MISOGYNY AND MORALITY:
JOHN DONNE'S ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN
AND THE TRADITION OF IRONIC ALLEGORY

By

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INTRODUCTION

Recent criticism of the attitudes toward women presented in the works of John Donne has had to account for the apparent contradictions found within his poetry. For example, the speakers in many of Donne's early poems seem to espouse a libertine, sometimes cynical attitude toward love and the relations between men and women. In contrast, other works celebrate the mutual love between men and women and are often profoundly religious. Critics have chosen various ways to account for this ostensibly drastic polarization of Donne's attitudes. For many, the elegies, and a certain number of his lyrics, express the views that Donne held as a young rake. His later poetry, say these same critics, expresses a more mature and positive outlook toward women that was engendered by his marriage to Anne More. Other critics see no relation among the poems, developmental or otherwise, and consider the whole of Donne's poetry as symptomatic of an almost schizoid nature. For these critics, Donne both celebrates and limits the nature of woman at the same time. This thesis, however, will propose that Donne's poetry presents a much more consistent portrayal of women, neither changing nor arbitrary, but one that is essentially rooted in traditional Christian precepts. Therefore, the thesis will argue that a profitable way to understand the poems is from a Christian perspective--a perspective that is best outlined in St. Augustine's treatise On Christian Doctrine.

D. W. Robertson is perhaps the best known of the scholars who stress the importance of St. Augustine's writings, especially On Christian Doctrine, in understanding medieval and Renaissance literature. For Robertson, On Christian Doctrine was "[in] the Middle Ages the most important single work describing the theoretical principles of exegesis" (Preface to Chaucer, 295). Robertson cites Augustine as having believed that the Bible reiterated one simple lesson: "Scripture teaches nothing but charity [*caritas*], nor condemns anything but cupidity [*cupiditas*]" (On Christian Doctrine 3.10.15). During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, *cupiditas* was defined as the love of an earthly good as an end in itself. In contrast, *caritas* was defined as the love of another as a means to glorify God. If a passage did not literally praise *caritas* and condemn *cupiditas*, then it was said to do so allegorically, and one had to probe beneath the *letter* of the passage in order to perceive its (Christian) *sense*, to paraphrase medieval writer Hugo of St. Victor (qtd. in Preface to Chaucer 315). Robertson also notes that over time Augustine's approach to reading the Bible was applied to all texts, including those that seemingly have little to do with Christianity: "As time passed, habits of thought developed in scriptural exegesis that left a strong mark on literary analysis" (Preface to Chaucer 348). Chapter one of my thesis will generally sketch the development of this influence, offering a brief review of some of the critics who have traced the connection between Scriptural and literary allegorical interpretation and applied it

to their study of medieval literature. In particular, the works of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Jean de Meun, Guillaume de Lorris, and Geoffrey Chaucer will be discussed. Also, attention will be paid to scholarly studies that demonstrate how during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance the erotic poetry of Ovid was often moralized in light of such Christian tenets as *caritas* and *cupiditas*.

Chapter two will discuss the relevance of the Augustinian approach to such Tudor poets as Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Philip Sidney. However, the main focus will be on studies of the poetry of Donne himself. Of particular interest will be the work of N. J. C. Andreasen, whose John Donne: Conservative Revolutionary is a central text pursuing this approach. The chapter will then mention Donne critics subsequent to Andreasen who have pursued a similar approach and will discuss the relevance of such work to Donne's poetry in general. Following the survey will be a brief examination of the influence of the early works of Ovid--the *Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*, and *Remedia Amoris*--upon Donne's own elegies. The thesis will argue that medieval and Renaissance moralizations of Ovid also influenced Donne, and it will assess the implications of this influence for interpreting the depiction of women in his elegies. Also, the thesis will illustrate how Donne often uses irony, a form of allegory mentioned by Augustinian theorists, to expose the speaker in his poems to negative judgment. For example, frequently the speaker will refer to Biblical passages or use religious language in his attempts to seduce a woman into bed. Irony presents itself

in the poems when these references, sometimes knowingly employed by the speaker to build witty conceits and comparisons and sometimes inadvertently expressed, undercut his arguments in favor of adultery and infidelity by reminding readers of the very biblical passages and Christian ethical principles that condemn such actions. As Andreasen observes, "Ovid's *Amores, Ars Amatoria, and Remedia Amoris* were often read in the Renaissance as didactic works, using techniques of comic irony and satire, and not as prurient lessons on the art of Love. . . . Ovid was thought by most humanists to be presenting dramatic portraits of deviations from a moral ideal. And Donne seems to have written his Ovidian poems in a similar spirit" (18).

Utilizing the methods of analysis outlined in the previous two chapters, chapter three will emphasize the importance of a close reading for exposing the ironies inherent in four of Donne's elegies. What becomes clear is that Donne, as Andreasen pointed out, consistently denounces the libertine speakers in his Ovidian elegies in light of their unwitting transgressions against Christian morality. Some recent critics have argued that the elegies represent women as mere objects of pleasure, even derision, whom the libertine speakers attempt to possess through trickery and deceit. However, such an interpretation falls short by not accounting for the possibility of an ironic presentation of the male speaker. Indeed, it is the male who is derogatorily satirized in many of these poems and not the female. His selfish desire to seek in the woman only his own pleasure and not the presence

of God's grace (a quality present in everyone regardless of gender) shows him to be acting against Christian notions of morality. If we believe Donne to have applied the Augustinian principle that calls for literature to praise *caritas* and condemn *cupiditas* to his own poetry, then it becomes easy to see how he is able to chastise the male speakers in his Ovidian elegies. This interpretation of Donne's poetry defends him against the charges of misogyny and sexism alleged by recent critics and views Donne as ultimately having regarded gender distinctions as far less important than the spiritual natures all persons share.

ST. AUGUSTINE AND ALLEGORY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

At the heart of this study is an attempt to scrutinize the relationship between the sacred and the profane, to account for the ways in which Christian writers and their readers in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were able to justify and utilize pagan erotic literature to affirm Christian beliefs. Perhaps it is fitting, then, that this study begin by examining the writings of St. Augustine, a pagan convert to Christianity. On Christian Doctrine, one of Augustine's most singularly influential works, outlines his program of training for the study and exposition of the Bible. Augustine believed that the study of the Bible is facilitated by understanding and appreciating figurative expression, or allegory. Although literary allegory had existed for centuries before he was able to write about it, Augustine brought to its study a unique Christian perspective that subsequently opened pagan literature to the inspection and admiration of medieval Christian humanists. The great influence that his work exerted is evident in the many references to it in medieval and Renaissance literature. Precisely because of Augustine's profound influence, recent critics have called for interpreting that literature according to the method outlined in On Christian Doctrine. However, before examining the fruits of these studies, it is best to begin by defining the major elements of the Augustinian method itself.

In On Christian Doctrine, Augustine stresses the prime

importance of the Bible as the source for all the spiritual truths necessary for salvation. However, as Augustine points out, the knowledge contained in the Bible is not always easily accessible, since many of its truths are expressed through "obscurities and ambiguities" that cover "certain sayings . . . with a most dense mist" (II.7).[1]

These sayings are types of allegory, and Augustine notes that the function of allegory is to cause "us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses" (II.1). Although all such figurative language is potentially ambiguous, Augustine values its presence in the Bible, for, as he states:

> . . . no one doubts that things are more readily perceived through similitudes and that what is sought with difficulty is discovered with more pleasure. . . . Thus the Holy Spirit has magnificently and wholesomely modulated the Holy Scriptures so that the more open places present themselves to hunger [for meaning] and the more obscure places may deter a disdainful attitude [toward meaning too easily perceived]. (II.8)

Furthermore, Augustine believed that obscure allegories were placed in the Bible "to conquer pride by work" (II.7). Thus, he cites the Canticle of Canticles 4:2 as an example of a Biblical passage that requires diligence to grasp its meaning: "Thy teeth are as flocks of sheep, that are shorn, which come up from the washing, all with twins, and there is none barren among them." In his book A Preface to Chaucer:

Studies in Medieval Perspectives, D. W. Robertson follows Augustine himself in citing this Scripture as one in which the "incoherency of [its] surface materials" resists a literal interpretation and encourages the reader to exercise his reason to make the passage intelligible (56).

However, if reason is the chief aid the student of the Bible uses in his attempts at exposition, then he needs a set of guidelines by which his intellect may be informed. Consequently, Augustine sets out in On Christian Doctrine to provide such guidelines, as is shown in his commentary concerning the distinction between a literal and figurative saying: "whatever appears in the divine Word that does not literally pertain to virtuous behavior or to the truth of faith you must take to be figurative" (III.14). Additionally, Augustine declares that any figurative passage will itself promote virtuous behavior or illustrate doctrinal truth. Since Augustine believed that any passage from the Bible "teaches nothing but charity, nor condemns anything except cupidity," all interpretations, literal or figurative, must reflect the Bible's essentially moral teaching (III.15). In Book III, Augustine defines cupidity and charity:

> I call 'charity' the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbor for the sake of God; but 'cupidity' is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of ones's self, one's neighbor, or any corporeal thing for the sake of something other than God. (III.16)

The concept of charity is centrally important, for it forms the backbone of the entire interpretive process. Generally, Augustine allows any interpretation that praises charity or condemns cupidity (I.40). For example, Augustine himself allows the concept of charity to inform his own interpretation of the previously cited passage from the Canticles. In so doing, he interprets the passage as a reference to the lives of saints, and he describes the pleasures of arriving at an allegorical interpretation:

> I contemplate the saints more pleasantly when I envisage them as the teeth of the Church cutting off men from their errors and transferring them to her body after their hardness has been softened as if by being bitten and chewed. I recognize them most pleasantly as shorn sheep having put aside the burden of the world like so much fleece, and as ascending from the washing, which is baptism, all to create twins, which are the two precepts of love, and I see no one of them sterile of this holy fruit. (II.7)

Read in a spirit of charity, the previously obscure passage not only makes sense but also promotes virtue. Besides encouraging morality, the passage also offers pleasure to the reader able to ascertain its meaning. In showing his strong and positive regard for both the utility and the pleasure he found in the Scriptures, Augustine demonstrates his affinity for Roman writers like Cicero who, long before Augustine, had made similar comments about the inherent "eloquence and wis-

dom" of pagan literature.

Although it may seem odd that the Bishop of Hippo would approve of pagan culture, Augustine believed that various kinds of pagan knowledge could be useful tools for removing the "dense mists" of obscure scriptural passages. Such knowledge could provide the tools needed to place a previously obscure passage in its appropriate context. For example, the study of the Hebrew or the Greek language might provide references for specific names of people and places found in the Bible. Augustine, therefore, encouraged Christians to explore the knowledge pagan cultures offered, provided that they used what they found there to reveal Christian spiritual truths. This encouragement is evident in Augustine's interpretation of the Exodus:

> Just as the Egyptians had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel detested and avoided, so also they had vases and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing which the Israelites took with them secretly when they fled, as if to put them to a better use. They did not do this on their own authority but at God's commandment, while the Egyptians unwittingly supplied them with things which they themselves did not use well (II.60).

According to Augustine, the "idols and grave burdens" were pagan myths and superstitions grounded in falsehood; the gold and silver appropriated by the Hebrews symbolized heathen "liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some most useful precepts concerning morals" (II.60).

Augustine advised that the Christian "should take this treasure with him for the just use of teaching gospel" (II.60). This concept of use is important to Augustine, and it is carefully defined in On Christian Doctrine; Book One, for instance, offers a distinction between use and enjoyment:

> To enjoy something is to cling to it with love for its own sake. To use something, however, is to employ it in obtaining that which you love, provided that it is worthy of love. For an illicit use should be called rather a waste or an abuse (I.4-5).

This point is explained in more detail by Bernard Huppé, who points out in his study Doctrine and Poetry: Augustine's Influence on Old English Poetry that Augustine felt that all objects of creation, pagan or Christian, "cannot be in themselves evil, [since] evil pertains only to the use and enjoyment of the objects of creation, not to the objects themselves" (6). This notion implies that Christians could not only seek in pagan sources an understanding of figurative obscurities encountered in the Bible but could also use pagan literature actively to promote Christianity. To illustrate this point, Huppé notes that "Augustine urged Licentius to continue with his Pyramus and Thisbe, which would celebrate an aspect of Christian charity" (17).

Although Augustine recognized the usefulness of pagan literary skills for studying and subsequently teaching the Bible, he did not want Christians to become too enamored with the mere eloquence of pagan literature and rhetoric. Augustine believed that such eloquence was potentially dan-

gerous because it was void of any reference to spiritual truth. Augustine even quotes Cicero himself to support this point: "'Wisdom without eloquence is of small benefit to states; but eloquence without wisdom is often extremely injurious and profits no one'" (IV.7). Because Augustine believed in the words found in 2 Corinthians 3:6, that "the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth," he admonished Christians not to let the superficial simplicity of literal interpretations prevent them from perceiving the spiritual truths that may lie hidden beneath the Scriptural surface. Thus, although Augustine is offering nothing essentially new (since allegory and the value of eloquence and wisdom were ancient concepts), as a Christian he infuses into these pagan concepts a specifically religious force that allowed later Christians to justify their use.

One of the most intriguing uses of Augustinian ideas concerns medieval interpretations of Ovid. Reviewing the history of medieval mythography, William Reynolds notes that among the earliest interpreters of Ovid was Theodulf of Orleans, who in the eighth century wrote, "'Beneath the false exterior of Ovid's tales lay a core of hidden truth'" (8). In this quote, Theodulf is clearly echoing a line of defense that originates in classical Greece and was used by those who desired to vindicate poetry (and its use of allegory) against critics who believed that its only function was to disseminate immorality and falsehood. Following the lead of earlier students of classical literature such as Theodulf, later medieval humanists continued to defend classical literature and

subsequently engendered a deeper and more inclusive appreciation of works by other authors. A testimony to this widening appreciation of classical poetry is Reynolds's observation that by the twelfth century, mythographers of Ovid were for the first time producing explanations of the whole of the Metamorphoses (9). Moreover, this increasing interest in the works of Ovid mirrored the increasing influence that Scriptural allegory exerted on literary interpretation. As Reynolds observes, this growing influence manifested itself by the twelfth century in a "greater emphasis on the moral message of Ovid's stories" discussed in mythographies of the Metamorphoses (10). In other words, mythographers, following the lead of their counterparts in the field of Scriptural exegesis, increasingly interpreted Ovid's myths in light of Christian doctrine. In fact, as Fausto Ghisalberti illustrates in his article "Medieval Biographies of Ovid," medieval writers of mythographies were not the only thinkers influenced by Augustinian methods of exegesis. In fact, Ghisalberti observes that, generally, all the writers of introductions to medieval collections of Ovid's works assumed that Ovid possessed a moral purpose in writing even such erotic poetry as is found in his Amores. Consequently, the collectors of these poems adapted them "to the service of Christian didactics and theology" (15).

The influence of Augustinian methods of Scriptural exegesis on Christian humanists, evidenced in part by an increase in the number of mythographies and collections of pagan works that presented moral interpretations of Ovid's

myths, came to fruition during the fourteenth century. The special place in history which this period of medieval humanism holds is confirmed by the opinions of the many scholars who consider it to be the high point of medieval mythographic writing. In particular, three works written at this time--the Ovide Moralisé, the Ovidius Moralizatus of Petrus Berchorius, and the Genealogy of the Gods by Giovanni Boccaccio--are considered especially significant. The earliest of the three is the Ovide Moralisé, whose precise date of composition is uncertain, although most scholars would date it before 1328. In studying the influence of the Ovide Moralisé, Bernard L. Witlieb notes that although modern critics view the work as "interminable, dull, [and] pious," the poem was well received by its contemporaries (33). Witlieb illuminates the strength of the work's reception by noting its influence on such later writers as Petrus Berchorius (author of the Ovidius Moralizatus) and Geoffrey Chaucer (33-4). As a possible reason why the Ovide Moralisé appealed to its contemporaries, Witlieb notes that its stated intent was to reconcile pagan literature with Christian doctrine, and he cites a typical passage in the work that establishes the author's recognition of the similarities between Scripture and Fable: "La fable et la Devine Page / Se vont, ce m'est vis, acordant" (27).

