence, here, in the human heart, assures the speaker that both the distracted motions of the universe and his own wayward path will be rectified. The Christ who turns the spheres is also to be the instrument of the speaker's turning away from the perverse and crooked ways of the world and back towards his God:

O Saviour, as thou hang'st upon the tree;
I turne my backe to thee, but to receive
Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
O thinke mee worth thine anger, punish mee,
Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace,
That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face.[38]

These final lines, filled with anguish as the speaker makes a humble plea for penance, are spoken by a very different voice to that of the confident man who shaped the intricate macrocosmic analogy with which the poem opens. As Anthony Bellette points out, "the rational ordering of idea and image which we feel to be so typical of Donne is here replaced by the destroying and re-ordering of that other, more sullied image by the action of Christ himself,"[39] and in this statement, I think, lies the central difference between "Good Friday, 1613" and the *Anniversaries*. Although both poems end with a gesture of humility, acknowledging the necessity of a willing reliance on grace, the speaker in the *Anniversaries* remains assertive and in control to the very end; the various and perplexed ways of reason still prove a little too attractive. By contrast, a significant change takes place in the speaker of "Good Friday, 1613"; he has been turned by the vision of Christ. The impulse for order and control with which the poem began has been replaced by a convincingly felt submission to the will of God.

Through an examination of figures of space in the secular and devotional poetry, this chapter has attempted to explain more fully Donne's attitude towards metaphors of framing in the *Anniversaries*, and to show where these poems belong in the development of his mind and art. Figures of space in the *Songs and Sonnets* become an ingenious means of

exploring the variable desires of a dominating ego, a manipulator of women and a lover of the world. Such figures deployed in the *Holy Sonnets* express the conversion of this same dominating ego as it struggles to submit to the will of an inscrutable God. As we have seen, Donne's treatment of figures of space in the *Anniversaries* poems draw upon the techniques of both the *Holy Sonnets* and the secular verse. On the one hand,we experience the anguish of a mind which longs for the certainty of faith but cannot come to terms with the subordination of reason that such certainty entails; on the other, Donne's preoccupation with curious perspectives and the labyrinth of language betray the assertive voice of the love poet. So, in his fashioning of Elizabeth Drury we discover a peculiar fusion of Petrarchan egotism and devotional defference—a synthesis which is at once both intriguing and disturbing, however imperfectly realised. The strain and perplexity of the *Anniversaries* poems finally find resolution in "Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward," Donne's most mature poetic statement of religious devotion. The same spatial metaphors, suggestive of man's perpetual doubts and uncertainties, recur; but, here, certain assurance is more distinctly achieved as Donne finds a way to communicate in poetry his discovery of Christ, his true centre: the point where all contraries meet.

NOTES

NOTES FOR CHAPTER I

[1]Almost every critical study of the *Anniversaries* includes a discussion of the extent to which the New Philosophy influenced Donne's poetry, but I am particularly indebted to the following works. The most comprehensive study of Donne's interest in the new science, and its effect upon his poetic imagination is Charles Monroe Coffin's *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1937; rpt. 1957). Coffin's book devotes a chapter to "Figures of Space," pp. 175-94, but makes no attempt at a detailed study of such figures in relation to the *Anniversaries*. Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the "New Science" upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1960), is a useful general study, but her interpretation of the *Anniversaries* follows a very different line of argument to my own. Victor Harris, *All Coherence Gone* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949), provides a general account of the effects of the seventeenth-century epistemological crisis. For a contemporary account of the new science see "The Copernican System" from *A Perfect Description of the Celestial Orbs* by Thomas Digges, 1576, in *The Frame of Order: An Outline of Elizabethan Belief taken from the Treatises of the Late Sixteenth Century*, ed. James Winney (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), pp. 147-59). For Copernicus' own sketch of his hypotheses for the heavenly motions, see "The *Commentariolus* of Copernicus" in *Three Copernican Treatises*, trans. Edward Rosen, 2nd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), pp. 57-90.

