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JOHN DONNE'S THWARTED REDEMPTION OF POETRY
IN 'A VALEDICTION: OF THE BOOKE'

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

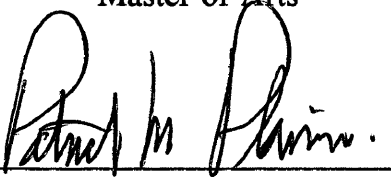
Patrick Lee Plaisance

1996

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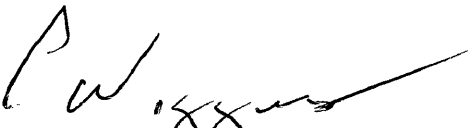
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Master of Arts



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Approved, July 1996



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Abstract

After lamenting the degeneration and what amounts to the death of poetry in Satyre II, John Donne appears to express a hope for redemption of the power of love's language in "A Valediction: of the booke." But through the poem's dialectic structure as well as Donne's use of language, the redemption proves to be a false one.

The tone of consolation and vulnerability in the other three valedictory poems gives way in "Booke" to a comparatively impersonal tone of resignation and doubt. An undercurrent of pessimism mocks the narrative voice's projection of confidence in the power of the lovers' letters, which are intended to provide the model of love for future generations.

In contrast to the confident monologues of the other valedictory poems that promise reunion, both spiritual and physical, a tonal shift in "Booke" dispels such assurance. Correspondingly, the poem's unusually concrete and earthbound imagery subverts the transcendent quality the narrative voice initially claims for the proposed love-book. The sense of subversion lingers as Donne dramatically shifts both the tone and imagery in the final stanza, leaving questions over the love-book's value unresolved and its power compromised.

JOHN DONNE'S THWARTED REDEMPTION OF POETRY
IN 'A VALEDICTION: OF THE BOOKE'

As the only poem among John Donne's Songs and Sonets to offer a sustained treatment of the subject of love writings, ``Valediction: of the Booke'' initially appears to reveal an optimism regarding the efficacy of poetry. Often grouped together with the other three valedictory poems as well as ``A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day,'' ``Booke'' suggests a faith in the transcendent power of the written language of love. Its tone is particularly redemptive compared with the mourning over the misappropriation of poetry in his earlier work on the same subject, Satyre II.

But Donne offers redemption only to thwart it. Repeated suggestions that the proposed love-book will be used for self-serving ends by others subvert the speaker's projection of confidence in the power of the lovers' letters, which are intended to provide the model of love for future civilizations. The characteristically Donnian use of Resurrection imagery to sanctify physical unions with spiritual metaphors is conspicuously absent in ``Booke''; in a 400-page volume of essays published in 1995 discussing the religious imagery in Donne's poetry, ``Booke'' does not merit a mention.¹ Correspondingly, the poem's unusually concrete and earthbound imagery subverts the transcendent quality that the narrative voice initially claims for the proposed love-book. The initial confidence of the poem is subverted both by the poem's language and by its dialectic structure. While the first three stanzas set forth the value and power of the

¹John Donne's Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John T. Shawcross. Raymond-Jean Frontain, Frances M. Malpezzi, eds. Conway, Ark.: UCA Press, 1995.

proposed love-book, the second three question that power. As a result, ``Booke'' is in fact a pessimistic commentary on the power of poetry and on its vulnerability to misappropriation and manipulation by representatives of the three fields in which Donne held aspirations: the clergy, the court and the law.

In all four of Donne's valedictory poems, the physical and spiritual union of the two lovers is archetypal, their passion transcends their parting. Intermingled tears in ``A Valediction: of weeping'' threaten to blissfully ``dissolve'' heaven and, correspondingly, the lovers. Lovers defy separation in ``A Valediction: forbidding mourning'' as their souls simply expand in their parting, ``Like gold to ayery thinness beate' (line 24). A name etched in a windowpane ensures a spiritual presence in ``A Valediction: of my name in the window.'' Similarly, in ``A Valediction: of the booke,'' the narrative voice offers instruction on how the two will thwart the goddess of destiny, ``How I shall stay, though she Esloygne me thus'' (line 3), thereby erasing the physical reality of the lovers' ``parting.'' In all these farewell pieces, Donne stresses, as Roger Sharrock notes,

[the] perfect union...possible between male and female lovers who by uniting complete the divinely ordained single creature who was separated by the Fall...(Sharrock 46).

This imagery initially holds true in ``A Valediction: of the booke''; the lovers alluded to are presented as models. Here, Donne appears to affirm what Sir Philip Sidney argues is the poet's ability to ``grow in effect another nature'' by interpreting, and thus transforming, reality through language. In ``Booke,'' the lovers are models in the most concrete sense, as their writings will serve as the basis for a future civilization. This model love relationship appears elsewhere in the Songs and Sonets and reflects Donne's strong

allegiance to the Petrarchan code of love with its exclusivity and detachment from earthly existence. Sharrock is not referring directly to ``A Valediction: of the booke'' when he discusses this spiritual aspect of Donne's poetry, but he accurately states the implied message of salvation in similar poems:

...lovers who love like this are not merely outside society, they are above the fallen world. In a quite exact sense they are a cosmic hope for mankind, repairing the ruins of nature (46).

But ``Booke'' often is glanced over as either a lightweight, even ``light of heart'' (Stampfer 210) exercise in Donne's familiar conceits, or a fumbled attempt whose lapse into relative obscurity is justified. Critics discuss the other three valedictory poems as a group with ease, apparently unconcerned over why they may feel justified in excluding ``Booke.'' Anna K. Nardo discusses the valedictory trinity as a tidy example of Donne's ``characteristic mode of mediating contradictory fears of separation and union'' (160). In her scheme, as with those of other critics, not only does ``Booke'' fail to fit neatly, but the conspicuous absence of any mention of the poem suggests that it is not worthwhile to ponder.² In his only reference to ``Booke,'' Doniphan Louthan makes the unhelpful and unsupported claim that the poem concentrates upon ``the quality of the lovers'

² ``In order to create unity despite apparent disunity, [Donne] plays with witty images: a departing lover's tears, which reflect his beloved's face, become whole worlds and seas like those through which he must sail ('A Valediction of weeping'), a `ragged bony name' scratched in a window will bring the muscle and sinew of its body home again ('A Valediction of my name in the window,' 23), and two feet that make a single compass represent lovers who, although `two souls,' `are one,' joined at a point above the earthly movement that separates the roaming from the fixed foot ('A Valediction forbidding mourning,' 21)'' (Nardo 160).

experience," not their love writings (132). ``Booke'' has been left out of the scuffle over Donne's meanings reflected by the titles of recent critical responses to Donne's poetry: Merritt Y. Hughes' ``Kidnapping Donne''; Summers' and Pebworth's ``Reassessing Donne''; and William Empson's ``Rescuing Donne.'' Donne, for many critics, must constantly be re-explained and re-catalogued. The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that ``Booke'' deserves a place in this debate.