If some modern critics consider the Ovide Moralisé dull, perhaps the Ovidius Moralizatus will seem more appealing. William Reynolds, in his critical translation of the work, notes that what distinguishes the Ovidius Moralizatus (espe-

cially its first book, entitled De Formis Figurisque Deorum) from other mythographies is its vivid depiction of the various pagan gods. Reynolds attributes the work's striking emphasis on visual imagery to Berchorius's determination to cull from the work of his friend Petrarch. Of particular aid to Berchorius was Petrarch's own poetic rendering of the pagan gods, an epic poem entitled Africa. The wish of Berchorius to depict colorfully the gods marked his mythographic manual as novel; however, he nonetheless wished to place this picturesque and novel manual in a traditional and religious framework. Emblematic of Berchorius's desire to remain within the traditional framework are the conventional analogies he draws between poetry and Scripture. A good example of his conventional commentary on poetry can be found in the opening passages of the Ovidius Moralizatus: "Sacred Scripture is accustomed to use . . . fables and fictions so that from them some truth may be drawn out or demonstrated. Poets work in similar fashion; they too construct fables, for through figments of this type they wish to communicate some other truth" (Reynolds 32). In the conclusion of his comparison, Berchorius also states his purpose in writing a new mythography: "because I have seen that Scripture uses fables to communicate natural and historical truths, it has seemed proper to me that . . . I moralize the fables of poets so that through man-made fictions I may be able to confirm the mysteries of morals and faith. For, if he is able, a man may collect grapes from thorns . . . and build a tabernacle of the Covenant from the treasures of the Egyptians. Ovid says

that it is proper to be taught by an enemy" (qtd. in Reynolds 33-4). In citing both Augustine and Ovid to support his own views, Berchorius echoes the appreciation that traditional Christian humanists felt for classical literature as well as the methods they used in reading it. Like Theodulf and the author of the Ovide Moralisé, Berchorius believed that pagan literature contained truths relevant to the higher truths found in Scripture. Yet Berchorius did not believe that everything found in a pagan work could promote Christian ideals; therefore, he claims that it is necessary to "[separate] the wheat from the chaff and [gather] the wheat into the storehouse for the praise and glory of God" (qtd. in Reynolds 36). Of course, Berchorius's metaphorical reference to wheat and chaff when discussing the proper use for pagan fables parallels Augustine's metaphorical references to Egyptian gold and burdensome idols to express the same concept.

Implicit in Berchorius's analogy is the submission of poetry to the service of Christian faith. That is to say, Berchorius qualifies his defense of poetry when he defines it as holding less truth than the Scriptures. Seemingly in contrast to this qualification is the defense of poetry offered by Giovanni Boccaccio in his own mythographic work entitled Genealogy of the Gods. In this work, Boccaccio asserts the importance of poetry in its own right. To Boccaccio, poetry is a vehicle used for expressing whatever truth the poet himself may experience, and not simply for recording the truths he finds in some other work. William Reynolds cites the passage of the Genealogy, found in Book XIV, that most frankly

communicates Boccaccio's views:

> [Poetry is] a kind of fervor, a rare and divine gift of exquisite invention and exquisite expression. This fervor is sublime in its effects, impelling the soul to a longing for utterance; it produces strange, original creations of the mind, composes them in a certain order, adorns them with a unique fabric of words and meanings, and in this way covers the truth with a fabulous and fitting veil. (qtd. in Reynolds 22)

Such language might lead one to conclude that Boccaccio is very forward looking; indeed, his assertion that the individual poet possesses the ability to discover truth and to produce sublime and "original creations of the mind" seems to anticipate certain modern literary assumptions. However, Boccaccio's theories about poetry and the role of the poet are not anticipations of the future but are instead an impassioned and traditional defense of an art form as it was understood during the Middle Ages. Boccaccio's Genealogy is the last of a long line of medieval mythographies; his defense of poetry is equally bound by tradition. Furthermore, not only is Boccaccio connected to a literary tradition, but he also is bound to a religious one as well. The presence of religious tradition in Boccaccio's writing is demonstrated in his allusions to Scriptural exegetic methods, as when he perceives poetry as possessing four types of possible meaning. Of course, such allusions to a four-fold distinction significantly predate Boccaccio's writings, for they are clearly

present (for instance) in the literature and correspondence of Dante Aleghieri. In his philosophical work Convivio as well as in his well-known letter to Can Grande, Dante's writing illuminates the full extent to which literary allegorists had absorbed the concepts of Scriptural exegesis, initially proposed by such Fathers of the Church as Augustine himself, into their own ideas about literature.

The beginnings of this assimilation have already been outlined. What is important to note here is that these exegetical methods of reading allegory were used not only in medieval commentaries on classical authors, such as the mythographies of Ovid's Metamorphoses, but also in the writing of original works as well. By the time of Dante, the practice of Scriptural exegesis had developed into the four-fold method of interpretation already mentioned. This method urged students of the Bible to look for four possible meanings when trying to interpret a figurative (or allegorical) passage: first, a literal level (or the surface meaning of the passage); second, an allegorical meaning (that is, a meaning that referred to the Church); third, a tropological significance (or any meaning with implications for one's spiritual well being); and, finally, an anagogical meaning (or a meaning that referred to the afterlife). Dante expresses his understanding and employment of the four-fold method of Scriptural exegesis in a letter written to his patron, Can Grande, Lord of Verona. Writing the letter to serve as an introduction to the Paradiso, Dante demonstrates to his patron the various senses in which the work is to be

understood by employing the four-fold method:

> To elucidate, then, what we have to say, be it known that the sense of this work is not simple, but on the contrary it may be called polysemous, that is to say, 'of more sense than one'; for it is one sense which we get through the thing the letter signifies; and the first is called literal, but the second allegorical or mystic. And this mode of treatment, for its better manifestation, may be considered in this verse: 'When Israel came out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a strange speech, Judea became his sanctification, Israel his power.' For if we inspect the letter alone the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt in the time of Moses is presented to us; if the allegory, our redemption wrought by Christ; if the moral [tropological] sense, the conversion of the soul from the grief and misery of sin to the state of grace is presented to us; if the anagogical, the departure of the holy soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory is presented to us. And although these mystic senses have each their special denominations, they may all in general be called allegorical, since they differ from the literal and the historical . . . (Latin Works 348)

Although Dante clearly employs the traditional four-fold divisions, he distinguishes the first, or literal, sense from the last three; thus a primary distinction exists between the

literal and the allegorical. It follows, then, that according to Dante, allegory is broadly defined, since it can contain meanings which are merely moral in their implications, or it can contain a "higher" sense that has significant implications for one's personal spiritual condition. In the largely philosophical work known as the Convivio, Dante notes that classical literature, such as the myths of Ovid for example, employ the type of allegory that contains moral implications only. However, this does not mean that other readers of Ovid did not interpret his tales as having spiritual implications. As we have seen, other mythographers such as Berchorius were quick to point out the perceived correlations between fable and Scripture and were therefore quick to interpret a myth as having spiritual implications for Christians. Boccaccio, too, distinguished fables according to the four-fold manner described by Dante and other Christian Scriptural exegetes.

Clearly, then, Scriptural exegesis had become a part of the way people during the later Middle Ages, and even before then, read and wrote literature. It is easy to see how someone like Dante, clearly a profoundly Christian poet, was able to use allegory to promote spiritual concerns. For example, Dante's work La Vita Nuova obviously attacks cupidinous love and promotes charitable love by depicting the unrequited passion felt by the poem's narrator (whom some take to be Dante) toward the beautiful Beatrice. The narrator remains in a state of emotional anguish that lasts until he learns to sublimate his love for Beatrice and redirect it toward God.

However, even though it is apparent that many of those who read and wrote literature during the Middle Ages looked for it to promote Christian morality, such an outlook is not always taken by modern readers. This loss of perspective can be explained in part by the inability of many modern readers to appreciate the methods of allegorical interpretation. In contrast, however, those modern scholars who often emphasize ironic readings of medieval literature see themselves as a part of a long tradition that acknowledges the possible role that irony and allegory might play in literary interpretation. For example, D. W. Robertson cites as one of his own predecessors the medieval scholar Isidore of Seville, who applies the term *alienloquium* to his description of the manner in which allegory can state one thing literally while also communicating some other meaning. Irony, says Isidore, functions as a type of allegory since it is used to deride someone through praise (Robertson, Preface 288). However, this recognition of irony as literary allegory was well established by Isidore's time. For example, irony was a widely accepted rhetorical trope (or turn of language) even in classical Greece and Rome. Indeed, Augustine himself understood that the Bible contained such tropes, and he recommended that Christians study the principles of pagan rhetoric to aid their interpretations of the Scriptures.

Robertson and many other scholars believe that Christian writers during the Middle Ages followed the dictates of Augustine and used allegorical writing and allegorical reading in ways that would promote Christian beliefs. Conse-

quently, these modern scholars of medieval and Renaissance literature themselves follow Augustine's example when they look for affirmations of Christian morality under the veil of figurative passages--affirmations sometimes expressed through the use of allegorical tropes like irony. Although the process may occasionally seem to impose a meaning never intended by a work's creator, some scholars argue that the writers themselves often direct the reader's attention to the veiled Christian meaning that lies beneath the work's surface. In his Preface to Chaucer, for instance, Robertson offers a brief summary of how this literary effect might be achieved:

> If a Christian author uses figurative concepts from the Scriptures . . . or, on the other hand, if he employs 'things' or 'actions' mentioned in the Bible in such a way that their conventional figurative meanings are implied, these concepts, things, and actions will carry their spiritual overtones with them into the poem. The spiritual meanings are not creations of the author of the poem, but represent a common language of the faith. (350)

Robertson's Preface (as well as similar pioneering studies undertaken by such scholars as Bernard Huppé) had a highly significant impact by helping to renew an appreciation of Augustinian literary sensibilities. Subsequently, other scholars followed Robertson's lead and began to apply the Augustinian perspective to a wide range of medieval texts. The remainder of this chapter offers a review of some of these other applications of the Augustinian method; ideally,

the chapter will provide enough examples to indicate the viability of such an approach. Even though some of the texts studied often appear to contradict Christian moral teachings, "Robertsonian" scholars have often convincingly employed Augustine's technique of interpretation to identify veiled references within the texts--references that point to deeper allegorical Christian meanings. Besides providing a fresh, if provocative, modern interpretation of older texts, the Augustinian perspective also encourages a renewed appreciation of the depth and wit of literary works that have, unfortunately, often been looked upon as being merely titillatingly erotic.

Although few would disagree with the notion that Dante is a Christian poet who actively employs allegory to promote his faith, such is not the case with Petrarch. For example, although many similarities exist between Dante's La Vita Nuova and Petrarch's Rime Sparse, few modern readers perceive Petrarch's love poetry as being fundamentally Christian in theme. Instead, most readers view that collection of love poems as exemplifying the courtly love genre of poetry. Consequently, such readers often sympathize with Petrarch's tormented narrator as he agonizes over his inability to realize his love for the beautiful but aloof Laura. In contrast to this typical reading of Petrarch, recent scholarship, undertaken by Sara Sturm-Maddox in her book Petrarch's Metamorphoses and by Thomas Roche in his study Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences, calls for an ironic interpretation of the Rime that exposes its narrator to negative judgment in

light of Christian principles that deride the practice of loving another person idolatrously, or without reference to God.

Idolatrous love is the emotional force that fuels the passions of characters in courtly love poems, or, as the genre was called in Italian, the *dolce stil novo* (new sweet style). In these poems the character who suffers from such a love is often the social inferior of his beloved and therefore can only adore her from afar. It is usually taken for granted that Dante was employing this stilnovist theme when writing La Vita Nuova, and Sturm-Maddox notes the close associations between that poem and Petrarch's Rime Sparse. In making this connection, Sturm-Maddox ostensibly keeps within the lines of conventional treatments of both poems, which view them as expressing Platonic types of love in which the lover adores a form of beauty that he can never really experience or possess. However, the initial similarities between conventional studies and Sturm-Maddox's soon end since she seeks to show how Petrarch integrates various traditional perspectives on love into the main text of his narrative. By doing so (she argues) he tests his narrator's perspective against Christian concepts of love. Sturm-Maddox thus concludes that Petrarch was employing the stilnovist genre to illustrate its inadequacies, especially as those inadequacies are experienced by the narrator of the Rime, who is unable to follow the example of his counterpart in La Vita Nuova by sublimating his love for Laura and redirecting it toward God. Sturm-Maddox believes that the references to charity and use

found in Petrarch's other writings inform this critique of the stilnovist perspective on love. Petrarch's Secretum is a particularly significant work in this regard since it is an account of a fictional conversation between Petrarch and St. Augustine. Sturm-Maddox believes that Petrarch expected his readers to apply the same criticism to the narrator of the Rime that Augustine uses to admonish Petrarch in the Secretum, who is criticized for his failure to understand (in Sturm-Maddox's paraphrase) that "Whether Laura be a queen, a saint, a goddess, a nymph [is] irrelevant to the fact that the poet's passion for her is an impediment, a wrong direction of his love" (128). In other words, worshiping a woman herself for her virtue or desiring her because of her beauty is a selfish act, since doing so means ignoring God's ultimate role as the creator of beauty and virtue. To Sturm-Maddox, the final poem in the Rime, in which the poet-lover appeals to the Virgin Mary for aid when acknowledging of his faults, still finds him unable to transform and to transcend his love for Laura. Therefore, she notes, the ending thematically opposes the ending of La Vita Nuova: "While Dante demonstrates the redemptive potential of human love, Petrarch's story suggests at its close that the transformation of Eros into Caritas cannot be credited to a mortal woman; only the Virgin is the 'vera beatrice,' and only divine intervention can effect true spiritual change" (132). This contrast implies a firm admonishment against idolatrous love and, as Sturm-Maddox believes, illustrates Petrarch's function as both a poet and a moral philosopher (140).

In arguing for the viability of an Augustinian reading of Petrarch's sonnets, Thomas Roche also points to the Secretum as a necessary key to understanding the full extent of the Christian sensibilities of the Rime. Further, in making his argument, Roche, like Sturm-Maddox, calls attention to the existence of various sub-texts in the Rime that lie implicit beneath the main narrative of the text itself. However, whereas Sturm-Maddox argues that Petrarch is testing the inadequacies of these subtexts, Roche claims that Petrarch is working in harmony with them. For Roche, the implicit sub-texts to which Petrarch refers in the Rime, and to which he expects his readers to refer as well, are found in the fourteenth century moralizations of the Ovidian myth of Apollo and Daphne, particularly those written by Berchorius and Boccaccio (both of whom borrowed from Petrarch's own renderings of the myth). Although Sturm-Maddox recognized five subtexts, including an Ovidian one, Roche finds the mythographic subtext to be all-encompassing, for in Ovid one discovers the germ of "almost every image and theme of medieval and Renaissance love poetry, in particular the tradition of the sonnet" (9). However, despite their apparent dissimilarity, both scholars follow the example set by medieval moralizations and interpret the Ovidian myth as chastising vanity and lust. Apollo, therefore, becomes the unsuccessful pursuer of a Daphne who alternately represents fame and beauty. That this same chastising of vanity and lust is voiced by Augustinius in the Secretum only strengthens the scholars' perception of Petrarch as a Christian poet, who was motivated

by medieval sensibilities to promote charity and to deride cupidity by including allegorical references to them in his poetry. In addition to exposing a narrative subtext that promotes Christian morality, Roche argues that a similar subtext also informs the structure of the poem as well. As Roche himself explains:

> The double vision I have been describing in Petrarch's poems is repeated in the structure of the Canzoniere. . . . The 366 poems are structured by reference to a calendrical year beginning with 6 April. The traditional division of the 366 poems into two parts: 1-263, *In vita di Laura*, and 264-366, *In morte di Laura*, corroborates my theory, for if one links each poem of the sequence to a day of the year beginning with 6 April, the major break at poem 264 coincides with 25 December, Christmas. Thus Petrarch in the covert style of allegorical poetry is plotting his love on the calendar of the Christian year. (32-33)

By observing that the structure of the poem echoes the Christian calendar, Roche surmises that the first and last poems fall on the same day, 6 April. In the Middle Ages, this day was traditionally believed to be the day of Christ's crucifixion. Because Petrarch's sequence begins and ends on the same Christian holy day, the circular structure of the Rime suggests spiritual rebirth; just as Christ's death secured mankind's redemption after the Fall, so the poet-lover's final hymn to the Virgin Mary secures his personal

salvation after he had initially turned away from God in the selfish pursuit of both fame and beauty. It is interesting to note that Sturm-Maddox interprets the final poem differently, since she finds the lover's spiritual renewal still lacking. However, such discrepancies in these critics' interpretations do not invalidate either study's use of Augustine's method of reading texts, since Augustine himself allowed for such variation as long as all interpretations ultimately promoted charity. What is important to note is that by emphasizing a Christian allegorical interpretation and by exposing various subtexts in this collection of poems, both scholars have restored a literary richness that seems to have been both originally intended and originally perceived. For, unlike most modern readers, many of Petrarch's contemporaries surely were able to understand the mythographic and allegorical bases of Petrarch's references to the myth of Apollo and Daphne as well as his use of the Christian calendar. Therefore, they were able to perceive the deeper, Christian, meaning inherent in both the content and the structure of the poem. The efforts of Sturm-Maddox and Roche have afforded modern readers a similar understanding and have also rescued the Rime Sparse from generic interpretations which have pigeonholed the collection as an example of "courtly love."