[2]John Donne, "The Second Anniversarie," line 22. *John Donne. The Epithalamians, Anniversaries and Epicides* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 40. All further references to this edition of the *Anniversaries* will appear in the text in parenthesis.

[3]*The Sermons of John Donne*, 10 vols., ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1953-1962), VII, 260.

[4]*The Breaking of the Circle*, p. 165.

[5]Cf. Walter J. Ong's discussion of the charting of Copernican space through mathematically-based systems in "System, Space, and Intellect in Renaissance Symbolism," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, XVIII (1956), 222-39.

[6]*Opere Complete di Galileo Galileri*, Firenze, 1842, ff. IV, 171, translated by E.A. Burtt in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science: A Historical and Critical Essay*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1932; rpt. 1950), p. 64.

[7]Coffin notes in *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, p. 178, that "the symbolism of geometry was for Donne a source of imagery that was to be increasingly congenial to his intellectual temper." John Carey also discusses Donne's attraction to "mathematical demonstration," explaining it as the sceptic's "search for some department of human thought which might be regarded as trustworthy." See *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), pp. 233-34.

[8]"System, Space, and Intellect," pp. 228, 224.

[9]Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, p. 21.

[10]Milgate, *Epithalamians, Anniversaries and Epicides*, p. 64.

[11]For a detailed discussion of the change in the world picture, see Nicolson's introduction to *The Breaking of the Circle*, pp. 1-10.

[12]Of the three, only Descartes employed a truly mathematical method, finding analytical geometry to be the most dependable and objective means of demonstrating scientific knowledge. Although not strictly a mathematician himself, Hobbes was influenced by Cartesian thought and, like Bacon, took an empirical view of reality, conceiving of the world in quantifiable, material terms.

[13]Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration*, in *Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works*, ed. Sidney Warhaft (London, Toronto: Macmillan, 1965), p. 309.

[14]*The Great Instauration* in *Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works*, p. 307.

[15]W. Milgate, ed., *John Donne. The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 93; Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne. The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 24.

[16]*Sermons*, VII, 260. Donne's sceptical view of rational enquiry is evident throughout the *Sermons;* as Gale H. Carrithers points out, the relativity and uncertainty of human knowledge is one of Donne's central themes. See *Donne at Sermons: A Christian Existential World* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1972), pp. 43-59.

[17]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, p. 13.

[18]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, p. 13.

[19]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 19.

[20]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* p. 13.

[21]The conflict between the absolutist and the sceptic is suggested once again in the paradoxical quality of the following lines also from "Satire III": "mysteries / Are like the Sunne, dazzling, yet plaine to' all eyes," Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* p. 13.

[22]Discussing the tensions at work in "Satire III," Carey attributes them to Donne's internal conflict between the absolutist Catholic beliefs of his youth and the "scepticism of the mature intellect." See *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art,* pp. 26-30.

[23]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* p. 13.

[24]Margaret L. Wiley makes a similar point as she assesses the relationship between scepticism and grace: "the sceptic is prepared by his nescience and his struggles with dualisms and paradoxes to admit truth, even from an unfamiliar direction. Not that he will abandon reason to embrace faith, but that his intellectual humility will have been the best preparation for a truth which continually breaks out of logical and verbal fetters." *The Subtle Knot: Creative Scepticism in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 108.

[25]*Sermons,* VIII, 332.

[26]Daniel B. Rowland, *Mannerism—Style and Mood: An Anatomy of Four Works in Three Art Forms,* Yale College Series (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), p. 57.

[27]"Donne's Timeless Anniversaries," in *Essential Articles for the Study of John Donne's Poetry,* ed. John R. Roberts (Connecticut: Shoestring Press, 1975), p. 375.

[28]My summary of Ramist method owes much to Walter J. Ong's study *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), which traces the development of Ramist thought and discusses its pervasive influence upon ways of representing the field of knowledge in the Renaissance. I should also like to acknowledge a debt to Jackson I. Cope who, in Chapter II of his study *The Metaphoric Structure of Paradise Lost* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), pp. 27-49, discusses the implications that Ramist method has for Milton's "diagrammatic" poem. For a general discussion of the influence of Ramist thought in England see Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 146-281. See also John S.