``Booke,'' like other works in the Songs and Sonets, proclaims that the narrator's love will be love's paradigm:

Thence write our Annals, and in them will bee,
To all whom loves subliming fire invades,
Rule and example found;
There, the faith of any ground
No schismatic will dare to wound,
That sees how Love this grace to us affords,
To make, to keep, to use, to be these his Records. (lines 12-18).³

Unlike elsewhere, however, Donne's focus in this work is not on the lovers but on their memorialized expressions of love.

Wee for loves clergy only'are instruments:
When this booke is made thus;
Should againe the ravenous
Vandals and Goths inundate us,
Learning were safe; in this our Universe
Schooles might learne Sciences, Spheres Musick, Angels Verse
(lines 22-27).

Their writings will preserve the essence of their love and serve as the basis of all learning; their ``long-liv'd'' book will be all that clergy will ever need to re-establish a community

³I use Grierson's text of all the poems unless otherwise noted.

of love and faith once the world emerges from its next Dark Age. In the world of Donne's meticulous metaphysical pairings, his distinction between the lovers and their expressions of love is an important one. In this respect, ``Booke'' is similar to ``The Extasie,'' where the distinction between physical bodies and the lovers' spiritual union is crucial: ``They are ours, though they are not wee, wee are/The intelligences, they the spheare'' (lines 51-52). Similarly, in ``Booke,'' the lovers do not transcend time and defy Fate through the strength of their love, but through the supposed eloquence of their writings. As Donne's lovers in ``The Canonization'' miraculously (and blasphemously?) come to mirror divine love through the Resurrection -- ``Wee dye and rise the same, and prove/Mysterious by this love'' (lines 26-27) -- the book of poetry conjured in ``Booke'' is gifted with the same metaphysical power: in it, ``the faith of any ground/No schismatic will dare to wound.'' In it, ``Loves Divines...may finde all they seeke'' (lines 28-29).

On the surface, Donne presents an optimistic view of writing, far removed from the dark despair and sense of loss expressed in Satyre II. Love writings, which were cheapened by the commercial stage and plagiarizing hacks and finally appropriated as a tool of manipulation by lawyers, appears to be dramatically redeemed in a work that many scholars estimate was composed five to 10 years after Satyre II. The threatening image of Coccus in Satyre II, the embodiment of an encroaching world of corrupt materialism, is transformed into the merely temporarily successful ``ravenous/Vandals and Goths'' (lines 24-25); they are eventually vanquished by a new civilization modeled on the same kind of writing whose power had all but disappeared in the earlier work.

The power Donne assigns to the language of love in ``Booke'' seems to be

diametrically opposite to its power in Satyre II, in which poetry is stripped of all force, and its appropriation by hack playwrights and lawyers represents the triumph of vulgarity. Its degeneracy into abuse through Coscus' legal terminology foretells its death. But in ``Booke,' the power of Donne's love letters between himself and his wife at first appears to be fully regenerative -- to be valued not only as models of sexual love, but for a whole new civilization after a coming Dark Age. Even Empson, in his essay, ``Rescuing Donne,' fails to suspect a subversion of such an upbeat premise:

A Dark Age is to be expected because the present representatives of a religion of love are busy burning each other alive, and persecuting any genuine lovers they may encounter. The eventual new civilization will find very little use in their relics and must extract all learning from the one book which has life in it; inventing a new heaven will be quite incidental. Such an outlook is by no means sceptical; it really does believe in the religion of love....What other seventeenth-century author had such a grasp of the historical process that he could envisage, if only for a defiant joke, the invention of a new heaven after a renewed Dark Age? (148).

It is an ingenious joke, but one whose very ingenuity suggests a deeper implication. There is an undercurrent of pessimism that constantly mocks the narrative's projection of righteous confidence in the power of the lovers' letters. Like the self-effacing undercurrent of the words of the lover who, in ``The Flea,' defends the action of the poor insect against charges of ``A sinne, [or] shame, [or] losse of maidenhead' (line 6), the confidence of the lover in ``Booke' repeatedly is diminished by a similar type of pessimism. The very power of the written word claimed in ``Booke' is swiftly subverted by Donne. In every instance that the narrator uses to demonstrate the value of the suggested love-book -- its use by clergy, statesmen and lawyers -- its power is not transformative, but highly subject to manipulation. Donne's hyperbole serves to deflate

his metaphysical conceits. This tension is what Helen Gardner undoubtedly sensed when she observed, ``Donne's language throughout this poem seems strained'' (196).

Donne's use of language throughout the poem continually subverts the power initially suggested of the proposed love-book. The poem opens with a sustained note of determination in the narrator's voice in insisting on the redemptive power of their love letters. The power of their love, and its resulting poetry, will not remain simply an idea, the narrator demands. Arthur Marotti and others note Donne's curiously intense use of hyperbole throughout ``Booke''; for example, ``When this book is made thus.../Learning were safe; in this our Universe/Schooles might learne Sciences, Spheares Music, Angels Verse'' (lines 23, 26-27). Brian Vickers writes that ``the poem is ingenious, amusing, deliberately outrageous; Donne is making fantastic claims, knows that he is doing so, and expects us to know (he knows that we know that he knows, etc.)'' (160). Yet Vickers may be oversimplifying Donne's intent.

``Booke'' is the only poem in which Donne uses the words ``myriads'' (line 10), ``cipher'' and ``idiom'' (line 21), according to the Concordance by Combs and Sullens -- words that suggest multiple and hidden meanings, subtle messages to be found in texts. They subsequently demand care in the poem's interpretation by the reader since, as Rosemond Tuve notes, ``The exact propriety of his images is perhaps the largest factor in the vigor and acuteness of his style, for the poet has no sharper instrument than this...'' (Elizabethan 198). John Freccero's detailed explication of Donne's scientific references in ``A Valediction: forbidding mourning'' shows us how meticulous Donne can be. The choices Donne has made regarding the descriptions of the lovers' writings are striking not

because of the metaphysical power supposedly embodied in them, but because of what Donne has chosen not to say.