One medieval writer whose works are seldom considered to be exemplars of courtly or Platonic love is Giovanni Boccaccio. In fact, many of Boccaccio's writings suffer from an almost opposite critical trend, since they are generally viewed as light and erotic comedies, concerned more with the

baser feelings of lust than with the more "lofty" themes of courtly love. In his book Boccaccio's Two Venuses, Robert Hollander comments on this trend in Boccaccio criticism: "The aim of Boccaccio's 'youthful' fiction is generally, indeed very nearly universally, understood to be the praise of carnal love" (3). Although Hollander recognizes the popular trend in Boccaccio criticism, he shies away from the conventional approach and instead employs an Augustinian interpretation to suggest an alternative reading of some of the works: "I believe that the intent of [Boccaccio's] *opere minori in volgare* [early minor works written in the vernacular] was to make an ironic attack upon the religion of love, an attack which is at times interspersed with praise of marital love" (3). Concerning Boccaccio's use of irony, Hollander notes that few modern readers perceive the "negative valence" that he himself feels is a natural part of Boccaccio's depiction of cupidinous love. However, this is partly because most recent readers of these lesser works disregard the "mythographic indications" embedded within the texts--indications that depict Venus and Cupid, characters present in all of the works, as "vain, cruel, and dangerous" (4-5).

Boccaccio's Teseida is a good example of how knowledge of medieval moralized allegories ironically undercuts the literal presentation of an often lascivious Ovidian storyline. Teseida is better known to most students as the source of Chaucer's Knight's Tale. In this work, two young men, Arcita and Palemone (Arcite and Palamon in Chaucer), let their friendship slip away when they fall in love with same

woman, Emilia (Emily). However, before this divisive love can put a definite and fatal end to their friendship, Duke Teseo (Theseus) decides that the outcome of a chivalrous duel between the two will decide who will marry Emilia. For Hollander, the "crucial moral action" occurs before the day of the joust when the three young characters remove themselves to temples dedicated to different pagan gods whom they ask for aid: Arcite prays to Mars, Palemone to Venus, and Emilia to Diana (55). Hollander notes that Boccaccio adds to his descriptions of the temples an allegorical gloss which not only explains some obscure references found in the descriptions but which also serves to promote the Christian moral of the story (56-60). In his gloss of the Temple of Mars, Boccaccio writes that there are two appetites in man, the concupiscible and the irascible, and he makes clear that the Temple of Mars is associated with the latter (Hollander 59-60). Even without the benefit of a gloss, says Hollander, Boccaccio also makes clear the "negative valence" associated with the temple of Mars (57). If Mars and the irascible appetite he represents are presented so negatively, we might expect that the temple of Venus would be treated in an opposite way. However, in Boccaccio's gloss to his second description, Hollander recognizes valences that are just as negative as those that pertain to Mars (58). Thus, Hollander concludes, "The apparent opposition Mars-Venus turns out to be, because of the nature of the two worshipers, Arcita and Palemone, a double version of a similar impulse toward self-centered worldly success" (63). Hollander suggests that

Boccaccio views man as possessing the divine gift of free will so that he may choose between two types of love. Boccaccio condemns Palemone's "impulse" toward self-centered love because he loves Emilia for her beauty, a mutable and worldly quality, without giving due respect to the ultimate source of her beauty, God. At the end of the tale, Palemone recognizes that this worldly impulse was responsible for the rift in his friendship with Arcita, whose last words of forgiveness for Palemone also acknowledge his own responsibility for the tragic affair. Boccaccio, then, even at the literal level of the storyline, implies that pursuing worldly desires can lead to tragedy. Although Arcita did win the climactic joust, his death makes Palemone eligible for Emilia's hand, and their marriage is presided over by "another" Venus, the goddess of marriage and charity. In remarking on the presence of the two Venuses, Hollander concludes by claiming that: "There are two Venuses only in one sense--man may worship the uses of Venus in either two ways . . . The carnal Venus is the object desired by a corrupt judgment, the celestial Venus . . . the aim of rational choice" (65). Hollander, in applying Augustinian literary theory, examines the minor works of Boccaccio to stress a distinction between the two types of love (represented in the stories by the two Venuses) and to emphasize man's active role in choosing which kind of love to follow. For Hollander, Boccaccio clearly believes that rational love is the right choice.

Although Hollander feels that an Augustinian interpretation clearly applies to Boccaccio's early vernacular works,

he is not convinced of its efficacy for interpreting Boccaccio's very enigmatic collection of tales known as the Decameron. However, Victoria Kirkham, in her article "An Allegorically Tempered Decameron," offers very persuasive arguments on behalf of a Christian allegorical reading of what is generally taken to be a very salacious collection of tales. Kirkham's study is concerned with identifying the natures of the ten storytellers in the Decameron as symbolizing basic Christian concepts. With this end in mind, she looks to the earlier works of Boccaccio for clues. To begin with, she finds correlations between the three male characters of the Teseida (Arcita, Palemone, and Theseus) and the three male storytellers in the Decameron (Filostrato, Dioneo, and Panfilo). In particular she identifies both groups as representing the tripartite division of the appetites of the soul: the irascible, the concupiscible, and the reasonable, respectively (3). For instance, Kirkham suggests that the fact that Dioneo's tales are the most salacious implies that he represents the concupiscible appetite (3). Similarly, Kirkham supports her argument that Filostrato represents the irascible appetite by noting that during his reign as "king" the tales that are told are often tragically violent or destructive (5). Finally, Kirkham notes that Panfilo is not only the first character to tell a story, but that he also rules on the final, tenth, day, a position that subsumes the foregoing nine. Such privileged positions, Kirkham argues, correspond to the privileged place that Christian medieval thinkers afforded the reasonable appetite over its unreason-

able counterparts (6-7). Kirkham convincingly applies the same reading to the male characters in Teseida: Teseo, who "controls" the overly emotional Arcita and Palemone by suggesting the duel, represents the reasonable appetite while the other two represent, obviously, the irascible and concupiscible appetites respectively (3).

In attempting to identify the natures of the seven female storytellers, Kirkham turns to another early work of Boccaccio, Commedia delle ninfe fiorentine in which three shepherds and seven nymphs teach a rural boy the bond between love and virtue (7). Since the male characters are assumed to be allegorical representations of the three divisions of the soul, Kirkham suggests that the seven women represent the seven virtues, four cardinal (Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, and Justice) and three theological (Faith, Hope, and Charity) (7). Noting that "the virtues that help bring irascibility and concupiscence into conformity with reason are accordingly fortitude and temperance," Kirkham respectively relates Filomena and Fiammetta to these two virtues (9). Textual evidence that supports this relation is offered in the storyline which has Fiammetta-Temperance and Dioneo-Concupiscence play music together and sit side by side on the first day (9). Also, Kirkham notes that temperance is best suited for mediation, and she argues that this role corresponds well to Fiammetta's middle position in the order of storytellers; she is queen of day five (9). Kirkham notes that among the textual details that support her reading of Filomena as an allegorical symbol of fortitude is the fact

that, on her day as queen, she demands that all stories told have as their subject "people who survive adversity" (12). In like manner, Kirkham offers textual evidence to support her readings of the remaining female storytellers as representatives of the remaining seven virtues. In so doing, Kirkham exposes the "serious moral symbolism" in the Decameron, arguing that it is less whimsical and more occupied with moral allegory than some modern readers had previously assumed. Also, she contends that the conventional view that sees the work as a collection of salacious tales must be reexamined since, as she herself notes, "The attributes and actions of [Boccaccio's] narrators, often in monitory contrast to the behavior of characters in the stories they tell, come to advocate emblematically the harmoniously ordered soul that Everyman should have" (18).

Boccaccio, apparently, was not the only medieval author to have the intent of his works possibly misconstrued by modern critics. Like the Decameron, the French poem La Roman de la Rose is often viewed by modern critics as advocating "natural" love, or a love that falls outside the dictates of Christian moral teachings. Such a view seems highly inappropriate, since, as John V. Fleming notes in his own study of the Roman, at least one French scholar, who lived a little more than a century after the completion of the poem (c. 1275), believed that the Roman was the model for Dante's Divine Comedy, a poem that almost no critic would view as being anything other than profoundly Christian (17). Seemingly even more ironic is the fact that this same me-

dieval critic and literary scholar was among the first to provide a French translation of the works of Giovanni Boccaccio. Clearly, despite their obvious differences, many medieval readers apparently felt that the works of each of these three authors presented the same Christian ideas. By citing other medieval literary commentaries on the poem and by thoughtfully studying some of the illustrations that accompanied its various manuscripts, Fleming argues that the ideas presented in the Roman, like those also presented in the works of the Italian authors discussed above, were very much concerned with Christian perspectives on love.

In his study Fleming notes that modern critics not only tend to see the Roman and the Comedy as opposites, but also tend to view the very nature of the Roman itself as schizophrenic (104). Much of this perceived schizophrenia has to do with the fact that the Roman has two authors who wrote more than forty years apart: Guillaume de Lorris completed the first 4,058 lines of the poem in or about the year 1235, and Jean de Meun finished the later, and longer, portion (lines 4,089-21,780) around 1275. According to Fleming, critics who take a conventional approach to the poem generally see "Guillaume's Roman" as "courtly, smooth, [and] aristocratic," while "Jean's Roman" is perceived as "anticourtly, bumptious, bourgeois, and unconventional" (104). Furthermore, Fleming asserts that at least one modern critic, C. S. Lewis, characterized Jean as a poet who "knew nothing about allegory in general and even less about Guillaume's in particular" (106). Fleming goes on to quote Lewis as saying

that Jean "'ignored, perhaps despised, Guillaume's architectonics'" (106). However, in supporting his own view that the Roman is no longer understood as it originally had been, Fleming notes that no medieval reader of the Roman commented upon any stylistic or thematic differences between its two authors (105). In fact, Fleming indirectly quotes one medieval reader of the poem, Pierre Col, as openly contradicting Lewis by merely saying that "'Jean brought to completion what Guillaume had begun'" (104). This is not to say that differences between the two parts of the poem do not exist. Yet although Fleming himself concedes the presence of obvious stylistic differences, he is firm in advancing a reading of the poem that stresses its fundamental thematic unity: "Despite marked, indeed sensational differences in style, emphasis, and poetic strategy on the parts of the two poets, their poem prosecutes a single and unified action" (106).

Therefore, for Fleming, the whole of the Roman sustains a unified action; moreover, such action moves in a decidedly ironic direction. According to Fleming, the essential irony of the poem is rooted in the conflict between Lady Reason and the Lover, Amant. This irony is first established in Guillaume's portion since it is here that Amant first encounters, and rejects, the counsel of Lady Reason, who is described as created in the image of God, by whom she has been endowed with the power to keep man from folly, provided that he only listen (ll. 2971-96). Amant, however, loses the sympathy of the reader when he brazenly and blasphemously chooses to avoid the counsel of one of God's servants. Continuing

this central irony, Jean offers another account of Amant again denying the counsel of Reason. Instead, Amant chooses to heed the advice given by various characters of dubious merit. Unfortunately for Amant (according to Fleming) this turns out to be the wrong choice:

> His 'education,' as a result, is a fiasco. From Amours he learns a stilted code of false courtesy which maintains that nobility is based on external, and often hypocritical, appearance rather than inner virtue. From Amis he learns the utility of mendacity in the game of love as well as much other cynical worldly wisdom, while the most notorious old whore in French literature, his ally and emissary, preaches love's mercantile strategy. (106-7)

That Amant could choose such an "education" over the counsel of Lady Reason should only decrease the reader's sympathy for him and thus amplify the central irony of the poem.

Fleming observes that many critics tend to associate the perspectives on love held by the dubious characters whom Amant meets with Jean de Meun's own views. This association, furthermore, contributes to the frequent critical impetus to divide the poem into "courtly" and "bourgeois" portions. However, by claiming that it is Lady Reason that best represents the thinking of Jean, Fleming convincingly offers an alternative to such conventional criticism. For example, Fleming notes similarities between the words of Lady Reason and those of Jean himself in his translation of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy:

> According to Jean de Meun, the Consolation of Philosophy gives men priceless instruction on the proper relationship between them and the things which surround them in the world. . . . Typically, man loses sight of what is absolutely and essentially good because his senses are captivated by what is only contingently ad accidentally good--i.e., by material creation. Intoxicated by the *sensible*, he loses all capacity for the *entendible*. (111)

Furthermore, Fleming also sees parallels in the experiences of the leading male characters of the Roman and Boethius's Consolation: "Boethius's hero was a sick man made whole by Philosophy; Jean's, a fool whom Philosophy cannot make wise. Boethius wrote, in an abstract sense, of his hero's involvement with things; Jean took the same theme but exemplified it with outrageous and comically explicit sexuality" (111). For Fleming, the words of Lady Reason, the direct literary descendant of Boethius's Lady Philosophy, form the moral backbone of the poem.

In the introduction to his English translation of the Roman de la Rose, Charles Dahlberg, like Fleming, argues that Lady Reason is the one character in the poem who espouses the Christian beliefs that condemn cupidity--beliefs commonly held by both authors of the poem and also by its readers (5). Moreover, Dahlberg also offers a reading of the poem that similarly sees it as wholly consistent in its ironic account of Amant's conquest of the rose. In his introduction, Dahlberg also expresses his agreement with another reading of

the poem, proposed by D. W. Robertson, that views the narrative structure of the work as mirroring the course of events in the Garden of Eden that led to the Fall: "It was Robertson who first identified [the Roman's narrative] pattern with the Fall, the prototypical sin which was thought to fall into three parts, corresponding to the three protagonists: suggestion to sense (Satan), delight of the heart (Eve), and consent of the reason (Adam)" (15). Dahlberg notes that the first of the three steps leading to the involvement of sin, suggestion to sense, is "strongly indicated" by the imagery found in Chapter I of the Roman--imagery that emphasizes "the role of sense impressions" (15). Guillaume's description of the god of Love's arrows is one example of such imagery, since, as Dahlberg notes:

> Five of the arrows encourage love and five discourage it. The series of the encouraging arrows, while it does not correspond in detail to the series of the five bodily senses, begins and ends with names that suggest sight. Beauty, lying in the beholder's eye, leads through advancing degrees of intimacy--Simplicity, Openness, Company--to the subjective sight impression of Fair Seeming. (15)

The next step, delight of the heart, is manifested in Amant's willing subjection of himself to the god of Love. Of course, this subjection can only begin, fittingly enough, after the god of Love's arrows enter through Amant's eyes and pierce his heart (16). However, Amant's subjection is not yet complete since he has not yet involved his reason. Unfortu-

nately, soon after feeling the pains of his enthrallment by the god of Love, Amant foolishly refuses to heed the warnings issued by Lady Reason against the type of love by which Amant is enticed, and so his fall seems assured.

All of the examples above are taken from the portion of the poem written by Guillaume de Lorris. However, this is not to say that Dahlberg believes that Jean de Meun failed to sustain the same narrative structure. To the contrary, Dahlberg argues that Jean de Meun contributes to this structure through his elaboration of the third phase of Amant's involvement with sin by presenting various characters "who illuminate the process of the overthrow of reason from several standpoints and who serve as reflectors of the inner state of the Lover as he continues in his rejection of Reason" (16). Both Fleming and Dahlberg, therefore, are able to provide textual evidence for their similar readings of the poem --readings that view its structural and thematic unity as illuminating basic Christian perspectives on love.

It is fitting that the discussion of this chapter ends with that renowned medieval author whose works are frequently viewed as echoing those of the authors discussed above. For, as D. W. Robertson himself notes in A Preface to Chaucer, the "influences of the Roman de la Rose, of more recent French poetry, and of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch are obvious" in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (241). Although Chaucer may have given a new flavor to these older materials, says Robertson, "there is no ground for the assumption that he created a radically new set of stylistic conventions without

the emphasis on underlying abstractions that was characteristic of the art and literature of the period" (Preface 241). If Chaucer's literary art is conventionally medieval, as Robertson contends, then his works should exhibit a medieval preference for allegory and therefore should present iconographic materials that address an underlying abstract idea, rather than simply presenting a realistic surface description. Of course, for Robertson the underlying ideas that are presented are inexorably connected with the teachings of Christianity.