Chamberlain, *Increase and Multiply: Arts-of-Discourse Procedure in the Preaching of John Donne* (Carolina: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1976), pp. 68-82, for the influence of Ramist rhetoric upon English methods of preaching.

[29]*Ramus*, p. 176. Ong is here referring specifically to Ramus' *Dialecticae institutiones* (1543), fol. 8, but stresses that this view of the dialectic process is consistent throughout Ramus' work.

[30]*Ramus*, p. 281. Ong also notes that, according to Ramus, the "rules of all the arts" as well as the "principles of all the sciences are best thought of as, in one way or another, like geometrical figures," *Ramus*, pp. 180-81.

[31]Although Ong remarks upon this similarity between Metaphysical poetry and the Ramist conception of rhetoric, he qualifies this statement by stating that there are many more divergences of thought. I am in agreement with him when he points out that any apparent similarities attest to a "common background" rather than a "conscious sympathy" (*Ramus*, p. 286). There is, however, a possibility that Donne came into direct contact with Ramism while studying at Cambridge. Gabriel Harvey, who, like his friend Sir Philip Sidney, was an enthusiast of Ramism, was named University Professor of Rhetoric at Cambridge in 1574 (*Ramus*, p. 302), and according to R. C. Bald was still at the university during the time Donne is believed to have studied there: see R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 47.

[32]Tuve makes a convincing case for the similarity between the structure of Ramist dialectic and that of Metaphysical poetry in *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (Illinois: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947; rpt. 1957), pp. 331-53. A. J. Smith is less convincing in his criticism of her claims in "An Examination of Some Claims for Ramism," in *Essential Articles*, pp. 178-88.

[33]*Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, p. 343.

[34]*Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery*, pp. 341-42.

[35]See Ong,s description of the dialectic process in *Ramus*, pp. 199-205. For an example of Ramus' dichotomising diagrams see *P. Rami Dialecticae Libri Duo*, ex officina Johannis Redmayne and veneunt per Robertum Nicholson and Henricum Dickinson (Cantibrigiae, 1669), sig. a4 ff. For a description of the classification process in terms of the movement from generic to specific, see the same edition, pp. 25-26.

[36]Rosalie L. Colie's discussion of the *Anniversaries* arrives at a similar conclusion in *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), p. 429.

[37]*John Donne and the New Philosophy*, p. 71.

[38]Earnest B. Gilman, *The Curious Perspective: Literary and Pictorial Wit in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, London: Yale Univ. Press, 1978). As an example of a curious perspective painting one might look at Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533). The picture presents two young successful men, Jean de Dinteville and George de Selve, standing at either side of a two-shelved table on which are placed the symbols of the scientific and artistic achievements of the age. Such is the view presented to the viewer's "normal" vision. But a different perspective is required by the anamorphic streak in the foreground of the painting. Looked at from the right side of the picture, the streak resolves itself as a death's head. This emblem of *momento mori* serves to disrupt, and even obliterate, the vital image of worldly confidence which the rest of the picture describes, for in order to see the skull, the viewer is forced to banish the human figures from his line of vision. Holbein presents the symbols of life and death in a single image, but in such a way that it is impossible to bring the picture into a steady focus; in order to grasp the significance of the painting the viewer is forced to take a double perspective. For a detailed discussion of this painting, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, London: Univ. of Chicago Press), pp. 17-21. For Gilman's reading in relation to *Richard II*, see *The Curious Perspective*, pp. 98-104.

[39]*The Curious Perspective*, p. 14.

[40]*The Curious Perspective*, pp. 16-25.

[41]*The Curious Perspective*, p. 26.

[42]Gilman notes that Donne uses the grid metaphor of lattices to represent the "fallacies" of human understanding when he warns us that in heaven we shall not "peepe through lattices of eies" (II.296). See *The Curious Perspective*, p. 26.