Donne rejects the argument, put forth by Sidney in his The Defence of Poesie, that poetry holds a transformative power as an art that imitates nature:

This purifying of wit, this enriching of memorie, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we cal learning, under what name so ever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the finall end is, to lead and draw us to as high a perfection, as our degenerate soules made worse by their clay-lodgings, can be capable of (13).

In ``Booke,'' the lovers' writings fail to provide precisely the ``perfect picture'' of mankind's potential that Sidney argues is the sole province of poetry. The poetic writings of the lovers in ``Booke'' prove to be as vulnerable to misinterpretation and abuse as the writings of historians and philosophers -- both of which Sidney, emulating Aristotle, attempts to subordinate to that of the poet. Despite his hyperbolic tone that elevates a book of love letters to the genesis of a new civilization, Donne's repeated references to the book are not symbolic, but concrete and direct. Unlike the poetic spiritual/physical conceit that Donne evokes in ``The Extasie'' by saying ``Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,/But yet the body is his booke....'' (lines 71-72), nothing about the book in ``Booke'' is representative of love. The love it is intended to reflect appears one-dimensional and passive, merely waiting to be extracted. Rather than personifying the purifying power of the lovers' passion, the book offers the comparatively cold ``Rule and example'' to follow for those whom ``loves subliming fire invades'' (lines 13-14). Rather than energizing a flagging clergy to a new appreciation of the glory of the Passion, the love-book will

become a far less majestic tool: ``Something which they may see and use...'' (line 34). But neither this nor any ``abstract spirituall love'' succeeds in reflecting the nature of what the narrator is striving to affirm: the strength of the love between himself and his lover. Here as elsewhere in the poem, Donne's magnanimous language becomes subversive because it omits the personal passion it is supposed to exalt. His generosity in the range of knowledge he claims would be absorbed from the love-book -- everything from a bookish, ``abstract'' sense love to mere beauty that ``figure[s]'' love -- is coldly aloof of the passion at hand. Thus, Donne establishes a truth opposite to that in Sidney's Defence, a truth that Robert E. Stillman finds suggested later in Sidney's The Old Arcadia: ``For when the liberty of the poet's conceit is exercised not in the apprehension of ideal images of virtue, but in illusory fictions that have merely the appearance of virtue, poetry becomes an enormously powerful tool for abuse'' (182).

The proposed love-book's passivity and vulnerability to manipulation in ``Booke'' also contrasts starkly with the spiritual transformation of love amid the utter physical reduction in ``A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day.'' In presenting himself as at the ``very bottom of a scale of dissolved and inert matter'' (Dolan 14) as a result of the loss of his love, Donne establishes himself as the ``quintessence'' of nothingness. This physical reduction not only completes his romantic use of the metaphor of alchemy, it sets the stage for a spiritual renewal. As Dolan notes, within the stanzas dominated by images of darkness, hope and ``light [are] enclosed, seed-like, dormant and inevitable as the life hidden in the winter earth'' (13). The lover has become simultaneously ``every dead thing'' (line 12) and a vessel of promise in which love has ``wrought new Alchimie'' (line

13). Such metaphysical transformation is absent in ``Booke,' where the writings of the lovers remain relatively inert, subject to the manipulations suggested in the second set of three stanzas, after the love-book is first presented to serve as a model. Further describing this transmutation later, Dolan says, ``The man-as-lover falls, but is raised and reconstructed by the poet'' (17). Man falls, and the lovers' ``all-graved tome'' (line 20) of ``Booke'' is supposed to raise, or reconstruct, a new civilization. However, the tome itself is capable of being reconstructed; subsequently, the lover in ``Booke'' fails as well in his attempt at redeeming the power of language.

John Bernard notes that Donne, in ``Booke,' is ``subjecting the myths of poetic tradition to the tests of reason and experience'' as he discusses how the love-book would be used by clergy, statesmen and lawyers. But, as other critics have done, Bernard fails to grasp the pessimistic truth of the poem when he says, ``the pose of the libertine or cynic in Donne's witty lyrics has never seemed quite convincing'' (377, 378). The methodical nature of Donne's pessimism is among the most compelling aspects of the poem. Donne's descriptions of what clergy, lawyers and statesmen will ``find'' -- a word that deliberately is used for each of the three professions and that implicitly circumscribes the possibilities of each -- are specific and do not offer to elevate them in any sense. Lawyers will ``find'' in it the real meaning of ``titles'' and ``prerogatives'' that characterize love relationships. This ``finding'' is hardly a redemptive discovery on which to base a new civilization. It also serves to perpetuate the superficial gamesmanship and sinful sex-play of the present, as Donne makes clear with his analogy between women and lawyers, both of whom ``exact great subsidies'' (line 42). Statesman, too, will ``find''

in it the truth about themselves, and that truth will prove to be the ``nothingness'' of politics. Or they will, as Empson interprets the poem, come to understand their occupation through poetry, because both love and statecraft are spoiled if they are analyzed -- in either case, a dubious enlightenment for the politicians of the future. The lovers' ``manuscripts'' are presented as a cold textbook even for ``loves clergie,'' to whom the book will not offer an inspirational glimpse of the divine love of the Resurrection, but relatively disappointing earthly substitutes for such heavenly love: ``Something which they may see and use'' (line 34). This is a similar rejection of ``the transfiguring mania of poetry'' (Bernard 384) that is found in ``A Valediction: of my name in the window'': ``But all such rules, loves magique can undoe,/Here you see mee, and I am you'' (lines 11-12). In both examples, the power conjured by the poet's language ultimately fails to change the state of things, as with ``loves clergie,'' or, in ``Window,'' fails to ensure a lover's constancy and remains merely ``idle talke'' (line 65). Once again, Donne denies his poetry the power assigned to it by Sidney to ``[restore] man to a state of virtuous contentment lost in his Fall into disorder and division'' (Stillman 197).

Theodore Redpath categorizes ``Booke'' as a ``positive'' poem of parting. Presumably, by describing it as positive, Redpath means that ``Booke'' succeeds in its effort to use a witty, complicated conceit to console the woman. But such classification is disturbingly superficial. Marotti, too, takes a more benign view of Donne's tone:

Through maniacal exaggeration...Donne defines in this and the succeeding five stanzas a love that is so rare, so mysterious, so grand, that all other serious human endeavors are absurd by comparison...[Donne's boasts] indulge in that mode of imaginative hyperbole through which Donne handled psychological conflict through fictional indirection... (170, 171).