Although Chaucer seemingly contradicts the medieval preference for allegory by displaying verisimilitude in depicting his characters in the General Prologue to the Tales, Robertson declares that these depictions are "in no sense 'realistic'" (Preface 247). The absence of perceived realism is attributed to the "surface inconsistency" of these depictions, which rely on a seemingly random use of iconographic materials to depict a character's "biography, action, costume, physiognomy, and manners" (Preface 247). Such an iconographically depicted character becomes almost a personified abstraction, and as such becomes an emblem of a moral quality. For example, after citing the description of Alisoun in The Miller's Tale, Robertson argues that she is "neither a 'realistic' reflection of the times nor a 'character' in the modern sense; rather, she is an elaborately and amusingly conceived manifestation of the *woman* who is an object of lust" (Preface 249). Furthermore, such characters (according to Robertson) tend to act in ways that reflect the

moral abstractions that they themselves represent (Preface 269).

Because Chaucer followed medieval literary convention and derived his descriptions from iconographic materials, Robertson notes that "In every instance where derivative materials are employed, whether they come from Scripture, from mythography, or from any other source, a knowledge of their significance as it was understood in the fourteenth century is of utmost importance to our understanding of [Chaucer's] art, just as important, in fact, as a knowledge of Middle English" (Preface 249). That Chaucer derived iconographic material from Ovidian mythographies is clear from his use of the description of the temples of Venus, Mars, and Diana found in Boccaccio's Teseida as a source for his own Knight's Tale. As Robertson notes, understanding the significance of the mythographers' depiction of Venus and Mars as representing the irrational appetites of the soul allows the reader to follow the author's intent and negatively judge any character associated with these gods. Additionally, Robertson points out that Chaucer borrowed from the Bible for iconographic material. For example, he notes that the concept of the pilgrimage "was ideally a figure for the pilgrimage of the Christian soul through the world's wilderness toward celestial Jerusalem" (Preface 373). If, as Robertson would have us believe, Chaucer knew and exploited literary allegory and used it to express his "confident acceptance of a Providential order," it seems appropriate to summarize some allegorical readings of some of the stories found in The

Canterbury Tales that illustrate this acceptance (Preface 281).

Perhaps the best comprehensive reading of Chaucer's great work that utilizes the method of allegorical interpretation proposed by Robertson is A Reading of the Canterbury Tales by Bernard Huppé, a former colleague of Robertson. In his reading of Chaucer's Tales, Huppé displays the same care as Robertson in revealing the medieval understanding of the iconographic materials Chaucer employs. For example, Huppé finds in the Knight's Tale two apparently contradictory elements. The first involves references to Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, made during certain characters' soliloquies; these references afford the tale a profoundly philosophical tone. The second element is a recurrent inclination toward rhetorical "sinking" (or *bathos*) that lends a different, comic, tone to the tale. Huppé resolves the apparent contradiction between these elements by pointing to their common didactic function: the Boethian principles supply a moral force to the story, while the rhetorical "sinking" creates a comedic distance between the reader and the characters in the tale who fail to follow those principles (A Reading 55). Huppé thus suggests that the conflation of these two elements leads to "a comic comprehension, of seeing the rhetoric of romantic grief as illusory, wrong, incongruous. . . . [a] perception of the comedy of human illusion as a game played in deadly earnest, with the wrong rules, for nonexistent stakes" (A Reading 72). The reader understands the folly of Arcite and Palamon in striving for earthly beau-

ty; but the characters themselves discover only the ironic trappings of Fate: Arcite prays to Mars and wins the joust, but he dies before he can claim the prize; Palamon prays to Venus and wins Emily, but only through the diplomatic maneuverings of Theseus and not through romantic involvement. If either young Theban could have directed his life toward the salvation found in God's providential plan, he would have avoided the sorrows associated with the pursuit of the worldly treasures of Fortune.

To Huppé, much of the didactic nature of the tale is reflected in the Knight's wish to warn his son, the squire, against the folly of young lovers and to instruct him in the seriousness of a life directed by Christian ideals (A Reading 55). As Robertson observes, pilgrims, like the characters in the tales they tell, implicitly expose their moral natures through their attention to, or disregard for, the Christian principles referred to in their own tales or in those told by other pilgrims (Preface 275). As Huppé notes, this observation is certainly true of the Miller, who demands that his own story be told immediately after the Knight's opening tale in order to "quite" it (A Reading 75). Huppé interprets the Miller's demand as reflecting the pilgrim's different social as well as philosophical and spiritual standing *vis-à-vis* the Knight: "His story then will 'quite' the Knight's by showing up its world of pretense and pretension, for in real life women are women, not Emilys: virile young men don't act like Palamon and Arcite--they go after their wenches, and if they are smart they leave the expense of keeping them to some poor

old husband" (A Reading 76). In one sense the Miller does achieve a certain triumph, since his tale--which describes how the young clerk Nicholas bests his youthful and effete rival, Absalon, tricks old John the carpenter into thinking that he is the second Noah (consequently forcing him to take refuge inside a barrel), and sleeps with the beautiful Alisoun, John's wife--is far more lively than the tale told by the Knight. However, in showing his preference for such a lively, realistic tale, the Miller also reveals his ignorance of the meaning behind the Knight's tale. As Huppé notes, in attempting to tell a "realistic" tale, the Miller ironically depicts a world that is threatened by apocalypse and in a state of confusion engendered by cupidinous desires.

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the reader to the basic principles of Augustinian allegorical interpretation and to illustrate the many ways in which these principles influenced how people in the Middle Ages thought about literature. However, although it seems to have been the dominant literary paradigm of the Middle Ages, the allegorical approach did have its detractors. Many of the dissenting voices spoke out against what they felt to be an overly zealous, if not inappropriate, application of allegory to both the reading and writing of literature. For example, even Fleming contends that the "absurdities of the interpretations" produced by some readers of the Roman de la Rose "testify that by the end of the fifteenth century the poem was no longer clearly understood" (6). In fact, by the time of the Reformation, allegorical interpretation had received

harsh criticism from some well-known voices, Rabelais and Luther being two prime examples. In addition, during the late Middle Ages some authors were also attacked for their allegedly inconsistent use of allegory. The debate over the Roman de la Rose in the fifteenth century testifies to this new trend in literary sensibilities--a trend that criticized the presence of explicit sexuality in an allegorical work.[2] However, despite its critics, allegory, and allegorical tropes such as irony, continued to be appreciated as legitimate literary tools well into the Renaissance, as the next chapter will illustrate.

Proponents of allegory and irony could defend the presence of sexually explicit material in literature by claiming that such passages were morally didactic. For example, Robertson quotes Pierre Col, who defended the Roman against critics who decried, among other things, its explicit references to the "members of generation." Col claimed that a careful reader of the poem would find in it "'teachings to flee all vices and pursue all virtues'" (Preface 363). Col's emphasis on the value of the poem's Christian and didactic nature obviously echoes St. Augustine's own literary values. As we have seen, modern "Robertsonian" scholars view this valuation of a work's didactic nature as typifying medieval literary theory, and such scholars attempt therefore to illuminate a work's inherent Christian sensibilities accordingly.

However, some recent studies have challenged the "Robertsonian" contention that medieval literary theory emphasized only the moral benefits a work could offer. For in-

stance, in his provocative book Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages, Glending Olson cites medieval writings that are concerned with justifying a literary work chiefly on the basis of the pleasure it excites. In the words of Olson, these writings "challenge severely the idea that medieval literary thought ignored or denigrated pleasure without profit, for . . . there are some spirited defenses of the value of taking delight in fictions" (37). However, Olson later qualifies his statement by remarking that these defenses of literary pleasure were not undertaken merely for pleasure's sake; instead, they maintain a definite moral dimension: "Taking pleasure in a fiction, even one that may not instruct the intellect, is a response that, in the proper circumstances, contributes to physical or mental well-being and hence to one's capacity for activities more directly related to one's final end" (38). Since Olson himself concedes and contends that the whole of medieval literary theory was concerned with "one's final end," the primacy of Augustinian principles remains intact: literature was used (in the Augustinian sense of the word) to bring one closer to an understanding of God. As this chapter's review of some modern readings of medieval works has suggested, poets like Jean de Meun, Petrarch, and Chaucer chose a middle path in their approach to writing literature. By creating amusing tales that illuminate the proper direction of the soul in its journey toward God, and by ironically presenting dramatic characters (or *personae*) that serve as negative examples, these authors combined both pleasure and profit. Thus the medieval Chris-

tian could knowingly laugh while he read about these misguided characters--misguided because they chose to be influenced by their desires and consequently to abandon reason.

[1]All passags from On Christian Doctrine are from the translation by D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1977). To facilitate finding their location in other editions, passages are designated according to their original book and paragraph number and not by page number.

[2] For a more detailed discussion of this debate see Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, pp. 361-65. Robertson contends that as "an indication of a change in taste which took place in certain quarters after the death of Chaucer, this controversy is invaluable. From this time forward humanists would find themselves frequently put on the defensive by the attacks of the righteous" (364).

ALLEGORY AND OVID IN TUDOR ENGLAND

Poets and their readers in sixteenth-century England remained, for the most part, loyal to the method of allegorical reading and writing that they had inherited from their medieval counterparts. Despite a small number of piously vociferous detractors (another commonplace inherited from the Middle Ages), proponents continued to justify poetry much as it had been justified in the Middle Ages: they argued that poetry could be morally edifying when illuminated through allegorical interpretation. For example, in a manner similar to its reception in the Middle Ages, Ovid's Metamorphoses received much attention from Elizabethan allegorists (especially Arthur Golding), who were always quick to point out that reading Ovid could be both spiritually profitable and artistically pleasing. Additionally, many sixteenth century poets accepted such interpretations, and Sir Philip Sidney's renowned treatise The Defence of Poesie perfectly illustrates how the English literary sensibility embraced the Horatian critical emphasis on poetry's simultaneous ability to delight and instruct. Consequently, like "Robertsonian" scholars of medieval literature, certain scholars of Renaissance literature interpret the poetry of Sidney and of other sixteenth century writers as morally didactic. Accordingly, such scholars view Tudor poetry as presenting characters who serve as negative examples because their perspective on love violates Christian morality and thus can only lead to despair.

To confirm their interpretations such scholars offer ironic readings of the poems, or they look for common mythographic or allegorical materials in the poetry (like the references to Venus and Mars in the works of Chaucer and Boccaccio) and argue that these materials imply negative assessments of passionate love.

However, some critics believe that later Tudor poets became dissatisfied with moral allegorizations of classical works, and within this milieu of changing literary tastes they place the poetry of the young John Donne. Such critics emphasize the obvious differences between Donne and some of the poets who preceded him (Donne, for example, did not write a sonnet sequence, nor did he make much use of mythographic materials), and they interpret these differences as evidence of Donne's willingness to break with literary tradition and its focus on moral instruction. Consequently, these critics often imply that Donne wrote poetry to delight and titillate rather than to instruct the reader. It follows, then, that these critics would not attempt to read Donne's libertine or Ovidian poetry as ironic; rather, they would condemn it for apparently endorsing its misogynist and rakish speakers. However, although Donne may indeed be more delightfully witty and titillatingly erotic than many poets who preceded him, it seems possible to argue that he is no less concerned with presenting the conflicting perspectives of cupidinous and charitable love than were more obviously orthodox writers.

Yet, before examining the viability of an ironic reading of Donne's poetry, it remains to be shown that Tudor literary

sensibility continued the medieval Christian preference for allegory. Certainly, much evidence suggests the presence of such a continuation. For example, Douglas Bush, in his book Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, writes, "The Elizabethan conception of poetry, and of myth in particular, was on the whole the medieval substitute for an aesthetic theory. Yet as on the continent, interpretations of myth are mainly ethical and humanistic. The Elizabethan love of morality is manifest everywhere" (72). Furthermore, in a statement that no Robertsonian would deny, Bush concludes that "the didactic attitude must be accepted if we wish to understand a large share of Elizabethan literature" (73). The "Elizabethan love for morality" as well as this "didactic attitude" are both clearly demonstrated in the efforts of contemporary humanists to moralize the works of Ovid, as Clyde Barnes Cooper's study "Some Elizabethan Opinions of the Poetry and Character of Ovid" illustrates. Cooper claims that Ovid attracted Elizabethan readers as a master of verse-form and narrative technique who also possessed penetrating insight into human behavior (5-7). However, Cooper adds that the content of his poems often gave "occasion for offense to the moral sense" (9). Cooper describes the polarized nature of Elizabethan reactions to the explicit erotic content of Ovid's poems. According to Cooper:

> Elizabethan writers commonly see one of two possibilities. Some would condemn the poems to what they regarded as well-merited oblivion, while others

> would have recourse to what they considered a sort of Higher Criticism. They would separate the good from the evil in the poems, and ignoring or forgetting the latter, make the utmost of the good. On their favorite analogy of the bee, which extracts honey from even the most poisonous plants, they would, moreover, find some profit in the evil itself. (9)

Clearly, many Elizabethans were capable of appreciating pagan literature in the same way as their medieval predecessors. As Cooper himself states, "The spirit of Pierre Bersuire [Petrus Berchorius, author of the Ovidius Moralizatus] . . . colored the whole Elizabethan attitude toward Ovid and toward the general interpretation of poetry" (12).

In particular, Cooper intimates that nowhere is the spirit of Berchorius more alive than in Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses. Cooper quotes Golding (in a letter of 1567 to his patron) as claiming that his verses all contain "pithie apt and pleyne / Instruction which import the prayse of vertues, and the shame / Of vices, with the due rewardes of eyther of the same'" (24). Surely this passage, which portrays Ovid as moral instructor, could easily be found among Berchorius's own writings. Any doubts concerning Golding's affinity for the medieval habit of moral allegory ought to be quieted by Golding's concluding words:

> The readers therefore earnestly admonisht are to bee
> Too seeke a further meaning then the letter gives to see,

> The travell tane in that behalf although it have sum payne,
> Yet makes it double recompense with pleasure and with gayne. (26)

Surely, Golding's emphasis on the need for an allegorical interpretation of Ovid ("Too seeke a further meaning than the letter") places him squarely on the shoulders of Berchorius and Augustine. Furthermore, Golding's appreciation of poetry's ability both to delight and to instruct indicates that his literary sensibilities exemplified the desire of many sixteenth-century writers to emulate Horatian critical theory.

Moreover, Golding was only one voice among many who emphasized the moral significance of an allegorized Ovid. As Cooper himself notes, such moralizings were applied to more than just the Metamorphoses. For example, Cooper mentions that although William Webbe, in his 1586 essay Of English Poetry, contended that the Metamorphoses was Ovid's best work, he defended Ovid's other works as well: "'The rest of his dooinges, though they tende to the vayne delights of loue and dalliaunce . . . yet surely are mixed with much good counsayle and profitable lessons, if they be wisely and narrowly read'" (20). Golding, too, states this belief that even the amatory poems of Ovid can be morally edifying, and similar statements can be found in the writings of others as well. For example, Thomas Nashe, in his pamphlet entitled Anatomie of Absurditie, defended Ovid from his Elizabethan detractors by employing one of the staple metaphors used by

Renaissance allegorists. Cooper cites Nashe as saying:

> I woulde not haue any man imagine that in praysing of Poetry I endeauor to approue Virgils unchast Priapus, or Ouids obscenitie; I commend their witte, not their wantonnes, their learning, not their lust: yet euen as the Bee out of the bitterest flowers and the sharpest thistles gathers honey, so out of the filthiest Fables may profitable knowledge be sucked and selected . . . they that couet to picke more precious knowledge out of Poets amorous Elegies must haue a discerning knowledge. (20)

In using the metaphor of the bee visiting the honey-bearing thistle (so reminiscent of the medieval metaphors of separating the wheat from the chaff) to refer to the "good" that may be extracted from pagan and lascivious poetry, Nashe clearly illuminates the presence of a medieval literary aesthetic in Tudor England.