[43]*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, p. 261.

[44]*Sermons*, VI, 59.

[45]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 50.

[46]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 50.

[47]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 50.

[48]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 7.

[49]Cope's description of Milton's epic cosmos in *The Metaphoric Structure of Paradise Lost*, p. 57.

[50]George Poulet, *The Metamorphoses of the Circle*, translated from the French by Carley Dawson and Elliot Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 16. Poulet discusses how an increased sensitivity to space affected the treatment of space in Baroque art. He sees the multiplicity of forms and intensity of detail in Baroque art as an attempt to confer reality on space by filling it as full as possible with material objects. However, as Poulet points out, the background space always remains a "container larger than its content" (p. 15); the space may be invaded, but never conquered. The attempt to possess space only succeeds in accentuating the disparity between the "real immensity of space" and the "false immensity" of what it contains; "in the presence of such space everything which occupies it shrinks and decays" (pp. 15-16). So in the *Anniversaries* Donne finds man dwarfed by the immeasurable spaces he seeks to conquer, and dismisses his attempt to fill the world with meaning as an accumulation of "fragmentary rubbidge."

[51]Poulet points out that an awareness of vast expanses of space which could not be conquered leads to a "shrinking of the circle of existence . . . the concentration on a nearby object that can be possessed." See *The Metamorphoses of the Circle*, p. 19. The transformation from macroscopic to microscopic vision (in a distinctly positive sense) is the subject of Toshihiko Kawasaki's essay, "Donne's Microcosm," *Seventeenth-Century Imagery: Essays on Uses of Figurative Language from Donne to Farquhar*, ed. Earl Miner (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1971), pp. 25-44.

[52]The significance of the watchtower is not made explicit by the poem; Frank Manley, however, glosses it as a "traditional symbol of the mind." See *John Donne: The Anniversaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 190. D. C. Allen, referring specifically to Donne's use of the symbol in the *Anniversaries*, equates the earthly watchtower with "alertness, with continued intellectual and devotional occupation." See *The Harmonious Vision: Studies in Milton's Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954), p. 18. Allen also cites Plato, *Timaeus* 70 A, where the mind of man is compared to a tower (p. 17).

[53]The subtitle of "An Anatomy of the World," refers to the occasion of Elizabeth Drury's "Untimely Death"; the subtitle of "Of The

Progres of the Soule" makes reference to her "Religious Death." See Milgate, *Epithalamians, Anniversaries and Epicides*, pp. 20, 39.

[54]Elizabeth Drury's status as the divine image restored by grace is the focal point of Barbara K. Lewalski's study, *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973). Lewalski's analysis of the poems will be discussed at length in Chapter III.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER II

[1]See, for example, Maren-Sofie Røstvig, "Images of Perfection," in *Seventeenth Century Imagery*, pp. 12-18; Poulet, *The Metamorphoses of the Circle*, pp. 1-14; Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle*, pp. 47-80. For Donne's particular use of the circle as an image of perfection, see John A. Thomas, "The Circle: Donne's Underlying Unity," in *The Need Beyond Reason and Other Essays*, College of Humanities Centennial Lectures, 1975-76 (Utah: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 89-105. See also James L. Spenko, "Circular Form in Two Donne Love Lyrics," *English Language Notes*, 13 (1975), 103-107.

[2]*Sermons*, VI, 173.

[3]*Sermons*, VI, 175.

[4]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, p. 102.

[5]See H. J. C. Grierson, ed., *Donne's Poetical Works*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1912; rpt. 1963), II, 176.

[6]For a discussion of Ramist dialectic as a means of approaching divine truths, see Ong, *Ramus*, pp. 189-90, and Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 240-41.

[7]*Ramus*, p. 284.

[8]Ong associates the movement towards a visual comprehension of the Scriptures with the development of the Puritan plain style with its emphasis on 'perspicuity'—a style of preaching which obviously differs greatly from Donne's own. See *Ramus*, pp. 283-84.

[9]*Sermons*, VII, 307.