But the effect of Donne's tone of insistence and his hyperbole produces a subversive questioning of the efficacy of such a ``love'' book. The poem seems to celebrate the comprehensiveness of the lovers' writings, but the love itself is never explored; it is never, to use Sharrock's phrase, ``proved on the pulses of the lovers'' (52). Nowhere in ``Booke'' does Donne make an effort, similar to that in ``Mourning'' and `A Valediction: of weeping,' to characterize the sacredness of the love that would be captured in this book. Whereas the love described in ``Mourning'' is ``holy, aristocratic, refined, partaking of the mind'' (Novarr 55), the descriptions of the lovers' love in ``Booke,'' scarce to begin with, remain conspicuously earthbound: it is a love that will offer ``all they seeke,'' subsequently having little to do with the mystery of the Passion -- a spiritual dimension commonly emphasized elsewhere in Donne's poetry. More than any other of the Songs and Sonets, the love that is the subject in ``Booke'' begs the question that Lewis argues remains persistent throughout Donne's work: ``it largely omits the very thing that all the pother is about':

Donne shows us a variety of sorrows, scorns, angers, disgusts, and the like which arise out of love. But if any one asked `What is all this **about**?...I do not know how we could reply except by pointing to some ordinary love poetry (81).

Nowhere in ``Booke'' is there anything similar to the philosophical application of the incarnation through the analogy of love between husband and wife found in ``Mourning.'' Donne's very use of such analogy demonstrates that human love ``cannot be simply reduced to the carnality or to the spirituality of which it is nevertheless composed'' (Freccero 281). But in ``Booke,'' Donne insists upon just such a diminishment of the

essence of the love reflected in the proposed model book. The condensation of love into a book provides a mere analogy of transcendence -- only in a limited, temporal sense -- for the lovers as they prove to be models for future generations. As a result, their love remains a poor second to the love expressed in "Mourning" that spans heaven and earth. The idea of embodying love within a model book for future generations could well offer a powerful, transcendent symbolism. But in "Booke," treated with Donne's skepticism, the power of the book of love letters is trivial compared with the symbolism of the compass, which "describes the expansion of the lovers' spirit from eternity to time and back again," as Freccero says (280). Donne certainly must have been aware of the possibilities of the love-book conceit. While preparing to foster civilization with it after the next Dark Age, one wonders why Donne chose not to carry it further; the lover's writings could be conjured into a new Book of Revelations, for instance. Donne's single reference to the Bible in the poem (line 54) is the exception that proves his pessimism; he declines to use the reference as a metaphor for the power of the love referred to, and instead reiterates the book's vulnerability to earthbound interpretation: "As in the Bible some can find out alchemy." Yet the power of Donne's love-book remains inert. Rather than giving "the entire weight of Revelation to his promise to return" (Freccero 281), "Booke" offers no such promise, and any "weight" that may anchor the lover's pledge turns out to be merely what future generations of clergy, lawyers and statesmen may find in their book of love.

For a poem devoted to the redemption of something so primary to Donne as poetry, "Booke" is suspiciously secular coming from a poet whose characterizations of the power

of love so often appropriate the language of the church -- as in "Mourning," where "'Twere prophanation of our joyes/To tell the layetie our love" (lines 7-8). The philosophy Donne applies in this and other poems, that heavenly influence works not directly but through an intermediary, also could help illuminate the pessimism of "Booke." Whereas Donne uses this concept here and elsewhere to explain the function of the body in the union of souls (Novarr 34), the body-soul relationship is fractured in "Booke." The poem does not conclude that the book will ensure the union of the lovers; instead, the body of the poem explores how their book will be used as an "intermediary" for everyone else.

The collapse of hope in "A Valediction: of my name in the window" ("Neere death inflicts...For dying men talke often so") reflects the same doubt of the efficacy of the book that is left unanswered in "Booke." Both prove that "myth has not the power to metamorphose reality; that not magic but only rules govern our lives" (Bernard 387-388). "Window," however, offers the same disillusionment and sense of vulnerability as "Booke," but with an overriding valedictory consolation that "Booke" lacks. In "Booke," moreover, the "secular mysteries of the Word" (Bernard 388) prove to have little mystery whatsoever; the poet is unable to counter the arguments for the futility of such a book's reinterpretation by the professions, just as the poet in "Window" cannot, with his willful conjuring of magic, effect the union independently of the creative force of the lady's faithful eye. "Booke" also is suspiciously devoid of the veiled romantic and erotic references that characterize so many other works in the Songs and Sonets, such as the clever rationalization of carnal sin in "The Flea." In discussing "Booke," Judah

Stampfer correctly notes Donne's tone of condescension regarding the value -- social and literary -- of publishing poetry: the narrator is instructing his lover ``to write a book of love, a subject Donne never took too seriously'' (208). But then, like Marotti and others, Stampfer carelessly trivializes the substance of the poem by failing to recognize its crucial tension: ``In the other valedictions, a superficial courtesy gesture is balanced against an underlying uneasiness, to be joined in the catharsis of the poem. Only here does no uneasiness underlie the gesture of courtesy'' (208). Not only is there a powerful undercurrent of ``uneasiness'' in ``Booke,'' but the tension between the power claimed for the book in the first three stanzas and the questions that arise from those claims in the second three proves to be the very crux of the poem.

Donne's valediction, in proposing a book of love letters to be the future source of civilization, is far more ambiguous than a simple ``positive'' poem of parting. His descriptions raise more questions about the book -- and ultimately about the poem itself -- than they resolve. As Novarr suggests in his discussion of ``Mourning,'' the validity and success of Donne's logic is less important than the effort at consolation, its ``calm and controlled voice'' (54). Novarr reacts against Freccero's overwhelmingly scientific explanation of Donne's intricate constructs in ``Mourning'' -- a focus that Novarr complains obscures the ``common human situation'' of the poem. Yet the underlying warmth of the effort at such consolation is absent in ``Booke'' to an extent not found elsewhere. In contrast with all of Donne's other valedictory poems, the farewell in ``Booke'' is a final one; there is no mention of any possibility of a reunion. Not only does the narrative voice never go to any such lengths at consolation in ``Booke'', but the

``calm and controlled voice'' also is largely absent. The survivability of the book, to say nothing of its probable uselessness written in ``code,'' would be tenuous at best; it may indeed be carelessly destroyed by the ``ravenous/Vandals and Goths.'' The love-book, meant to be a testament to the lovers and to the strength of their love as well as a kind of consolation for their parting, essentially has no power: it can be easily misinterpreted, misappropriated or even destroyed. Donne's dark proposition once again rejects the Renaissance idea that poetry can, as Sidney argues, ``[make] things...better then nature bringeth foorth''; Donne's lines also seem to respond forebodingly to Sidney's charge that puritanical critics of poetry are akin to ``certain Goths'' who would burn great libraries.