Additionally, Cooper cites other writers of the period who employ allegorical interpretation to defend poetry, Ovid's in particular; Thomas Lodge and William Harrington are just two examples. However, it must also be noted that allegorical interpretation, and Ovid's poetry, did have a large number of detractors. For instance, Cooper cites William Tyndale as expressing particular indignation toward allegorical methods: "'some will prove a point of the faith as well out of a fable of Ovid or any other poet, as out of St. John's Gospel or Paul's Epistles'" (12). In addition Tyndale warned readers to "'beware of allegories; for there is not a

more handsome or apt thing to beguile withal than an allegory'" (12). Although Cooper states that "expressions such as the foregoing were . . . restricted to the field of theological controversy and appear to have exerted little influence on the application of allegorical interpretation to works of literature" (12), some recent studies have argued that late sixteenth-century poets were also dissatisfied with the orthodox allegorical approaches to classical literature.

One such study, William Keach's Elizabethan Erotic Narratives, contends that glimpses "of an ironic detachment from [the allegorical] approaches . . . appear in the midst of well-known expositions of the orthodox approach to pagan poetry by late Elizabethan writers who . . . exhibit a sensibility very far from that of Sir Arthur Golding" (33). For example, Keach cites Lodge and Harrington as two such writers who (he believes) exhibit a certain skepticism toward allegory. However, while Keach wishes to distance the "subversive" young Elizabethans from the older, more orthodox poets, he does not wish to claim that these younger poets, specifically Lodge and Harrington, "placed no positive value at all in the allegorical and moral positions they expound" (34). What may first have begun, according to Keach, as a schoolboy rebelliousness toward orthodoxy--a rebelliousness that initially led these poets and others to explore the "witty eroticism of Ovid"--eventually ended in a "sensitivity to the violent pathos and psychic torment which disrupt and complicate both the wit and the lyricism of [Ovid's Amores]" (35). According to Keach, the artistic production of these younger poets

(particularly poets such as Marlowe and Shakespeare who wrote epyllia in the 1590's) represents a novel and deep exploration into the "characteristic Ovidian ambivalence" toward love. However, the studies reviewed in the last chapter suggest that such explorations were in fact not solely characteristic of the late Elizabethan period. Similar explorations occur in the works of Boccaccio, for example, who in the Teseida offers poignant and ironic commentary on humanity's tragic struggle between two types of love.

Yet, despite making a perhaps too hastily drawn distinction between the Middle Ages and the late Renaissance in England, Keach's study remains beneficial. Even Keach concedes that later Elizabethan poets were able to echo Ovid's amatory works in their own poetry without omitting the moral dimension so characteristic of earlier and more orthodox Elizabethan verse. Being novel, in other words, did not necessarily mean ignoring morality. However, some scholars argue that at least one late sixteenth-century poet, John Donne, not only emulated his contemporaries' dissatisfaction with the more orthodox approaches to classical literature but also expressed few moral concerns in his poetry. Ellen Dugan-Barrette, in her 1983 dissertation, suggests that Donne did not "[borrow] the didactic reading of the Ovid of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance" (12). Rather, she quotes William Rockett's assertion that Donne's borrowing from Ovid "'suggests that he values an amoral and witty sophistication more highly [than] the conventional properties'" (12). Such arguments imply a literal reading of both Donne's early poet-

ry and of the poetry of the Latin elegists who so influenced him.

However, literal readings of Donne's Ovidian poetry deny some of its basic poetic dynamics, and they also isolate Donne from the many other poets who stressed Ovid's didactic role. Of course, Donne himself never made any explicit claim for Ovid as a teacher, and certainly some writers saw Ovid's amatory works as a corrupting force. Nevertheless, both the basic moral character of Tudor poetry in general as well as a close reading of particular poems seem to support a Robertsonian assumption: that many Tudor poets, like many Medieval writers, seem concerned with portraying the ill effects that befall lovers who choose to become enthralled by their passions and who thereby remove themselves from reason and from God. Yet before a study of Donne's poetry begins in earnest, this chapter will briefly review some studies that illuminate the moral concerns of major Tudor poets.

Certainly, no reasonable scholar would view the poetry of Edmund Spenser as being anything but Christian in its concerns. That Spenser's most famous work, The Faerie Queene, represents the best of Elizabethan attempts at Christian allegory is a generally conceded fact. Consequently, the vast majority of studies concerning this work discuss in more or less detail Spenser's employment of allegory to represent various moral virtues.[1] However, Spenser's sonnet sequence, Amoretti, has not engendered a similar unanimity of critical opinion. In trying to account for this fact in his article "The Drama of Amoretti," Alexander Dunlop notes that "criti-

cism of Amoretti seems to be caught in an impasse between numerologists and traditionalists" (107). Apparently, scholars adhering to either critical approach study one of two varying aspects of the poem: "the narrative-historical [traditionalist or biographical] aspect, which is the author's *donnée*, and the symbolic [numerological] aspect, which embodies the author's evaluation of the conventional and historical materials with which he works" (107).

However, Dunlop contends that these two approaches need not be mutually exclusive, and he offers to link them by focusing specifically on the dramatic presentation of the poet-lover's own perspective on love. Thus Dunlop asserts "that Spenser is speaking to us not directly but indirectly through the persona of the poet-lover. . . . That the poet-lover is specifically identified as Edmund Spenser, author of The Faerie Queene, makes him no less fictional than the Dante of the Commedia" (107-8). Much like the "Robertsonian" scholars of Petrarch's Rime Sparse, Dunlop believes that recognizing the distance between the author and the poem's dramatic *persona* exposes the imperfections of the poet-lover. Thus Dunlop views the narrator of Amoretti as "'Vntrainde in louers trade'" (51) and limited by his human nature (108). In fact, Dunlop argues that "during most of the sequence [the lover] is troubled by his passion, confused, caught in the emotional flux of the moment" (108).

Furthermore, Dunlop contends that "the lover's imperfection introduces an important element of irony" into the poem (108). Such irony, which Dunlop feels is central in under-

standing Amoretti, derives from Spenser's placement of the poet-lover's perspective on his own love story against the abstract and religious framework of the sequence. Dunlop notes that this framework is both abstract and religious because it numerologically represents a calendrical progression through the Christian holidays of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter (108). The poet lover's failure to relate his amorous experiences to this larger spiritual framework is "the basis of the irony of Amoretti" (108). Therefore, by focusing on the ironic presentation of the poet-lover's reaction to the traditional love-story (of which he is a part), and by emphasizing the lover's blindness to the numerological aspect of the sequence's structure, Dunlop successfully spans the gap between two seemingly incompatible critical approaches.

If Dunlop's approach to Spenser seems strikingly similar to Thomas Roche's approach to Petrarch's Rime Sparse, it should. Both scholars argue for an ironic reading of the respective sequences--a reading that emphasizes the distinction between the author and the created poetic *persona*. Furthermore, by noting the calendrical structure of the sequences, both scholars advance a reading that perceives a growth in the poet-lover's understanding of love as it relates to Christian doctrine. In each case this understanding matures during the last sonnets of the sequence, which, according to the calendrical structure, fall on the days surrounding Easter, the Christian holiday that celebrates Christ's ultimate sacrifice in the name of selfless love. That Spenser's sequence is the more joyous (since the poet-lover marries his

lady) is a distinction that ultimately is lost in the larger similarities the two collections share. Both sequences function didactically, as illustrations of how Christians can overcome the weakness of their natures and turn their attention in the proper direction: upward.

Although Roche's and Dunlop's studies reaffirm the commonly acknowledged influence of Petrarch upon Tudor poetry, few modern critics look to Renaissance Petrarchan commentators as a guide to reading Tudor sonnets. One exception is Maxwell Luria, who stresses the usefulness of such commentaries when interpreting at least one sonnet by Sir Thomas Wyatt. According to Luria,

> The widely circulated Petrarchan commentaries of the sixteenth century, which have not perhaps been treated with the seriousness they deserve by most of Wyatt's critics, may help to understand [Wyatt's poem "The Lover compareth His State to a Shippe in a Perilous Storme Tossed on the Sea"] and at the same time perceive the extent to which such a humanist sensibility as Wyatt's was committed to moral allegorism. (531)

Luria notes that the "extended metaphor of the distressed lover as a storm-tossed ship was very popular among the Elizabethan sonneteers," and he notes that it appears in Wyatt's poem through a "reasonably close" translation of one of Petrarch's own sonnets, "Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio" (531). While most of Wyatt's modern editors and commentators "read the poem as a love plaint, an expression of the lover's

hopeless suffering from his beloved's disdain," Luria contends that "the Renaissance commentators read Petrarch's poem quite differently. . . . [They read it] as an allegory of the soul bereft by reason" (533). Luria claims that such glosses to Petrarch's poems were remarkably prominent in the Renaissance; he notes, in fact, that the gloss of Allesandro Vellutello went through twenty-seven editions between 1525 and 1584. Luria claims that this "influential gloss" was "largely devoted to educing the poem's moral implications" (534). Citing Patricia Thomson's study of the background of Wyatt, Luria contends that the poet used Vellutello's gloss "in preparing his version" of Petrarch's sonnet. Luria concludes by suggesting the appropriateness of reading Wyatt's version of Petrarch in "the spirit in which contemporary humanists were reading the Petrarchan original: not just as the expression of the emotions of a frustrated lover, but as a philosophical reflection in poetry upon the passion-disordered soul" (535).

Clearly, Luria's arguments are Robertsonian: he argues that a poem should be read in light of contemporary literary sensibility. Such a sensibility, of course, presumes a Christian belief in the immorality of cupidinous love and a "passion-disordered soul." However, as Donald M. Friedman illustrates, one need not be a devout Robertsonian to argue that a poem displays a negative attitude toward unreasonable, cupidinous desire. In fact, Friedman does not even mention contemporary literary theory in arguing that Wyatt's famous poem "They fle from me" "reveals a [speaker] whose sensibili-

ty has been warped by subservience to a code he has just learned is false and impermanent . . . [and consequently] sketches the moral consequences of the ethos of courtly love" (4).

According to Friedman, Wyatt uses a technique "basic to all drama and to much modern fiction: a piece of history is described by one of its participants and the reader is challenged to find the truth of the story, to judge whether the narrator has distorted it, and to understand the reasons for any such distortion" (5). Similarly, Friedman contends that Wyatt employs dramatic *personae* in his poetry rather than offering direct didactic assertions (5). Thus Friedman observes that the speaker of "They fle from me" is "dismayed to find that his skill as a hunter (poet-courtier-seducer) has not in truth changed [his past loves'] natures. The only explanation he can offer for the failure of his practiced 'gentilnes' is one familiar from the traditional 'abuses' of women . . . the assertion that in women, as in animals, change is the law of nature" (7). If left at this literal level, the poem would naturally seem misogynistic. However, Friedman contends that the poem in fact "makes no statement" about the nature of women; rather, when read ironically, it is a portrait of self-deception. The poem criticizes the "unregenerate animality" inherent in "courtly love." Furthermore, Friedman continues, "what distinguishes the poem from other satiric attacks on the hypocrisy of the rules of courtly love is the fact that the critic himself has not realized the degree of his implication in that hypocrisy" (11).

The presence of a deceived narrator can be found as far back as Chaucer's Miller, whom Chaucer ironically undercut partly through showing the chaos inherent in his essentially worldly values. Looking forward, the influence of Wyatt on Donne is manifest in the latter's preference for presenting in his early poetry "dramatic" sketches of self-deceived *personae* who blame others for the despair engendered by their own selfish desires.

Another poet who exerted a strong influence on Donne is Sir Philip Sidney, whose sonnet sequence Astrophil and Stella set the standard by which all other Elizabethan sequences were judged. Although Donne himself did not write a sequence, he did, arguably, set out to imitate the extremely witty voice of the poet-lover of Sidney's sequence, Astrophil. Yet, according to Alan Sinfield, Sidney not only provides his sequence with a witty speaker but also with an ironic perspective similar to Wyatt's. That such similarities between these two important influences on Donne exist is supported by Sinfield's reading of the sequence as establishing a "fundamental movement . . . between an expression of Astrophil's attitude and a critique of it" (3). In other words, just like the speaker in "They fle from me," Astrophil unwittingly deceives himself, and as this self-deception becomes increasingly obvious to the reader, the reader is led increasingly to a negative judgment of Astrophil. As Sinfield notes, the reader is "obliged initially by the first person presentation to see through Astrophil's eyes, [but then] we are encouraged by the early sonnets on virtue and

reason and then by other factors to trace Astrophil's self-deceptive manoevuers back to the moral truth which provokes them. We perceive the alternative principles which he is attempting to avoid" (3). Although Stella is consistent in her refusal, Astrophil deceives himself into believing that his irrational and selfish desire for her is proper and will succeed. Furthermore, as Sinfield notes, Astrophil is also capable of deceiving the one he ostensibly loves; he attempts to manipulate Stella's words, twisting them until they confirm his own seductive arguments. According to Sinfield, Stella's steadfastness serves as "a standard of virtue against which to judge [Astrophil's] manipulations and self-deception" (12).

By affirming the ironic gap between author and character, Sinfield reads Sidney's sequence as a "battle between right reason and Christian virtue on the one side, and sense and will on the other" (1). Thomas P. Roche, in his own study of Sidney's sequence, reaches conclusions similar to those of Sinfield. According to Roche, Sidney "is using Astrophil's journey from hope to despair as a fictional device for the analysis of human desire in Christian terms" (142). Alluding to Sidney's critical treatise, The Defence of Poesie, Roche writes,

> I think that Sidney wanted us to be delighted by Astrophil's wit and to be instructed by the image of a man whose reason gives way to his will and whose hopeful desires finally lead him into despair. Astrophil is not a hero, and he is not a hero pre-

> cisely because he succumbs so wholeheartedly to the pursuit of his desires. He teaches morality by negative example. The vacancy at the heart of Sidney's poem proclaims in chorus with all the other English sequences: Go, and do not likewise. (141)

Roche is very much concerned with connecting the English sonnet sequences back to Petrarch's Rime Sparse, and his book Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences exhaustively presents his arguments. Roche shows that many other sixteenth-century poets could be connected, in their Christian moral concerns, not only with each other but with poets from the past as well. In this respect John Donne seems to have been no exception. Like the English sonneteers and writers of epyllia, Donne seems to have been concerned with dramatically presenting the conflict between passion and reason, and N. J. C. Andreasen, in her book John Donne: Conservative Revolutionary, in fact argues that Donne embraced the moralistic tradition in a manner similar to other Tudor poets. That is to say, he wrote not simply to delight but also to instruct.

In contending that Donne was loyal to a contemporary Christian literary aesthetic, Andreasen seems thoroughly Robertsonian. Like Robertson, she looks to define this aesthetic in religious terms, and thus she discovers a didactic function in Donne's writings, which allegedly express Christian and orthodox views of love. Additionally, Andreasen proposes that such a Robertsonian perspective can resolve some of the problems and paradoxes associated with Donne's poetry. One such paradox can be found in Donne's

early poetry, which often presents a speaker who either adoringly or cynically assesses the love between himself and a certain woman. Donne's cynical poems have recently provoked negative, if not hostile, assessments from some critics who denounce them as misogynist. However, Andreasen's critical perspective views these poems as actually upholding the traditional Augustinian concern for promoting charity and condemning cupidity, thereby making these speakers vulnerable to negative criticism and deflecting the charges of misogyny away from Donne himself and aiming them instead at the speakers he creates. For example, Andreasen argues that many of Donne's poems ironically undercut their speakers' libertine arguments. These speakers, continues Andreasen, are meant to be viewed as negative moral *exempla* because they love cupidinously.

In reaching her conclusions, Andreasen employs methods similar to Robertson's. She begins by identifying the prevailing literary theory during the time in which her subject wrote. Thus, Andreasen cites a passage from Sidney's A Defence of Poesie as a typical Renaissance view of the role of literature: "'indeede [poets] doo meerely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to moue men to take the goodnes in hande, which without delight they would flye as from a stranger; and teach, to make them know that goodnes whereunto they are moouved . . .'" (qtd. in Andreasen 15). The principles illuminated in this passage from Sidney's Defence combine an Aristotelian emphasis on the poet's imitative skills and a Horatian concern for the poet's

ability to both "delight and teach" his audience. Although no reference to Augustine is made, Sidney's (and other Renaissance literary theorists') use of the Horatian dictum "delight and teach" (*dulcis et utilis*) displays an Augustinian preoccupation with using literature, whether it be classical pagan writing or contemporary poetry, to promote Christian teachings ("'to make them know that goodnes whereunto they are moouved'"). Having established that a didactic literary aesthetic existed in sixteenth-century England, Andreasen proceeds to identify some of the Renaissance concepts of "goodnes" about which a poet, wishing to instruct his reader about love, might write. According to Andreasen, a poet during Donne's time had abundant sources from which to draw; in fact, "he had an ample system of doctrines ready at hand in the Bible, the Church Fathers, and the works produced by the Florentine and French Academies" (19). In discussing this "system of doctrines," Andreasen finds that they make frequent use of Augustinian distinctions between charity and cupidity (*caritas* and *cupiditas*). She also finds that these two types of love were both divided into two smaller subcategories. For example, cupidity (which Andreasen defines as the love of things themselves) could take the form of spiritual love (or idolatry) and of carnal love (or lust).