[10]*Sermons*, III, 206.

[11]*Sermons*, VIII, 97.

[12]*Sermons*, VII, 435.

[13]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 30.

[14]According to Protestant doctrine the image of God in man is seated in the heart. Because of the effects of original sin, the divine image is in a state of disrepair and can only be restored by the gift of grace, merited for man by Christ's sacrifice. Barbara Lewalski sees the divine image in man's heart as the "ordering symbol of Donne's *Anniversaries*," and interprets Elizabeth Drury through this Protestant doctrine. See *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, pp. 108-41. In the *Anniversaries*, Donne associates man's first disobedience which caused the corruption of his own centre, the heart, with the corruption of the circular harmony of the universe: "Then, as mankinde, so is the worlds whole frame / Quite out of joynt, almost created lame" (I.191-92). As Rolf Soellner points out, the popular use of the word "frame" was consistently suggestive of the circle, and was even used to translate *sphaera*. See *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge* (Ohio: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1972), p. 51.

[15]Lewalski also sees Elizabeth Drury as symbolic of the divine image restored by grace. See *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, pp. 134-41. Perfected at centre, Elizabeth Drury recaptures the circular perfection of the prelapsarian universe, in harmony with God. Pure in heart, she experiences the all-encompassing vision associated with the circle and knows God without impediment. Throughout the *Sermons*, Donne consistently associates purity of heart with complete knowledge of God. See, for example, *Sermons*, I, 195.

[16]Although the passage on the soul's journey through the spheres (II.183-219) is Donne's vision of its own release, in so far as the poem is a meditation upon the religious death of Elizabeth Drury, one might suppose that the description could be extended to cover the progress of her soul also.

[17]"Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden," *Ben Jonson*, I, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1925), 133.

[18]*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, p. 103.

[19]Milgate, *Epithalamions, Anniversaries and Epicides*, pp. 69-70.

[20]In "Expostulation XX," Donne uses the figure of the compass to describe man's repeated efforts to search out a fixed centre in God. "And he that would describe a *circle* in paper, if hee have brought that *circle* within one *inch* of finishing, he cannot make it up a perfit *circle*, except he fall to worke againe, to finde out the same *center;* so though setting that foot of my *compasse* upon *thee*, I have gone so farre, as to the *consideration* of my selfe, yet if I depart from *thee*, my *center*, all is unperfit." See *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, 2 vols., ed. Sister Elizabeth Savage, Elizabethan and Renaissance Studies, No. 21 (Austria: Universität Salzburg, 1975), 2, 152-53. Donne's metaphor bears a striking resemblance to the popular compass emblem suggesting constancy described by Rosemary Freeman in *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), pp. 21-24.

[21]The movement of perfected reason was popularly considered to be circular. See Soellner, *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge*, p. 51. This theory probably originated in Plato's circular geometrical analogy for the divine soul (or pure intelligence) in the *Timaeus*, 36D-37C. See *The Timaeus of Plato*, ed. and trans. R. D. Archer-Hind (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 115-19.

[22]*Sermons*, II, 200.

[23]According to Plato, the immortal soul is originally created circular and divine, but on its incarnation it becomes imprisoned in a body subject to ceaseless inflowing and outflowing. Hence the regularity of its original, perfect, circular motion becomes confounded by the contrary, rectilinear motion it experiences on its entry into the world of matter. On first entering material chaos, the soul is bereft of reason and experiences a disorderd winnowing movement. But gradually, as the disturbance diminishes, reason again gains control and the soul achieves a more regular, spiral motion, a synthesis of the circular motion of its original perfection and the rectilinear motion characteristic of the world of matter. See the *Timaeus*, 42E-44D. M. Thomas Hester draws a parallel between Plato's spiral motion of the soul incarnate, and Donne's use of spiral motion in "Satire III." See "John Donne's 'Hill of Truth'," *English Language Notes*, 14 (Dec. 1976), 100-105.

[24]See the *Timaeus*, 38B-39E, for Plato's account of the various motions of the planetary spheres.