All three comparisons made with clergy, lawyers and statesmen, while on the surface providing a reassuring sense of hope, carry a demeaning tone that finally undermines that hopefulness. This tone is subtly suggested by Donne's repeated punning on alternating images of death and the writing of a book: tome/tomb, engraved/graved, cypher/crypt (``This booke...this all-graved tome/In cypher writ...'' [lines 19-21]). The universal ``Rule and example'' that would be offered by the tome of love poetry does not ever transcend the three professions as Donne calls them up individually. Rather, it merely confirms the shallowness or self-serving nature of each of the professions, and reflects this shallowness back upon the poetic work itself. It will not become the new canonical work that will re-energize clergy; it becomes merely a tool for their very earthly whims. The ghost of Coscus from Satyre II remains present:

Here Loves Divines, (since all Divinity
Is love or wonder) may finde all they seeke,
Whether abstract spirituall love they like,

Their Soules exhal'd with what they do not see,
 Or, loth so to amuze
 Faiths infirmitie, they chuse
 Something which they may see and use;
 For, though minde be the heaven, where love doth sit,
 Beauty a convenient type may be to figure it (lines 28-36).

Raman Selden argues that these lines parallel, in a positive way, the final stanza of "The Extasie": "Just as the body is the necessary medium of the soul and permits the revelation of Love to 'weake men', so the physical Beauty of the lover is an earthly embodiment of Love which 'Loves Divines' 'may see and use' so that they need not strain their faith upon an invisible 'abstract spirituall love'" (65). This is a misreading of the passage in "Booke"; it does not take into account Donne's peculiar phrasing for such a solemn and, for him, familiar subject. Spiritual shepherds, Donne cynically suggests, will find "all they seeke," including superficial justification for their less-than-divine behavior, to take the outward form for the spirit of God -- much as beauty and lust often 'figure[s]' love. There certainly is a note of subversiveness in Donne's use of the phrase "Something which they may see and use" in the context of an allegedly renewed church infused with new life after the next Dark Age by the suggested love-book. An "infirmitie" of faith is exactly what leads the church's so-called "Divines" to substitute for true spiritualism "Something which they may see and use." That this is even a possibility when the leaders of the new church "may finde all they seeke" represents a biting stroke of pessimism in a poem that initially presents itself as a work of redemption; such bitterness recalls the writers who "outswear the Litany" in *Satyre II*. The same bitterness also can be seen in Donne's use of the word "convenient" in the passage. One

definition listed in the Oxford English Dictionary refers to something "morally or ethically suitable or becoming." Another listed meaning is "agreeing, consistent, accordant, suitable, becoming," as in "convenire": to come together. More fitting for Donne's intent here in "Booke," however, is the word's current sense, which also dates from 1477: "Personally suitable or well-adapted to one's easy action or performance of functions; favourable to one's comfort, easy condition, or the saving of trouble; commodious." The proposed love-book, consequently, fails to bring the earthly practice of the clergy closer to its heavenly source; it simply offers a "convenient" reflection of the clergy's limitations.

Joan Bennett also uses this passage in her suggestion that Donne accepts physical beauty as a type of the soul's beauty and that physical love leads "directly to the love of God" (93). This certainly is the case in other poems, but not in "Booke." Bennett takes the poem's mention of beauty entirely out of the poem's context. In the lovers' poetry, "Loves Divines" supposedly will find a new model for heaven. Donne insists that the book will serve as the world's sole model: "Wee for loves clergie only are instruments:/When this booke is made thus" (lines 22-23). But the clear suggestion is that the "convenient" mirror of "Beauty" may prove only to be a shallow translation of true love that displaces the "abstract spirituall love" demanded by faith. Indeed, Clay Hunt uses this among other examples of Donne's use of the word beauty to apply to things that are "specifically physical" (225).

Similarly, in the lovers' poetry will lawyers supposedly find the basis for the prerogatives of affection among men and mistresses. However, the practice of withholding

sexual favors in a game of politics could merely instruct lawyers in how to perpetrate a similar game of manipulation for personal gain in the courts -- the same monstrous grafting of law and greed that has produced the widespread corruption denounced in Satyre II. Lawyers will not be purified by the book; they will merely see in it a reflection of the duplicity of the letter of the law at the expense of the spirit of justice. As laws are manipulated to serve individuals, so does womankind ``exact great subsidies (line 42)'' in the name of true love (``Love himself'') and thus make a mockery of it.

Similarly, in the lovers' poetry statesmen supposedly will find value and justification in their true calling who can use the power of language for public good. But like self-appointed messiahs appropriating Scripture, power-hungry politicians may learn from poetry how language is best manipulated for private gain. They will not be uplifted by any such book of love but will see the emptiness of their profession contrasted in it. ``In this thy booke, such will their nothing see''⁴

Donne's references to certain classical female poets in the opening stanza of ``Booke'' also reinforce the fact that very little about the suggested love-book is truly representative of the kind of love expressed in the other valedictory poems. Rather, the references to female poets used to motivate his lover to write have much less to do with love than with power relationships:

⁴Empson, reflecting a debate that stems from a variation among the manuscripts, takes Gardner to task for her reading of this passage. Gardner opts to rely on MSS that supply `something' instead of `nothing.' Obviously, `something' would require a dramatically different interpretation. Grierson, however, notes the majority of MSS show `nothing,' and sides with the majority.

...How thine may out-endure
 Sibylls glory, and obscure
 Her who from Pindar could allure,
 And her, through whose helpe Lucan is not lame,
 And her, whose booke (they say) Homer did finde, and name (lines 5-9).