Regarding Renaissance notions of lust, Andreasen states that many Renaissance writers "did not even classify it as a kind of love" (24). However, such an omission does not mean that lust was not a topic of concern; in fact lust was often condemned in the Renaissance for religious as well as practi-

cal reasons. For example, Andreasen observes that in the Renaissance, "lust was thought literally to destroy the body, as well as to destroy the soul because it was a mortal sin," and she cites as testimony to this fact a poem by John Donne himself, "Farewell to love." That poem mentions that "'each such Act, they say, / Diminisheth the length of life a day'" (qtd. in Andreasen 25). Additionally, Andreasen cites another writer who expressed a negative view of lust: William Shakespeare, whose sonnet 129 contains the following lines: "'Th' expense of the spirit in a waste of shame / Is lust in action; and till action, lust is perjur'd, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame, / Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust'" (qtd. in Andreasen 25). However, Andreasen claims that such condemnations of lust should not lead one to conclude that the body or the sexual act itself was believed to be repulsive. Instead, attacks on lust were "in fact founded on a reverence for the body rather than a scorn for it" (25). Andreasen observes that the renowned Renaissance philosopher Erasmus condemned lust by reminding his readers of the holy nature of the human body, and she further observes that John Donne himself claimed in one of his sermons as the Dean of St. Paul's that sex is not necessarily an evil when it is consecrated through marriage and free of selfish desire (25-6). By using excerpts from Donne's sermons, Andreasen is able to support her contention that Donne was a Christian Renaissance poet whose poems uphold an essentially medieval literary aesthetic and therefore praise charity and condemn cupidity.

In remarking on Donne's sermons, Andreasen seems to anticipate later scholars who also used these works in attempting to identify possible common threads that run along the entire body of the poet's work. For example, Terry G. Sherwood and Lindsay A. Mann also view the corpus of Donne's works as upholding orthodox Christian teachings. Sherwood contends, for instance, that one may find "consistent basic principles in Donne's preoccupation with the ways in which the rational soul knows and uses its various knowledge, both natural and supernatural. And [one can] find a similar consistency in his self-conscious observations of the rational soul and its relationships to the body" (1). In applying such observations to Donne's early poetry, Sherwood further contends that "Donne's naturalistic and libertine love poems conspicuously dramatize, both for the individual and the community, the consequences of separating the body's experience from spiritual control" (72). Similarly, Lindsay A. Mann sees a "deeper consistency in Donne's work than is generally acknowledged" (534). Such poetic consistency, she contends, "moves towards integration through the restoration of order to human faculties so that they may act well, and participate in and contribute to God's sustaining love for all" (534-5).

Yet, despite these two corroborating studies, Andreasen indicates that one does not necessarily need to look forward to Donne's later prose works to establish the nature of his thoughts about love in his early poetry. In fact, Andreasen sets out to show that these poems themselves provide sufficient clues about Donne's orientation. For instance, Andrea-

sen points out "the prevalence of religious imagery" in these poems, and she observes that "in poem after poem Donne projects lovers who use the language of theology to describe their amatory success" (79). Although the coupling of the erotic and the religious may strike some as a blasphemous paradox, Andreasen contends that such a coupling was used by Donne for comic effect. As Andreasen herself explains, the "religious imagery . . . [suggests] the likenesses and differences between profane and sacred love, [and] recalls the more satisfying love [that the poet-lover-speaker] might have chosen. Because the folly of his choice is pointed out by the imagery he uses to describe it, the lover is a comic figure" (79). Because she sees such a marked presence of comic irony throughout Donne's Ovidian poetry, Andreasen concludes that the speakers in these poems "are meant to be negative *exempla*, models for what is to be avoided" (79). Furthermore, she notes that for much of this type of comic irony and wit Donne borrows from Ovid: "Donne's indebtedness to Ovid is considerable; sometimes he borrows lines, sometimes situations, sometimes themes" (79). In associating Donne with Ovid, Andreasen follows the path laid down by J. B. Leishman, and other Renaissance or classical scholars have since continued to explore the influential relationship between the Roman elegists and Donne. Additionally, Andreasen also points to the preference for a moralized and didactic Ovid that was so pervasive in sixteenth-century England, and she argues that Donne's choice of Ovid as a poetic source "provides another clue as to the attitude towards sexual gra-

tification which [his poems] express" (79).

However, some critics do not see Donne's Ovidian poetry as being didactic or ironic. For some critics, these poems reveal the thoughts of a poet who is contemptuous of the people, particularly the women, around him. For example Janel Mueller finds a "conviction of male superiority" in Donne's "cynical and libertine" (read Ovidian) poetry. In these poems, she notes, it is the male who is the persuader and possessor, the woman who is the persuaded and possessed. Although Mueller recognizes that the speakers in Donne's Ovidian poetry frequently fall short of their assumed seductive prowess, she nonetheless perceives a facet of "phallocentrism" that dominates Donne's works.

John Carey is another scholar who is critical of what he perceives to be Donne's approval of his male speaker's possessiveness and contemptuousness. Thus, Carey sees in a poem such as Elegy XIX, "Going To Bed," a "contempt [that] extends not only to his mesmerized victim but to large sections of the human race" (106). In contrast to Andreasen who feels that Donne's use of religious language often provides a poem with characteristic comic irony, Carey contends that the religious language that permeates Elegy XIX typifies Donne's frequently "defensive and derisive treatment of religion" (106). Carey's study is largely biographical, and he remarks that the poet's yearnings for supremacy are "a natural outcome of Donne's impatience with his divisiveness and inconstancy, as well as with the failures and disappointments of his career" (101).

Although his study of Donne's poetry generally avoids biographical criticism, George Parfitt, like Carey, argues that the attitudes expressed in Donne's poetry frequently belong to Donne himself. Thus Parfitt claims that

> Writers are more often than not writing in known genres, and that it is in the nature of genres to define roles and attitudes which give the particular genre its distinctive identity. This at once creates difficult relationships between the writer and his/her own work, precluding simple associations between work and biography. It remains true, nevertheless, that a consistent attitude or set of attitudes in a writer's work is revealing, perhaps of individual psychology, of social psychology, or of both at once. (31-2)

Parfitt contends that Donne's choice to imitate the genre of Latin or Ovidian erotic elegy reveals his preference for the display of derogatory attitudes toward women that is characteristic of the genre. In fact, Parfitt argues that these attitudes reflect a "very common male viewpoint whereby women are to be denigrated (perhaps out of fear) and also celebrated as objects for male gratification, to be shown off, stripped and fucked" (37). Furthermore, Parfitt claims that these poems also display contempt not only for females but for males as well, particularly "husbands, fathers and the lovers of allegedly unattractive women" (37). However, according to Parfitt, all this is not to say that the poems are poorly wrought. In fact, he concludes that "their value is

in highlighting, because of their brilliance, the offensive limits of their own vision" (39).

Although more wary of trying to glean biographical facts from the poems, Helen Gardner shares Carey's and Parfitt's perception of a decided tone of egotism and contempt in Donne's elegies. Thus in the introduction to a collection of Donne's poetry that she edited, Gardner writes,

> The Elegies give an overwhelming impression of masculinity. The 'masculine persuasive force' of the language and the reckless, overbearing argumentativeness match an arrogance that in some of the poems amounts to a brutal contempt for the partner of his pleasures, in others issues a confident assertion of the will to enjoy her, and even in the two valedictions appears in the lover's unquestioning assumption of superiority. . . . English poetry provides no precedent for the adoption of so wholehearted a rejection of all social, moral, and religious values in the interests of youthful male desire . . . (xxiv-xxv)

However, although she differs with Andreasen in her interpretations of Donne's poetry, Gardner does note the influence of Ovid (and other Roman elegists) on Donne's elegies, and she identifies three of them as being "obviously Ovidian": "Jealousie," "Tutelage," and "Love's Warre" (xxiii).

Some scholars, though, are skeptical about any definitive associations between Donne and Ovid; they claim instead that Donne imitates the general themes and situations used by

other Latin elegists, such as Propertius and Tibullus, and not just Ovid. While no study that deals with this topic can deny a connection between Donne and the Latin elegists, there is little or no consensus as to the exact nature of this connection. A. J. Peacock seems to sum up the situation best:

> On the question of literary borrowings, there can never be a final consensus as opinions will invariably differ. Moreover, there is the difficulty that, where the reworking is more divergent and hence perhaps more original, its source is naturally less sure. Also, even established indebtedness can be misleading in relation to the question of 'originality'. . . . The critic can only honestly cite what 'rings a bell' for him. (28)

For Peacock, as well as for other readers of Donne, the classical work that most often makes the bell ring is Ovid's Amores, although other works and authors are thought to supplement Donne's own writing.[2] In deference to the work of Peacock and other scholars, all ensuing references to Donne's 'Ovidian' poetry in this paper will refer to those poems that display the libertine and cynical tone most frequently found in Ovid's Amores.

Another scholar interested in Donne's connection to the Latin elegists, Roma Gill, does not believe that Donne was a "libertine who wrote from personal experience" (47). However, this does not mean that Gill entirely appreciates Donne's literary attempts at imitating the Latin elegy. For instance, she finds that Donne, as a Christian writer, can

not share in the "pagan enjoyment" of illicit love that is so often depicted by the Latin elegists. She notes that the Latin writers often seem ambivalent toward their amorous desires: they understand that such desire is a form of slavery, yet they rejoice when this desire is realized in sexual consummation (52-3). Gill contends that such a servitude to lustful desire "can only be professed when there is no connection between love and marriage," and it is the consummation of this illicit desire, which is the right true end of love for the Latin elegist, that no Christian writer could share (53). Gill cites Donne's perceived uneasiness about illicit love, as well as the "little respect or regard [he shows] for women" (55) and the "preoccupation with fairly irrelevant nastiness" (57), as differences between Donne's elegies and those of the Latins. Another difference that Gill notes is that religious language is "used obsessively throughout [Donne's] elegies" (68), and she concludes that such a "predilection for the language of religion sprang from Donne's being vitally concerned at the time he was writing the elegies with his own religious problems and allegiance" (70).

It is interesting to note that Gill cites many of the same qualities of the elegies as Andreasen yet arrives at a very different conclusion. Whereas Gill seems critical of the note of unease the elegies express concerning the "right true end of love," Andreasen finds such tension functional, since it serves to instruct the reader about the follies and suffering inherent in this "right true end." In fact, "Ro-

bertsonians" such as Andreasen would argue that Donne wrote to an audience who (he expected) would read his poetry ironically. Such an audience would be part of a tradition that, as we have seen, extends far back into the beginnings of the Middle Ages. St. Augustine was among the first to formalize this essentially Christian method of reading, and his influence remained strong even up to Donne's day. Indeed, many recent studies suggest that Tudor poets wrote allegorically (like Spenser) or used irony (a form of allegory itself) to depict Christian teachings about love. However, the prevalence of recent readings that sympathize with the agonized and irrational Astrophel or are critical of Donne for his speakers' lack of regard for women illustrates just how foreign the allegorical way of reading poetry has become. Granted, it seems impossible to prove conclusively that Donne himself moralized either Ovid or his own erotic verse, and scholars have employed the scant evidence present in his letters to bolster arguments both for and against views of Donne the Christian or Donne the rake. Unfortunately, it appears that participants in this debate have often neglected the value of closely reading the poetry itself. More often than not, as John Shawcross has noted, "most of Donne's poetry is left unread by the commentators who nonetheless allow themselves expansively inclusive statements" (8).

In attempting to avoid such a predicament, the rest of this paper will offer close readings of selected elegies, specifically those that are most pronounced in their cynical or libertine attitudes toward love and women. Although

Andreasen's study is itself cited by Shawcross as one that is guilty of making expansive statements, it can still serve as a useful point of departure because it initiated the recent attempt to reinstitute a Christian approach to Donne's erotic poetry. The rest of this chapter will begin to examine the implications of such a Christian, ironic reading of some of Donne's Ovidian poetry, and that examination will continue throughout the next chapter. Central to such a reading is the Augustinian principle that literature should praise charity and condemn cupidity. When this principle is applied to Donne's poetry, it becomes easy to read Donne as chastising the male speakers in his Ovidian poems. These Ovidian poems include not only the elegies (some of which will be discussed in the next chapter) but also such poems from the Songs and Sonnets as "Confined Love." In fact, because "Confined Love" is a relatively brief poem, it can serve as an excellent introduction to the techniques employed in a Robertsonian or Augustinian reading.

Critics often disagree about the gender of the speaker in "Confined Love." However, because Andreasen's study is the stated point of departure for this paper, the ensuing discussion of "Confined Love" will begin by accepting as valid her assumption that the speaker is male. Like Andreasen, Ellen Dugan-Barrette, in her study of the influence of the derogatory attitudes of women in the Latin elegies on Donne's Songs and Sonets, also contends that the speaker is male. According to Dugan-Barrette, the poem depicts a seduction of a woman by the speaker, who employs such common lib-

ertine or Ovidian arguments as appeals to nature and the doctrine of use in order to bolster his case. However, Dugan-Barrette does not agree that this poem (or any other by Donne) is didactic or ironic. Although she does not assume that Donne himself espouses the derogatory attitudes expressed in his poetry, Dugan-Barrette seems dismayed by their presence. Yet she does little to explain this presence other than to identify its initial Ovidian source. In contrast, Andreasen offers a much more satisfying reading of the poem by presuming a didactic function for its libertine rhetoric.

A close reading of "Confined Love" illuminates the irony that runs throughout (and ultimately disrupts) the speaker's arguments. The irony is better perceived when the reader applies the Augustinian concepts of charity and cupidity--concepts which Andreasen contends Donne expected his readers to understand. This poem, as well as those discussed in the next chapter, all use irony (a figure of speech that condemns through praise) to present comically a self-satisfied womanizer who is too ignorant to see the flaws in his witty conceits and reasonings, even though these flaws are also apparent in his approach to living.

Donne's use of irony is readily apparent in the first stanza of "Confined Love," when the speaker begins to complain indignantly about the oppressive imposition of the law of monogamy:

> Some man unworthy to'be possessor
> Of old or new love, himselfe being false or weake,
> Thought his paine and shame would be lesser,

If on womankind he might his anger wreake,
And thence a law did grow,
One should but one man know;
But are other creatures so? (qtd. in Shawcross 123, ll. 1-7)

Although the speaker contemptuously claims that the blame for the imposition of monogamy falls on "some man" who is "unworthy to be possessor of old or new love" (ll. 1-2), he fails to acknowledge that possessive or covetous love is unworthy of anyone. The modifiers "old," "new," "false," "weake," "pain," and "shame" all imply that love is fleeting and torturous. The speaker assumes that lovers may be weak (and by implication, strong) and that love may be old or new, but that neither can be true or lasting. Of course, strong, true, and lasting love is most important to a Christian, since it confirms covenants and assures salvation. Ironically, line three recalls to the reader (and, just as importantly, to the woman whom the speaker is trying to seduce) one negative outcome that often results from pursuing fleeting and cupidinous love, namely "the paine and shame" felt by the "possessor" once he discovers that his supposed possession has abandoned him. Unwittingly, the speaker reminds the woman he is trying to seduce that cupidity offers no guarantees of permanency--a fact which should make the woman wary. In line four, the speaker attempts to win the woman's sympathies by expressing his own sympathy for womankind. Yet in so doing, he reminds his audience that women often are unjustly rendered passive objects of man's irrational passions,

including both the anger of the "false and weake" man as well as the cupidity of the speaker. In line five the speaker uses a verb ("grow") that suggests both a natural process and an artificial convention. He thus proposes a libertine view of nature--a view opposed to the Christian assumption that the law of monogamy is both God-given and permanent. Although in the last three lines of the stanza the speaker tries to set up a chain of reasoning that will ultimately confirm his argument, these lines actually suggest a Christian response to his reasoning that patently contradicts his own position; once again, the self-satisfied speaker has failed to recognize the obvious. These last lines suggest that the speaker is again attempting to win the woman by claiming to be sympathetic to her plight: she must bear the burden of oppressive and unnatural laws that in part state that "One might but one man know" (l. 6). However, the appearance in lines 5-7 of the words "law," "know," and "other creatures" suggests to the reader an opposing Christian response to the question the speaker poses in line seven. A Christian reader (as Donne might have expected) would answer that no, of course other creatures are not monogamous, but that humans, as Christian souls, have been given the gifts of rational thought and free will. In affirmation of this special gift, humanity must abide by a covenant with God--a covenant partly confirmed by our subscription to the laws He has set down in stone for us to follow. In fact, the very word "creatures" implies the existence of a Creator to whom human beings have special obligations.