[25]See Lewalski, *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, p. 250.

[26]*Sermons*, I, 190-91. This sermon on purity of heart was given in 1616, four years after the *Anniversaries* was published; nevertheless,

it may serve to illuminate the text of these poems, for, as various critics have pointed out, there is a marked imaginative continuity throughout Donne's canon, despite the inevitable shifts in focus and opinion. John Carey, for instance, sees the poems and the prose to be "fabrics of the same mind, controlled by the same imaginative needs." See *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, p. 11. Moreover, the concern Donne expresses for the heart as man's spiritual centre is echoed consistently and repeatedly throughout the *Sermons*.

[27]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, p. 95.

[28]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, p. 13.

[29]*Sermons*, VI, 227.

[30]An interesting comparison may be drawn between this passage from the *Anniversaries* illustrating the solipsistic effect of man's scientific ambition and the contemporary compass emblem which describes the spiral motion of a compass making its retreat, and bears the epigraph *Donec ad Idem*. This emblem is interpreted as God's rebuke to the sinful Adam in Genesis. As a punishment for his sin of 'curiosity', Adam was condemned to return to the earth from whence he came. See Filippo Picinelli, *Mundo Symbolico*, trans. August Erath, *Mundus Symbolicus*, 2 vols. (Cologne, 1694; rpt. New York: Garland Press, 1976), II, 176-77.

[31]"Meditation 4," *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, p. 22.

[32]*Sermons*, VII, 396.

[33]*Sermons*, VII, 248.

[34]*Sermons*, I, 191.

[35]Donne is here referring to a contemporary controversy over the composition of the body. According to Aristotle, the three principles of natural bodies were matter, form and privation, but Paraclesus and his followers had introduced "new ingredients," converting the Aristotelian principles into salt, sulphur and mercury. See Manley's note in *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, p. 189.

[36]*Sermons*, VI, 109.

[37]According to Plato, the immortal soul was created to perfect pitch and harmony, apportioned in accordance to the intervals of a musical scale. See the *Timaeus*, 34A-36D. Donne associates Elizabeth

Drury with the harmony of the divine soul (*Anniversaries*, I, 311-14).

[38]I am indebted to P. G. Stanwood for drawing my attention to the geometrical significance of the word "pitch" in his essay "'Essentiall Joye' in Donne's *Anniversaries*," in *Essential Articles*, p. 393.

[39]Cf. V. E. Smith, *St. Thomas on the Object of Geometry*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1953 (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 43-44.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

[1]Elizabeth Drury's death as both the cause and the consequence of the death of the world is the subject of Harold Love's essay, "The Argument of Donne's *First Anniversary*," in *Essential Articles*, pp. 355-62.

[2]"The Argument of Donne's *First Anniversary*," p. 361.

[3]Richard Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne* (New York: Morrow and Co., 1968), pp. 196-225; Manley, *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, pp. 10-50; William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935; rpt. 1950), p. 84.

[4]I am here in agreement with Rosalie Colie who writes that the peculiar quality of the *Anniversaries* "resides in their resistance to final definition. . . . They hold in balance many oppositions and contradictions: they are, in short, paradoxical poems, poems about paradoxes and poems within the paradoxical rhetoric." See *Paradoxia Epidemica*, p. 414. See also Roaslie Colie, "'All in Peeces': Problems of Interpretation in Donne's *Anniversary* Poems," in *Just So Much Honour: Essays Commemorating the Four-Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of John Donne*, ed. Peter Amadeus Fiore (Pennsylvania, London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 189-218.

[5]For Lewalski's discussion of the Protestant doctrine of justification in relation to Elizabeth Drury as the divine image restored by grace, see *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, pp. 134-41.

[6]Lewalski takes as her starting point Donne's answer to Ben Jonson's charges of blasphemy. Donne defended his preposterous claims for Elizabeth Drury by stating that he was celebrating "the Idea of a Woman and not as she was." Lewalski points out that Donne frequently uses the term "idea" when referring to the divine image in mankind, and she cites as examples *Sermons*, IX, 73-76; VII, 60-61. See *Donne's Anniversaries*

and the Poetry of Praise, pp. 112-13.