The significance is a political, not amorous, one -- and thus a cynical one also -- when Donne chooses to mention an influential Cumaean wordsmith, a competitive poetry instructor, Lucan's editor/spouse and an Egyptian writer plagiarized by Homer -- Sibyl, Corinna the Theban, Polla Argentaria and Phantasia of Memphis, respectively. A deeper examination of the female figures chosen by Donne reveals that they imply the same questionable expedients that appear elsewhere in the poem. As Vickers notes, Donne's attempt to motivate his wife to write by making these references has little to do with their love:

Donne assures his mistress of a renown exceeding all the famous exempla of women who have aided poets -- Corinna helped Pindar, Lucan owed much to his wife, Homer cribbed both his poems from a woman (159).

There certainly are ancient masters whom Donne could have chosen if his purpose were to emphasize writers as lovers, and hence the spiritual nature of their poetry -- Sappho, Phaedra and Antigone, in particular, come to mind. Stampfer correctly senses the irony of the first stanza, noting that the narrator is appealing to the lover's vanity more than extolling the potential of their love-book:

Indeed, while her competition is superficially grand, its actuality is rather meager... The speaker celebrates his beloved with affectionate distraction, but hides his own complacency. He may coax her to outdo Pindar's temptress, Lucan's wife, and Homer's source; but the comparison puts him alongside Pindar, Lucan, and Homer -- rhetoric aside, the books were finally theirs'' (208, 209).

By offering up female figures whose literary noteworthiness has largely political connotations rather than spiritual, Donne reinforces his pessimism that poetry, through this book, will find little true redemption.

Donne's final images equating the depth and longevity of his love with navigational techniques involving longitude and latitude have drawn various reactions from critics. According to Marotti, the intention of the astronomical figure in the last stanza parallels the ``imaginative hyperboles and comic distraction of the poem as a whole,''' and he concludes its purpose is one of ``affectionate reassurance'' (172):

How great love is, presence best tryall makes,
 But absence tryes how long this love will bee;
 To take a latitude
 Sun, or starres, are fitliest view'd
 At their brightest, but to conclude
 Of longitudes, what other way have wee,
 But to marke when, and where, the darke eclipses bee? (lines 55-63).

Considered beside Donne's relatively flat description of what the book of poetry will provide to the three professions, Donne's sudden return to a more enigmatic metaphysical imagery to conclude the poem carries a much different significance than Marotti suggests. In the final stanza, the imprecision of the images may have less significance than the richness of their ambiguity. If so, the final stanza serves as a kind of tonal counterpoint to the previous three.

As we have seen, Donne's descriptions of what clergy, lawyers and statesmen will ``find'' are specific and relatively one-dimensional. Yet the navigational images in the final stanza are open-ended, whimsical and suggest multiple ``findings'' that are associated with observations made over great distances:

...Abroad I'll study thee,
As he removes farre off, that great heights takes....(lines 55-56).

Hughes links this imagery to that of the better-known two compasses in ``A Valediction: forbidding mourning:''

If they be two, they are two so
As stiffe twin compasses are two:
Thy soule the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the'other doe
....
It leanes, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as that comes home (lines 25-29, 31-32).

``In `A Valediction: of the booke,' although the closing simile is hardly more `scientific' than that of the compasses, it is more elaborate and strange....In spite of his consistent interest Donne never took natural science seriously'' (Hughes 51). According to Redpath, Donne's comparison between the measurement of the strength of love in absence to the measurement of latitude by observing a star at its zenith ``is a highly fanciful one, almost resting on a purely verbal basis'' (Redpath 48).⁵ Sharrock concludes that the image, ``though complicated and drawn out, is not strained because it offers an emotional as well as an intellectual fitness. What begins as witty conceit ends with a dying fall, symbolic darkness succeeding brightness'' (53). This symbolic succession is a crucial one if

⁵In attempting to draw out the technical validity of the last three lines, Grierson concludes that the navigational method Donne refers to ``is not, however, a practically useful one'': ``If the time at which an instantaneous phenomenon, such as an eclipse of the moon, begins at Greenwich (or whatever the first meridian) is known, and the time of its beginning at whatever place a ship is, be then noted, the difference gives the longitude. The eclipses of the moons of Saturn have been used for the purpose'' (vol. II, 29-30).

considered reflective of the underlying pessimism of the narrative voice toward the efficacy of the lovers' writings. Donne's final parallels of the measurement of one's love through absence and the measurement of a ship's longitude and latitude are clearly grounded in science. But the specificity of the navigational techniques may be less significant than the variety of possibilities Donne leaves open through the inexactness of his language. The limited efficacy of the proposed love-book finally may be admitted. The separation of the lovers may indeed diminish their ardor. It also may prove to offer a more valuable assessment of their love than any such book; ``...but to conclude/Of longitudes, what other way have wee,/But to marke when, and where, the darke eclipses bee?'' (lines 61-63). Such a sober assessment of the strength of their love certainly is preferable to using a tome of love letters to ``tissue over the void'' (Wiggins 490).

Clearly, the use of language in ``Booke'' distinguishes it from most other poems among the Songs and Sonets, at once indicating a pessimistic view of the power of the love-book and subverting the value of the book that the poem initially suggests. The same function can be discerned in Donne's dialectic structure in the poem. The effect of Donne's opposition between the first three stanzas and the second three of ``Booke'' is no accident. The confident tone of the first stanzas falters upon the sudden ambivalence of the following three, in which the exalted state of the love-book is thoroughly diminished.

The poem has the feel of a debate, in which the narrative voice uses the first three stanzas to confidently express the scheme that the lovers will follow to diminish the pain of parting.

I'll tell thee now (deare Love) what thou shalt doe
 To anger destiny, as she doth us,
 How I shall stay, though she Esloygne me
 thus...(lines 1-3).

The transcendent power of the lovers' expressions of love, their written words to each other, also is established.

Study our manuscripts, those Myriades
 Of letters, which have past twixt thee and mee,
 Thence write our Annals, and in them will bee
 To all whom loves subliming fire invades,
 Rule and example found...(lines 10-14).

This tone of confidence and consolation abruptly changes in the next three stanzas, each of which opens with the peculiarly passive construction of ``Here [in this book other people will find their model].'' One stanza is dedicated to each of three professions; Donne aspired to launch an influential career in two of them, law and politics; he eventually secured a position of power in the third, the clergy. ``Here Loves Divines (since all Divinity/Is love or wonder) may finde all they seeke...' (lines 28-29); ``Here more then in their bookes may Lawyers finde...' (line 37); ``Here statesmen, (or of them, they which can reade,)/May of their occupation finde the grounds...' (lines 46-47).