In the second stanza, the speaker employs in earnest the appeal to a libertine view of nature. Thus he cites a wide range of fickle natural phenomena, ultimately narrowing his focus to the earthly and animal examples:

> Are Sunne, Moone, or Starres by law forbidden,
> To'smile where they list, or lend away their light?
> Are birds divorc'd, or are they chidden
> If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a night?
> Beasts doe no joyntures lose
> Though they new lovers choose
> But we are made worse than those. (qtd. in Shawcross 123, ll. 8-14)

Ironically, the movement away from the celestial to the mundane mirrors the speaker's own deviation in perspective from the spiritual to the bodily. It seems unlikely that Donne's sophisticated Inns of Court audience, so indoctrinated in the techniques of reasoning as well as in the teachings of Christianity, would miss the irony. To such a Christian audience, the biggest error in the speaker's reasoning comes during line 14 when he laments that "We are made worse" than the beasts because we are forced to follow the oppressive laws of monogamy and marriage. To the Christian mind, this statement is blasphemous because it denies precisely the importance of the feature that makes humanity superior to the animals, our covenant with God. In making such a statement, the speaker clearly illustrates his lack of concern for what is essential to any Christian, the progress of the soul through this world and into the next. The speaker's worldli-

ness and rejection of spiritual concerns doom him to suffer the consequences for coveting what is fleeting and impermanent. And, once again, the use of language with strong religious connotations ("law"; "forbidden"; "divorced"; "mate"; "made") only underscore Donne's irony.

The last stanza also demonstrates the speaker's errant concern for the merely worldly through his appeal to the doctrine of use. Andreasen defines this doctrine as positing that "no good thing is really good unless it is used; things which are greedily hoarded are fruitlessly wasted and their waste is unnatural and wrong" (87). Thus in stanza three the speaker asks,

> Who'e'r rigg'd faire ship to lie in harbors,
> And not to seeke new lands, or not to deale withall?
> Or built fair houses, set trees, and arbors,
> Only to'lock up, or else to let them fall?
> Good is not good, unlesse
> A thousand it possesse
> But doth wast with greedinesse. (qtd. in Shawcross, 123-4, ll. 15-21)

Ellen Dugan-Barrette echoes other scholars when she harshly criticizes the speaker for reducing women to objects in the natural world who must act only on instinct (75-6). However, a close reading of the poem reveals a consistent comedic irony that distances the reader (and the poet) from the speaker, who reveals himself as being egotistical yet ignorant. Thus the speaker's apparent unwitting reminder of the Fall, seen in the words "trees," arbors," and "fall," can be

seen as enhancing this distance. Further, John Shawcross has noted that "the ship was a commonplace image for prostitution" (123). Is this an appropriate metaphor to use when trying to beguile a married woman, who seems hesitant to commit adultery? Doubtless, the presence of such unconscious vulgarity and of the unwitting references to Christian moral teachings are meant to show up the speaker as something of a proud yet very ignorant peacock. Donne expected his readers to be well educated, to be fluent in both the language of formal and legal rhetoric and of the church. In writing for such a community of readers as existed at the Inns of Court, it seems clear that his intentions were to produce comedy, not misogyny. The worst that can probably be said of both the young Donne and his equally young initial readers (who were mostly law students) is that they perhaps took an excessive delight in being titillated by the merely shocking. However, such a judgment seems not only shallow but a little overzealous. As final evidence of the direction Donne expected his readers to take, it should be noted that the words "possessor" and "greedinesse" end the first and last lines of the poem. These strongly ironic words suggest that the poem is more concerned with expressing a negative view of cupidinous love than a positive view of the derogatory, anti-feminine attitudes of its smug speaker.

Although scholars sometimes disagree about the gender of the speaker, it can be argued that the speaker's gender ultimately does not matter. Instead, what is at issue is not gender but rather the right and wrong ways to love. Deborah

Lockwood is one scholar who maintains that the speaker in this poem is female, and who further argues that Donne purposefully displays the limitations of the speaker's rhetorical prowess. Discussing the reasoning of male speakers in some other songs and sonnets (such as "Breake of Day"), Lockwood contends that the female speaker in "Confined Love" fails to emulate her male counterparts because she does not use abstract thought to formulate her analogies and arguments (44-5). However, I would claim that the speaker in "Confined Love" shows admirable rhetorical deftness: certainly her skills equal those of some of the decidedly male speakers in other poems. I cite her ability to move from heavenly bodies to birds and then finally to beasts in her libertine analogy as an admirable attempt to bring all of the manifestations of nature to the mind of the reader. Next, the focus is sharpened incrementally until the argument finally rests on analogies rooted in the mundane and earthly. Furthermore, if the speaker of "Confined Love" is a female, she reveals that she is fully aware of the libertine view of Nature and is very skilled at applying it analogically to humans. Observations such as these illustrate the problems inherent in establishing a categorical view of Donne's attitude toward women by simply reading his poems on a literal level. In Elegy 7, for example, the woman is declared to be "Nature's Lay Idiot" because she is supposedly incapable of understanding the workings of nature without tutelage. These different portrayals of women in different poems suggest that Donne is not chastising the gender of his speakers but rather their individual

behaviors and beliefs. He satirizes libertine arguments, whether offered by men or women, by showing their intellectual pitfalls and spiritual negligibility. Moral behavior and sincere practice of the Christian faith seem to have been more important to Donne than differences of gender. The next chapter will explore Donne's efforts to produce the same comedic, ironic effects in some of his Ovidian and libertine elegies that he so successfully employs in "Confined Love."

[1]Quoting just two examples will (I hope) satisfy the inquisitive reader. Douglas Bush notes that, "The Faerie Queene is assuredly complex and subtle in its presentation of characters and religious and ethical ideas in action," and C. G. Osgood adds, "First and most prevalent is the moral issue between carnal lust and pure affection or chastity. It is not the issue of the Third Book especially, but is ubiquitous."

[2]For a sampling of the range of discussion on this topic, see Andreasen, chapters 2 and 3; Armstrong; Bedford, chapter 2; LaBranche; Leishman, chapter 2; Lerner 125-6; and Revard.

WOMEN, LOVE, AND IRONY IN DONNE'S OVIDIAN ELEGIES

The discussion of "Confined Love" in the last chapter indicated the implications of an ironic reading of Donne's Ovidian poetry. Although no absolute statements can be made, ample evidence supports the appropriateness of reading such poetry in an Augustinian, didactic light. The last two chapters reviewed studies that have traced the development of an Augustinian literary sensibility in the Middle Ages, and that also have identified the presence of this tradition in Tudor England. In particular, chapter two demonstrated that scholars have noted how Tudor writers and readers of poetry often followed their medieval counterparts and moralized pagan poetry, and how sixteenth-century writers defended their own poetry by pointing to its simultaneous ability to delight and instruct their readers. Donne seems to have written his elegies for an audience comprised mostly of young and sophisticated law students who could take great delight in discovering the ironies present in a poem, especially if that poem's speaker violated the standards of reason and religion with which they were very familiar. Indeed, a Robertsonian would contend that the modern reader would do well to read Donne's elegies with such standards in mind. In so doing, the modern reader can better understand Donne as a poet who stressed the need for faith as well as for love; the speakers in his Ovidian poetry are arrogant fools who suffer because they deny not only their own spiritual natures but

also those of the women they treat as objects, as mere sources of pleasure. Seen in this light, the Ovidian, libertine positions upheld by these speakers are not simply imitative embellishments of Ovid, nor are they the opinions held by Donne himself. Rather, they function didactically: they expose their own inadequacies. Since N. J. C. Andreasen was the first scholar to reveal the techniques used by Donne to achieve this effect, this chapter will offer close readings of four of Donne's elegies identified by Andreasen as Ovidian ("Change"; "Nature's lay idiot"; "Going to Bed"; and "Jealosie"). These readings will use Andreasen's contention that Donne was concerned with promoting charity and condemning cupidity as a point of departure for discussing his allegedly derogatory attitudes toward women.

Such attitudes are clearly displayed in the opening lines of Elegy 1, "Jealosie," as the speaker chastises his mistress for turning ambivalent toward their affair now that she knows that her husband is suspicious. Yet, in trying to allay her concern, the speaker continually (and perhaps unwittingly) alludes to the immoral nature of their adulterous affair, and so ironically gives credence to the woman's fears:

> Fond woman which would'st have thy husband die,
> And yet complain'st of his great jealousie;
> If swolne with poyson, hee lay in'his last bed,
> His body with a sere-barke covered,
> Drawing his breath, as thick and short, as can
> The nimblest crocheting Musitian,

Ready with loathsome vomiting to spue
His Soule out of one hell, into a new,
Made deafe with his poore kindreds howling cries,
Begging with few feign'd tears, great legacies,
Thou would'st not weepe, but jolly, and frolicke bee,
As a slave, which to morrow should be free,
yet weep'st thou, when thou seest him hungerly
Swallow his owne death, hearts-bane jealousie.
O give him many thanks, he'is courteous,
That in suspecting kindly warneth us.
Wee must not, as wee us'd, flout openly,
In scoffing ridles, his deformitie;
Nor at his boord together being satt,
With words, nor touch, scarce looks adulterate.
Nor when he swolne, and pamper'd with great fare
Sits downe, and snorts, cag'd in his basket chaire,
Must wee usurpe his owne bed any more,
Nor kisse and play in his house, as before.
Now I see many dangers; for that is
His realme, his castle, and his diocesse.
But if, as envious men, which would revile
Their prince, or coyne his gold, themselves exile
Into another countrie,'and doe it there,
Wee play'in another house, what should we feare?
There we will scorne his household policies,
His seely plots, and pensionary spies,
As the inhabitants of Thames right side
Do Londons Mayor, or Germans, the'Popes pride. (qtd.

in Shawcross 51-2)

The very first word of the poem, "Fond" (meaning "foolish"), is ironic because the speaker does not realize how foolishly he undercuts his own attempt to calm the wife's fears. For example, in the following thirteen lines the speaker argues that the woman would be glad to see her husband "die" (which can also mean to have sexual intercourse) and so she should not be worried that he is jealous, an emotional state that poisons the heart, because such jealousy will only quicken his death. Ironically, the hyperbole that embellishes this argument is filled with words and images that highlight the immoral nature of their affair. Certainly the explicit images of hell and suffering do little to bolster the speaker's cause. Words such as "poyson," "soule," "hell," "slave," and "free" further point to a Christian understanding of the situation--an understanding that views cupidity as a corrupting poison that can enslave people and ensure their suffering, both in this world and in the next. However, the speaker is unable to appreciate this view and so sees only that someone else's irrationality is dangerous and not his own. Perhaps because he himself is "deafe" to the Christian teachings that would save him from his own folly, he can shed only "feign'd teares" for the husband's plight.

Such selfishness is perhaps the reason why the speaker apparently makes an unwitting reference to Numbers 5, which tells of the institution of the trial of jealousy. In this trial, a husband who is cursed with jealousy brings his wife before the priest, who offers the wife a drink of bitter

water. The proof of her fidelity rests in her body's reaction to the water: if her belly swells and her thigh rots, she is guilty; if not, then she is free of sin. In "Jealousie," the roles are reversed; it is the husband who "swallow[s] his own death, hearts-bane jealousie," and who is "swolne with poyson." Nonetheless, the speaker's seemingly unconscious reference to the trial of jealousy ought to force the wife to realize that her own spiritual well-being is in peril. Donne's inclusion of this Biblical echo suggests that his intent was to expose the speaker and the wife to negative judgment according to Christian standards.

Perhaps because he realizes that the images he has been using are perhaps too graphically inappropriate for his needs, the speaker changes tactics. Thus in line 15 he stops talking about the ill effects of jealousy (and, ironically, of any irrational cupidinous emotion, such as his lust for the wife). Instead, he contends that the wife should be thankful that, by displaying these ill-effects, the husband has warned the lovers that he suspects what is going on. It seems as if the speaker is trying to deflect or ignore the reality of the situation, the perilous nature of their spiritual negligence. Such a misunderstanding is ironically underscored in lines 17 and 18 when the speaker declares that the lovers should no longer "flout openly, / In scoffing laugh [the husband's physical] deformitie"--phrasing that ironically emphasizes the speaker's own spiritual pathology. The same spiritual oversight is again evidenced in line 22 when the speaker uses the words "snorts" and "cag'd" to de-

scribe the husband's obesity while forgetting that his own cupidity has reduced him to an animal, driven by his own passions.

Similar oversights run throughout the remainder of the poem. Doubtless, to the Christian reader these oversights are humorously ironic because the speaker seems so blind to them. Many of these lapses expose the speaker as a man distanced from the Christian faith. For example, the speaker laments that he and the wife can no longer "usurpe [her husband's] own bed any more, / Nor kisse and play in his house, as before. / Now I see many dangers; for that is / His realme, his castle, and his diocesse" (ll. 23-6). Yet a Christian reader can only view the speaker's lament as ironic; he may "see many dangers," but he ignores those that ultimately are most pertinent to his life as a spiritual being. Donne cleverly places the most ironic noun ("diocesse") in the most emphatic position, and perhaps he plays sardonically with that word's etymology, which refers to the management of a house. In the Christian church, a bishop in charge of a diocese in effect manages God's house. Therefore the use of the term "diocesse" by Donne's speaker--who violates the household of another man--is particularly ironic. The irony continues as the speaker, attempting to evade the dangers he does perceive, suggests that they "play in another house" (l. 30). In discussing this option, the speaker likens himself and the wife to treasonous men "which would revile / Their Prince" (ll. 27-8), perhaps another unwitting allusion to mockery of the church, the teachings of Christ, and the au-

thority of Christian rulers. The speaker believes that such treason is safe, yet he prompts a skeptical Christian response when he asks "what should we feare?" (l. 30). Away from the husband's "household policies" (l. 31), the speaker believes that they are free from worry, much as "the inhabitants of Thames right side" escape the jurisdiction of the Mayor's office (l. 33). However, a Christian reader could view the speaker's call to abandon Christian "policies" as placing him on the wrong side of Christ. Furthermore, the reference to that seedy section of London can only seem highly inappropriate, since it reminds the wife of the dubiousness of their actions. In fact, the speaker's reference to traitors who seek to "doe it" (i.e., commit treason) inadvertently reminds us that this phrase was in Donne's day (as it is in our own) a slang term for copulation (Partridge 103). Lastly, the reference to Germans mocking the Pope's pride reveals that the speaker seemingly has forgotten that Protestants basically follow the same moral precepts as Catholics. In any case, it hardly seems an accident that the final word of this poem is "pride," or that the speaker uses this word to condemn the failing of someone else. It is his own pride and arrogance, of course, that the poem fully exhibits.

There is no question, certainly, that the speaker of Elegy I smugly evaluates the woman in sexual terms, particularly in terms of her sexual utility. He also expresses continual disdain for the husband, whom he regards as something of an ignorant, stupid oaf. Yet all of his contempt only ex-

poses the inadequacies of his own position as he attempts to ease the woman's ostensible concern about her husband's jealousy. The speaker's unwitting use of religious language and biblical references, particularly the allusion to Numbers 5, ironically implies the very standards of morality he transgresses. Although the poem begins with the speaker indicting the woman, it can be argued that she alone is at least worrying about the debilitating consequences that the affair may have on her marriage and on her spiritual well-being. The woman, therefore, can be seen as the more reasonable of the sinners, since she is more clearly aware of their spiritual plight and attempts to take proper action. In contrast, the speaker is completely unconcerned with such matters. In fact, it is he who is ultimately the jealous one, since he fears the loss of sexual pleasure with a wife who realizes that the adulterous affair is wrong.

The bitter opening of Elegy VII again illustrates Donne's use of a speaker whose cynical and libertine views of women reveal the irony inherent in his own contradictory comments:

> Nature's lay Ideot, I taught thee to love,
> And in that sophistrie, Oh, thou dost prove
> Too subtile: Foole, thou didst not understand
> The mystique language of the eye nor hand:
> Nor couldst thou judge the difference of the aire
> Of sighes, and say, this lies, this sounds despaire:
> Nor by the'eyes water call a maladie
> Desperately hot, or changing feaverously.