[7]*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, p. 103. Lewalski, herself, admits that whereas according to the Protestant doctrine of justification anyone who experienced even a partial restoration of the divine image could rightfully be termed a saint, the language of the *Anniversaries* repeatedly assures us that Elizabeth Drury has a unique worth, above all others, and that the hyperbolic claims Donne makes are for her alone. See *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, pp. 163-64.

[8]See Love, "The Argument of Donne's *First Anniversary*," p. 361.

[9]In so far as they employ a strategy of conversion directed against the reader, the *Anniversaries* operate in a similar manner to the varieties of literature which Stanley Fish discusses in his study, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1972). The aim of such literature is not to conform to the expectations and limitations of the human mind, but rather to bring about a "conversion, not only a changing, but an exchanging of minds" (pp. 2 ff.). Such literature, in that it seeks to turn the reader towards a truth which is non-discursive and non-rational, inevitably becomes a vehicle of its own abandonment, proclaiming its own insufficiency as it points towards something which its forms cannot capture.

[10]Throughout his works, Donne expresses a fascination for biblical metaphor, as Barbara K. Lewalski argues in *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 253-82. Chapter V of Lewalski's study *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise* provides a detailed discussion of the relationship between Donne's symbolic treatment of Elizabeth Drury and seventeenth-century Protestant hermeneutics. She argues that, "In his poetry of compliment generally, but especially in the *Anniversaries*, Donne's witty but not frivolous technique is to take hyperbolic tropes and figures seriously, probing and exploring their grammar, syntax, and metaphoric meanings as revelatory of truth—even as the Biblical exegetes did" (p. 159). As a particularly significant contemporary study of biblical metaphor, Lewalski cites William Whitaker's *A Disputation on Holy Scripture against the Papists, especially Bellarmine and Stapleton*, trans. William Fitzgerald (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1847), esp. pp. 405-407.

[11]The healing serpent, which serves as a figure for Elizabeth Drury is associated with the restorative powers of Christ, figured typologically as Moses' serpent of brass, which had the power to cure the bite of the deadly serpents that God sent among the people of Israel. See Numbers 21:9.

[12]Ben Jonson told Drummond of Hawthornden that Joseph Hall wrote the "Harbinger" to Donne's second "Anniversarie" poem. See "Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden," *Ben Jonson*, I, 149.

[13]Manley's edition of the poems provides a useful gloss for this line: "As long as souls are immured in bodies, they perceive only through the organs of sense, but as they become free, they are able to perceive directly through themselves in all directions at once, as though every part of them were eye." See *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, p. 186.

[14]Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, I, 10, in *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. Norman J. Endicott (New York: Doubleday, 1967; rpt. Norton, 1972), p. 15.

[15]While acknowledging that Browne and Donne are of a very different temperament, I would suggest that their works seem to express a similar attitude towards divine mystery. John R. Mulder also draws a comparison between the two when discussing Browne's suspicion of a philosophy of definitions: "Mystery retains for Browne, as it did for Donne, its theological meaning; it signifies a truth beyond the reach of human reason, but divinely revealed." See *The Temple of the Mind: Education and Literary Taste in Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Western, 1969), p. 62. However, although I feel that the passage quoted from the *Religio Medici* serves to illuminate Donne's attitude towards rigid definitions in the *Anniversaries*, I do not mean to infer that Donne is advocating, instead, an "easie and Platonick description"; indeed, Donne's acute awareness of the distorting glass of language would hardly permit the belief in an ascent to wisdom by way of allegory.

[16]*Sermons*, X, 237.

[17]See Deuteronomy 32.

[18]*Essays in Divinity*, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 92. I am indebted to P. G. Stanwood for drawing my attention to the relationship between this passage of scriptural commentary and Donne's reference to the song of Moses in the *Anniversaries*. See "'Essentiall Joye' in Donne's *Anniversaries*," pp. 389-90.