The poem may indeed be lumped with the majority of Donne's lyrics that C.S. Lewis calls ``meditations or introspective narratives''; but only ``A Valediction: of my name in the window'' and ``A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day'' come close to ``Booke'' in exhibiting a ``self-contempt and unconvinced sensuality'' (Lewis 68, 70). The subversive thematic structure of both ``Booke'' and ``Window'' are closely aligned; Barbara L. Estrin says ``the anticipation belies the becoming'' (346) in ``Window'' soon

after Donne's statement, "I am you," in the second stanza. Here, Donne formulates an aesthetic ostensibly based on picturing the woman but actually based on analyzing himself" (Estrin 346). Similarly, the premise in "Booke" that the love-book will "contain" all that their love embodies ultimately is undermined. The promise and sense of possession set forth in the first three stanzas are challenged, and the subsequent value of such a book is left in question. However, the meter of "Window," with its shorter six-line stanzas and predominance of anapestic trimeter, has little in common with "Booke."

The structure of "Booke," however, strikingly mirrors that of "A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day," the only two poems in which Donne ever uses such an alternation of pentametric and trimetric lines. Both poems have nine-line stanzas; seven stanzas in "Booke" and five in "A Nocturnall." In all stanzas, Donne uses iambic pentameter except for the fifth and sixth lines in each stanza, which are trimetric. "A Nocturnall" can be considered Donne's ultimate valedictory poem, in which the loss of his lover through death has transfigured his idea of love into the refined, immutable "quintessence." The structural kinship between "Booke" and "A Nocturnall," however, also suggests a relationship between the messages of the two poems. Initially, it appears that nowhere is the structure of "Nocturnall" shaken by any dialogic questioning such as that in "Booke." But while the monologue of "Nocturnall" at first appears uniformly homiletic, unrefutable and irreproachable, Donne's "hyperbole and equivocation carry with them none of the confidence exhibited" in other poems (Wiggins 485). Despite the suggestions of a spiritual renewal, that he is "re-begot" at the moment of darkest desolation, in "the dayes deep midnight," his dependence upon "the blurring

of categories'' and his invocation of the Passion raise questions about the narrator's claims of martyrdom and transcendence (Wiggins 485). The physical loss of the body remains inescapable; ``I am by her death,...Of the first nothing...'' (lines 28-29). As the presence of a shadow requires ``a light, and body'' (line 36), so do lovers require a spiritual and physical presence. In ``Booke,'' the earnestness of the lover's effort to replace his ``body'' with a book also is deflated. Instead of endowing the proposed love-booke with power to ``draw all that's good,/Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have...'' (lines 19-20), such power is thwarted by the suggestions that the book would be interpreted for selfish ends by others. Donne's clear suggestion in both poems is that love requires the bodies, the physical union of the lovers despite his claim for transcendence. Here, as in the lover's expropriation of St. Lucy's martyrdom in ``A Nocturnall,'' the narrator's initial vision of the love-book conflicts with its ulterior use by others ``to the point where his metaphors subvert themselves'' (Wiggins 486).

The references to possible states of being that G.R. Kress notes in ``A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day'' use the future tense in very specific ways. The motivation of Donne's use of the future tense here appears linked to that in ``Booke.'' Referring to lines 10, 30 and 31 of ``Nocturnall,'' Kress discusses the sense of Donne's usage ``referring to possible states, possible worlds'' (335). ``He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot;'' ``Were I a man, that I were one.'' The violent division of worlds -- specifically the separation of the reduced/exalted state of the narrator/lover from that of lovers basking in the ``lesser sunne'' -- is embodied in the phrase, ``you who shall lovers bee'' (line 10). ``The `futuraity' resides in the potential nature of the process, and in the prediction by the

speaker" (Kress 335). But as Donne's alchemist extracts a mythical "quintessence" out of nothingness, there is a tone of self-deprecation in "A Nocturnall." The death of his lover has demonstrated that their erotic relationship was indeed "nothing" like the spiritual union he supposed it was; "...with his beloved's death the speaker realizes that the religious and cosmological meanings he lent their love are false." (Wiggins 489-490). Donne makes similarly confident revelations in "Booke," and they are lent authority with the same use of the imperative: "Thence write our Annals, and in them will bee,/To all whom loves subliming fire invades...." Similarly, the exalted nature of the book is undermined in the very process that Donne proceeds to describe. The "findings" that Donne predicts do not reinforce the narrator's position of omniscience, nor do they represent alchemical material in a state of transcendence. Kress notes that the syntax of "you who shall lovers bee" and other lines implies "an interpretation of love and loves existing in one of the other worlds, but not in the world of the poet now" (335). There is no such note of transcendence in "Booke"; the rhetorical attempt ("Thence write our Annals"; "Thus vent thy thoughts") is made, but the lover is thwarted by the subversive suggestions of what lasting effects the book of love is likely to have.

The dialectic opposition between the first three stanzas of "Booke" and the second also contrasts with the structure of most of Donne's other poems in the Songs and Sonets. Compared with the consistent "abler soule" of "The Extasie" and the consistent tone of consolation found in the other three valedictory poems, a Socratic exchange seems to take the place of a unifying narrative in "Booke." Using "The Extasie" as an example, David Novarr notes Donne's "authoritative" voice of the "abler soule":

Having achieved the acme of the experience of love, the 'abler soule' is perfect, immutable, at one with itself, and it soliloquizes. The 'dialogue of one' is not a 'weak joke.' It is the keystone of Donne's arching wit. The 'abler soule' has no doubts as it speaks; it knows. Its certainty is reflected in the metrical regularity of 'The Extasie,' in the patness of its stanzaic form'' (30).

Similarly, Wilbur Sanders notes the 'tonal sensitivity' in 'Sweetest love, I do not goe,' where he says Donne offers 'real speech to a real person.' Sanders sees that the speaker takes the 'woman's fears' into his own consciousness and gives them back to her 'clothed in his man's tenderness' (11-12). In both 'The Extasie' and 'Sweetest love, I do not goe,' the union of the lovers dominates the sense of the lines. But Donne makes a dramatic departure from this in 'Booke'; not only is the poem's structure dialectic -- the first three stanzas prompt the 'reply' of the second three -- but the dialogue itself indicates equivocation over the value of what's being imparted. Moreover, the final stanza offers no reconciliation for the opposition of the first three with the second three. The dialogic structure of the poem raises questions about the 'realness' of the love referred to; the narrator offers no rebuttal in the last stanza for the questionable, earthly applications of the lovers' love outlined in the preceding three.

This lack of resolution or unity is striking compared with 'A Valediction: forbidding mourning' where, even as Donne offers a surprising concession at the end of his argument by raising the possibility that the lovers may remain as 'two' separate souls, he retains the conviction that the lovers' souls constitute a single body.⁶ Novarr also

⁶The final two stanzas of 'Mourning' may not be as restrictive as Novarr's explication suggests. Donne's descriptions of the compass' motion, rather than unsatisfactorily leaving the reader with an imperfect analogy of the lovers' union as

notes the structure of ``Mourning,''' saying that Donne offers ``no rigid first step in a syllogistic formulation; he approaches his subject indirectly'' (540). ``Booke'' offers no such diplomacy; the opening is comparatively confrontational, as Donne plots how to ``anger destiny,''' and does not seem to be primarily concerned with the consolation of his lover. There is an inherent inverse hierarchy in ``Booke'' compared with ``Mourning''; in the latter, the lovers are likened to high priests who are not to display their love as earthbound and thus subject it to ``prophanation''; ``[their love] is characterized by a mysterious refinement, by so perfect and constant an interpenetration of minds that its purity is unalterable and its security is confident'' (Novarr 55):

So let us melt, and make no noise,
 No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
 'Twere prophanation of our joyes
 To tell the layetie our love (lines 5-8).

In ``Booke,''' the communication of the supposed sublimity of their love to others, as lessons to be ``divined,''' serves as the only affirmation: ``Wee for loves clergie only'are

Novarr concludes, can be viewed as variations on the same image of circularity and ``centeredness.'' In both, it is the harmony of the legs that is emphasized, rather than the promise of reunion. When the adjustable foot ``far doth roam,''' as in taking a measurement of a radius, the ``fix'd foot' inevitably ``leans, and hearkens after it'' depending on the compass' rate of protraction. The fixed foot remains fixed, but simultaneously moves. In the second stanza, the movement of the fixed foot is referred to once more, but this time regarding its circularity; as the adjustable foot draws the circle, the fixed foot remains in the center but necessarily revolves in place; thus, the ``firmness'' of Donne's lover, i.e., the constancy of the radius, makes not only the circle, but also the revolution of the fixed foot, perfect. The movable leg, it is assumed, returns to the starting point of the circle, but, Donne says, so does the fixed foot in its revolution upon one point. In this sense, Donne's use of the image is much less ``inexact'' than Novarr allows.

instruments:/When this booke is made thus....'

The precise date of ``Booke'' has not been conclusively established. But its dramatic change in tone -- from redemptive to pessimistic bordering on dismissive -- could be considered all the more intriguing if the poem's creation were placed during one of the darkest periods in Donne's life: after his secret marriage had grounded his career hopes at court and he was working to restore his stature in the face of little encouragement. R.C. Bald, referring to this period as Donne's troubled ``Mitcham years'' during which he sought to recover a career in law or politics, described the man as ``deeply despondent at the lack of direction in his life'' (230). Bald referred to several of Donne's letters written at the time:

I would fain do something; but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For to chuse, is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. At most, the greatest persons, are but great wens, and excrescences; men of wit and delightfull conversation, but as moales for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute something to the sustenation of the whole.

...my fortune hath made me such as I am, rather a sicknesse and disease of the world then any part of it...

...if I aske my self what I have done in the last watch, or would do in the next, I can say nothing; if I say that I have passed it without hurting any, so may the Spider in my window (Hester 50-51, 59, 48).

``Booke'' might have emerged from this period in Donne's life with what first appears to be a strikingly uplifting tone -- a positiveness whose very exaggeration, as we have seen, raises suspicions.

What Donne leaves unsaid about what such a book **could** be -- a book of religious power that would enable a new spiritualism to descend upon the tired earth, a book whose teachings of love would transform the professions and not simply offer ``grounds'' on

which to justify business as usual -- is intended to provoke the reader to question the actual content of the book. Donne's earnest redemption of the power of poetry, it turns out, becomes a highly suspect one. The vulgar Cocus has not been driven away after all. Through the preceding analysis of ``Booke,''' it is clear that Donne does not deviate from his message of dire skepticism regarding the value of poetry and the power of the poet expressed in Satyre II years earlier.

In Satyre II, Donne lashes out at the world's mutability as it is manifested in the emerging power of law and its potential for abuse. Satyre II is a work in which Donne transforms the satiric genre by using it as a vehicle not only for a scorn akin to the traditional Roman satirists, but also to express a deep-felt loss. Donne's constant theme of decay and degeneration is not the expression of mere anger, but of a pained sensibility. The degeneration of love's language through Cocus' legal manipulations, coming on the heels of its vulgarization by commercial playwrights, is a foreboding image of the death of poetry itself. The rising star at the Inns of Court is witnessing the systematic stripping away of the heart of the Elizabethan community of faith, the poetic language of love, and its replacement by a world of vulgar materialism.

The question of poetry's place in a rapidly changing world remains a problematic one in ``Booke.''' It seems that the mutable world, even after a new Dark Age, has not changed much at all in Donne's vision; and the authority of the poetic voice, correspondingly, has not been restored. The skepticism behind Donne's vision is clear, but the motive behind such skepticism is not. The dichotomy between this dark view of poetry's efficacy and the emotional power of his body of work is a prominent one. But the

suggestion that Donne refuses to vest poetry with any real authority because of his own thwarted ambition is too simplistic. For anyone who might see a Coccus strutting down every alleyway, the notion of placing faith in the survivability of an unsullied, ``true'' poetics amid an increasingly political world undoubtedly would seem to be folly -- be there a next Dark Age or no. Such a pessimistic view of the outside world certainly would prompt a mind such as Donne's to intensify the ``inward'' character of his poetry, to become all the more determined to capture an essence of earthly love by using the language of heaven and of the church. Such a pessimistic view would prompt Donne to write an intensely personal poetry -- powerful even in the durability of such negating work as ``A Valediction: of the booke.''

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Vita

Patrick Lee Plaisance was born in Newport News, Virginia, on December 7, 1963. He was raised primarily in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Denver, Colorado, where he graduated from Wheat Ridge High School in 1981. He received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Missouri in 1985. He worked as a copy editor at the Los Angeles Daily News before working as a news reporter for newspapers in South Florida, New Jersey and presently at the Daily Press in Newport News, where he has worked as staff writer since 1991.