[19]Deuteronomy 32:5. See also Gilman, *The Curious Perspective*, p. 183.

[20]*Sermons*, III, 365.

[21]According to Protestant doctrine, providential history becomes reincarnated in the heart of the individual Christian. See Lewalski's discussion of this doctrine and its relation to the symbolic meaning of

Elizabeth Drury in *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, pp. 161-73. For a more general discussion of Protestant "incarnational" symbolism and its focus on the individual, see William Masden, *From Shadowy Types to Truth: Studies in Milton's Symbolism* (New Haven, London: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 84-144.

[22]*Sermons*, III, 365.

[23]See Dennis Quinn, "Donne's *Anniversaries* as Celebration," in *Essential Articles*, pp. 369.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

[1]Numerous critics have noted Donne's fondness for imagery drawn from the language of science. See, for example, Melissa C. Wanamaker, *Discordia Concors: The Wit of Metaphysical Poetry* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1975), p. 36; Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, passim, esp. p. 250; Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, passim, esp. pp. 175-94.

[2]See Carey's introduction to *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, pp. 9-14.

[3]Gardner, *John Donne. The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 63; *Sermons*, VIII, 97.

[4]George T. Wright, "The Personae of Donne's Love Poems," *Southern Quarterly*, 14 (1975-76), 174.

[5]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 78.

[6]Gardner *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 78.

[7]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 36.

[8]*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, p. 259.

[9]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, pp. 63-64.

[10]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 63.

[11]For a detailed discussion of the complex motions of the "stiffe twin compasses," see John Frecerro, "Donne's 'Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'," in *Essential Articles*, pp. 279-304.

[12]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, pp. 76-77.

[13]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 63.

[14]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 17.

[15]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 73.

[16]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 85.

[17]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 70-71.

[18]Cf. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's criticism of the poem in *John Donne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 275.

[19]Cf. Greenblatt's exploration of the tensions inherent in the artful process of framing the identity of the ego in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, esp. p. 9.

[20]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 52.

[21]Milgate, *Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters*, p. 62.

[22]Cf. Stephen Orgel's discussion of the relationship between Renaissance paintings and their frames in *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1975), pp. 20-21.

[23]Louis L. Martz, *John Donne in Meditation: The Anniversaries* (New York: Haskell House, 1947; rpt. 1970), p. 1. See also, Louis L. Martz, "Donne's *Anniversaries* Revisited," in *That Subtile Wreath*, ed. Margaret W. Pepperdene, James McCain Lecture Series (Atlanta: Agnes Scott College, 1972), p. 33. Cf. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, p. 414. Joseph Hall also points to the Petrarchan rhetoric in Donne's presentation of Elizabeth Drury: "let thy Maker's praise / Honour thy Laura, and adorne thy laies" ("Harbinger," lines 35-36).

[24]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, pp. 61-62.

[25]Augustine, Sermon 169, quoted by Peter Brown in *Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 30.

[26]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 13.

[27]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 13.

[28]Gardner, *Elegies and Songs and Sonnets*, p. 43.

[29]Anthony F. Bellette, "'Little Worlds Made Cunningly': Significant Form in Donne's *Holy Sonnets* and *Good Friday, 1613*," *Studies in Philology*, 72 (1975), 325.

[30]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 10.

[31]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 11.

[32]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 11.

[33]"Donne's Timeless Anniversaries," p. 375.

[34]See Terry G. Sherwood, "Conversion Psychology in Donne's Good Friday Poem," *Harvard Theological Review*, 72 (1979), 101-22.

[35]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 30.

[36]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 30.

[37]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 31.

[38]Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. 31.

[39]"'Little Worlds Made Cunningly': Significant Form in Donne's *Holy Sonnets* and *Good Friday, 1613*," p. 342.

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FIGURES OF SPACE AND LABYRINTHS OF LANGUAGE: A STUDY OF JOHN DONNE'S *ANNIVERSARIE* POEMS

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