I had not taught thee then, the Alphabet
Of flowers, how they devisefully being set
And bound up, might with speechless secrecie
Deliver arrands mutely,'and mutually.
Remember since all thy words us'd to bee
To every suitor: *I,'if my friends agree.*
Since, houshold charmes, thy husbands name to teach,
Were all the love trickes, that thy wit could reach;
And since, an houres discourse could scarce have made
One answer in thee, and that ill arraid
In broken proverbs, and torne sentences.
Thou art not by so many duties his,
That from the'worlds Common having sever'd thee,
Inlaid thee, neither to be seene, nor see,
As mine: who have with amorous delicacies
Refin'd thee'into a blis-full paradise.
Thy graces and good words my creatures bee,
I planted knowledge and lifes tree in thee,
Which Oh, shall strangers taste? Must I alas
Frame enamell Plate, and drink in glasse?
Chafe waxe for others seales? breake a colts force
And leave him then, beeing made a ready horse?
(qtd. in Shawcross 54-5)

The first line is reminiscent of Thessalonians 4:9, which explains that it is God who has taught us to love. However, the speaker shows that he is not concerned with religious, spiritual instruction. Nor is he even concerned with the brotherly love he owes to his mistress's husband. Rather,

his focus is on the earthly, and he applies this focus with a cynical and selfish jadedness. Thus, in line 2 he bitterly declares that love is only a sophistry, a string of persuasive arguments whose only end is to produce seemingly valid reasons for committing assuredly sinful acts. Indeed, the speaker throughout the poem pursues worldly aims while using terms that ironically recall the realms to which his attention should properly be directed. Such terms include the references to "mystique Language" (l. 4), to "despaire" (l. 5), and to being "desperately hot" (l. 8).

However, the irony of the poem does not rely entirely on the presence of language with religious overtones. The speaker's own bitter realization of his situation is enough to throw a negative and ironic light on his arrogance and cynicism. For example, the first lines set up the rest of the poem because it is here that we learn what has so upset the speaker: that the woman he had educated in love has put this knowledge to her own selfish use and so has turned her back on her instructor. The speaker's denigration of the woman results from the frustration, anger, and even "despaire" of realizing that the student has become the master.

Therefore (as Andreasen has pointed out), much of the ironic humor of the poem is situational and thus exists at a literal level. However, beneath the surface, at a deeper, moral level, irony also abounds. Much of this irony results when the speaker compares his own creative capacities to those of God. By using such rhetoric, the speaker inadvertently reminds us that it is he who is the creature who has

been molded into life by his Creator, but who has thanklessly forsaken God's teachings and has struck out on his own in search of mundane and selfish pleasure. In this way the action of the titillating, delightful irony found at the surface mirrors a much more serious (but no less ironic) situation discovered at a moral (allegorical) level. Recognizing this deeper moral level only heightens our perception that the speaker and his libertine and denigrating attitudes violate Christian ideals. It is the speaker who ultimately is a "lay idiot" and a "foole" for forsaking Christian morality, and he suffers because of his own cupidity.

Various negative connotations in the poem's phrasing strongly suggest that the libertine education the speaker offers is anything but desirable. For example, lines 4-12 detail the kinds of lessons the speaker has taught his now independent student. Yet many of his words and phrases evoke a less than positive or healthy image of these lessons, forcing the reader to question their appropriateness, desirability, or propriety. In this school of love, "sighs" signify only "lies" and "despair," and teary eyes are symptomatic of maladies that are "desperately hot" or that are noted for "changing feverously." The students, like the flowers they learn to employ, are "bound up" in secrecy and deception.

Lines 13-19 remind us of the initial naiveté of the speaker's former mistress. Especially interesting is the speaker's claim that women are ignorant of the passions and trickery supposedly inherent in the "sophistry" of love. In other elegies, particularly Elegy 3, Donne's speakers claim

that women are more "hot, wily, wild" than even the most lustful and crafty of the other creatures, the goat and the fox (l. 12). Superficially, therefore, it can be said that it is hard to pin down one particular portrayal of women in the elegies. This lack of a stereotype forces the reader to look elsewhere for the message of these poems. If they do not offer an encompassing stereotype for either sex, then what *do* they teach us about humanity? If Donne is not focusing simply on his characters' physical or behavioral traits, what is left? One obvious answer is their spirits--the states of their souls. Perhaps Donne is encouraging us to focus on religious teachings to grasp the humor and lessons inherent in his elegies. Referring to Christian practice gives the reader an arsenal for reducing Donne's speakers to comic dimensions. In the end, we laugh at the bitter speakers in poems like Elegy 7 because they so easily and ironically expose their own ineptitude: they inadvertently, yet ostensibly wittily, invoke the very standards by which they can be ultimately and rightly judged.

Lines 20-28 are an excellent example of how a speaker in Donne's poetry can so openly and blasphemously use religious language that the sophisticated Christian reader can do little but laugh at his foolhardy transgressions. The fact that the comparisons used by this particular speaker are filled with such overtly sexual language helps his case not at all. For example, lines 23-24 suggest the speaker's belief in his own godlike abilities. Not only did he create the woman, but he also created a "blissful paradise." Lines 25-26 continue

the deluded and self-centered comparisons while mixing religious and sexual imagery. The result is extreme cynicism and open blasphemy. By referring to the tree of knowledge, the speaker implies his own plight, for he shows how dangerous a little knowledge can be. Clearly the knowledge he prizes does not always benefit its possessor. In contrast, his knowledge of Christian doctrine, which he simultaneously exhibits and ignores during his bitter tirade, is his only source of real salvation. Yet he forsakes Christian doctrine and focuses only on his own desires, rejecting the only beneficial knowledge ever handed to him. He judges the woman solely in terms of the benefits he himself would reap after he has educated her in the "subtile" art of adultery, and in fact the satisfaction of his pleasures is his only end. His analogy comparing her to a horse and himself to a rider is doubly ironic. Not only was this image commonly used as a metaphor for reason bridling the passions (the opposite of his own intentions), but the image also reminds us of sexual, almost animalistic, mounting. He thus denies, in himself and in her, what is truly essential: their covenant with God, their existence as equal partners who were meant to share the fruits of His creations. The reference to the events in Eden is ironically apt because he, like the first man and woman, abuses his position and places his own desires above the word of God.

Lines 27-30 also display the ineptitude of the speaker's comparisons. For example, line 27 brings out the speaker's true emotions: he can not tolerate the other woman using her

newly gained knowledge as a means to sleep with another man. Whereas God created life for its own sake out of His beneficence, the speaker has "created" the adulterous wife to satisfy his own desires. The very fact that his ends were sinful prove him to be the unreliable fraud that he is. He bemoans the fact that his "creation" has escaped his control, whereas we, as God's creations, can never evade His power. That fact should humble us and remind us to pursue God's dictates rather than our own capricious desires and selfish ends. The speaker, by consistently displaying his arrogance and desiring his own pleasures while alluding equally consistently to the spiritual ends he should pursue, has proven himself unreliable and must be judged negatively. Donne seems to mock his infantile and selfish tirade, treating it with bemusement despite the witty arrogance the speaker self-consciously displays.

The opening lines of Elegy 3, "Change," resemble those of Elegy 7 in that both begin with statements by a speaker who jadedly intermingles sexual and religious language. Thus, religion becomes the metaphor for both the sexual act and the "faith" that is subsequently established between lover and mistress. However, in ironic contrast to Donne's speakers' wishes, such religious metaphor invites the reader (and mistress?) to test the trustworthiness of the speaker according to the Christian standards he so self-consciously invokes:

> Although thy hand and faith, and good workes too,
> Have seal'd thy love which nothing should undoe,

Yea though thou fall backe, that apostasie
Confirme thy love; yet much, much I feare thee.
Women are like the Arts, forc'd unto none,
Open to'all searchers, unpriz'd, if unknowne.
If I have caught a bird; and let him flie,
Another fouler using these meanes, as I,
May catch the same bird; and, as these things bee,
Women are made for men, not him, nor mee.
Foxes and goats; all beasts change when they please,
Shall women, more hot, wily, wild, then these,
Be bound to one man, and did Nature then
Idly make them apter to'endure then men?
They'are our clogges, not their owne; if a man bee
Chain'd to a galley, yet the galley'is free;
Who hath a plow-land, casts all his seed corne there,
And yet allows his ground more corne should beare;
Though Danuby into the sea must flow,
The sea receives the Rhene, Volga, and Po.
By nature, which gave it, this liberty
Thou lov'st, but Oh! canst thou love it and mee?
Likenesse glues love: Then if soe thou doe,
To make us like and love, must I change too?
More then thy hate, I hate'it, rather let mee
Allow her change, then change as oft as shee,
And soe not teach, but force my'opinion
To love not any one, nor every one.
To live in one land, is captivitie,
To runne all countries, a wild roguery;

Waters stincke soone, if in one place they bide,
And in the vast sea are worse putrifi'd:
But when they kisse one banke, and leaving this
Never looke backe, but the next banke doe kisse,
Then are they purest; Change'is the nursery
Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity.
(qtd. in Shawcross 59-60)

Unfortunately for the speaker, he can in no way appear trustworthy because he ignores the religious principles to which he refers. It is he, in fact, who is guilty of "apostasie," of the deliberate rejection of Christianity--especially when, in lines 3-4, he jokingly depicts the sexual act as a testament of religious faith. (This meaning perhaps is also implied in the reference to "workes" in line 1 (Partridge 223]). Thus the speaker shows himself to be materially and physically oriented; the spiritual realm is subsumed by the physical. That the speaker has rejected Christian, charitable love in favor of cupidinous love is further suggested by his implied opposition in line 4 to 1 John 4:18, which states: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." It seems likely that Donne expected his Christian audience to recognize his speaker's distance here from such a basic concept as charity. Although the speaker may be less arrogant and cynical than the speaker of Elegy 7, his willingness to employ libertine views that contradict such basic Christian teachings nonetheless invites the sophisticated reader to see the pitfalls of his position.

The first four lines of the poem, therefore, establish the speaker as untrustworthy, if not a bit foolish. Thus the reader is alerted to be suspicious of the views the speaker professes. The implications of such suspicion are clear: if we assume the untrustworthy character of the speaker, we should not consider Donne himself a misogynist. The male speaker was created to be mocked; his views, after all, are invalid and self-defeating. It follows, then, that by establishing the suspect nature of the speaker's character so early, Donne invites the reader to examine critically his speaker's ensuing derogatory attitudes of women.

Because Donne loads lines 5-20 with typical libertine and misogynistic rhetoric, such an examination becomes all the more inviting. For example, in lines 5-10, the speaker alludes to traditional associations for women, and he is pleased with man's stereotypical role within this fictional realm. Men are capable, discretionary, discerning discoverers of the female. Women, on the other hand, are born to be discovered, found, or caught: their role is passive. Although the speaker appears content with man's active and dominant role, his description of this libertine position contains words that hint at its dubious nature. For example, with the principle of charity in mind, the Christian reader perhaps would view the word "fouler" (l. 8) as an apt description for one who could only "prize" women by "knowing" them sexually, without recognizing their spirituality. (Perhaps this is especially likely since the image of a fouler pursuing a bird had long been associated with the

Devil's pursuit of the soul; see Psalms 124:7. See also Proverbs 6:5.) Indeed, the principle of charity dictates that man must love woman with just such a spiritual attention. Similarly, the phrasing of line 10 states that women, like men, were created, thereby suggesting that both owe allegiance to their creator--an allegiance that the speaker foolishly chooses to ignore. Indeed, the reference in line 10 to women being "made" may inadvertently remind us of Genesis 2:20-22, which describes how God created the fowl and other creatures for man to control, but which also describes how He created Eve in order to institute the charitable relationship of marriage. It is this relationship, of course, that libertines inevitably violate.

However, in lines 11-20 the reader begins to sense that the speaker is not as comfortable with the situation as he would have us or even himself believe. We begin to understand what he fears: in the realm of nature--the only realm which can support his libertine views of cupidinous love--man is unable to "endure" as well as woman. Women are described as "open" and worthless if "unknowne" (l. 6), and both adjectives carry a heavy sexual charge. Women are depicted as the most crafty, capricious, and voracious of all the animals; not even the fox and the goat (the most deceitful and lecherous of all creatures) can compare to the "hot, wily, wild" character of women. Indeed, like the planter of corn or a river, man toils and struggles to achieve his aims yet must "allow" those aims to be encompassed by the female, who (as Andreasen notes), like the field or the sea, has a greater

receptive capacity.

At the literal level (as Andreasen again points out), the poem revolves around simple, situational irony: the speaker realizes that he can not himself embrace a libertine philosophy while simultaneously seeking the loyalty of one particular woman. Consequently, the speaker modifies his stance; he changes from supporting free love to supporting a discriminating kind of love. Whereas the speaker initially accepted the fact that women are "open to all searchers" (l. 6), he now holds a different opinion: that it is best "To love not any one, nor every one" (l. 28). The title of the poem hints at this irony: it is the speaker who has shown a "change" of mind while espousing a principle of "change" (infidelity). However, the speaker's final perspective is as invalid as his first, and Andreasen has pointed out the pitfalls of his final arguments. For example, she notes that

> Through [the speaker's] very choice of the river image to describe his [new opinion on] love, he contradicts himself, since he has already proved in lines 19 and 20 that all rivers flow into the sea anyway. Thus his own putrifaction [sic] seems inevitable. (104)

Andreasen contends that Donne employs such sophistry for comic effects, and she further notes that such comedy is Ovidian in nature, although she does not cite a specific example (104).

However, beneath the literal, situational irony, Donne also establishes a moral irony which his initial Christian

audience would likely have perceived. In particular, Donne seems to have created for the amusement of his audience a speaker who alludes to Biblical passages at the most inappropriate (and therefore ironic) times. For example, by declaring his hope that a change in attitude will "not teache, but force [his] opinion," the speaker unwittingly refers to 1 Timothy 2:12 and to Titus 2:4, which ask the husband to teach his wife fidelity--an education that contradicts the one intended by the speaker. Also, in line 32 the speaker claims that waters that flow into "the vast sea are worse putri-fi'd," which plainly contradicts Ezekiel 47:8 ("These waters . . . go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed"). Lastly, the speaker's final assertion in lines 35-6 that joy, life, and eternity are nurtured by change is, in one respect, perhaps the most antithetical to Biblical teachings. The Renaissance Christian probably would have known that all these things are nurtured by God, who is himself eternal and can not change, as Malachi 3:6 states: "I am the Lord, I change not." however, the speaker's words might have seemed very appropriately ironic to any Renaissance reader who recalled the many Biblical passages that associate "change" with the eternal spiritual redemption wrought by God. 1 Corinthians 15:51-3, for instance, describes how "we shall be changed, In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality."

Donne would have known that only through such change could true "joy, life, and eternity" be achieved.

Throughout the poem, therefore, the speaker reveals his own distance from Christian teachings. Because Donne reveals this fact ironically, he also distances us from his speaker; we realize that this man is ultimately a fool. It should follow that the principles that he endorses are similarly foolish and morally bankrupt. We have seen the speaker employ different stereotypical and derogatory views toward women to try to explain his situation. At first he depicts women as passive, as objects to be possessed; next he portrays them as "hot, wily, wild" creatures driven by voracious and aggressive sexual appetites. In neither case, however, can the reader view these depictions as credible, if only because the one who espouses them has himself lost all credibility. Thus Donne seems not only to be poking fun at the speaker but also at the very stereotypes he embraces.

Unlike the elegies discussed above, Elegy 19, "Going to Bed," has received a fair amount of critical attention. In recent years, much of this criticism has been negative, as the review in the last chapter indicated. For example, John Carey summarizes the poem's dramatic action by declaring, "The despotic lover here, ordering his submissive girl-victim to strip, and drawing attention to his massive erection (the point of Donne's joke about 'standing'), is of course a perennial dweller in the shadow land of pornography" (105). Carey also identifies some "specifically Donnean traits" within the poem as well, including "a strongly economic

flavour" and an "urge to dominate" (106).

However, if we attempt to read the poem as a sophisticated Renaissance reader might have (that is, in light of the Horatian dictum that poetry should delight and instruct), the poem becomes something other than pornography. Furthermore, such a reading subverts Carey's portrayal of the young Donne as an embittered poet, replacing it with a more positive portrait of a writer who could entertain his young Inns of Court readers with sexual puns and comic ironies. That these same ironies function to promote the Christian concept of charity through condemning the speaker for his submission to cupidinous desire should only augment the portrait of Donne as a writer who could delight and instruct.

Certainly, there is much in Elegy 19 that is titillating; sexual puns abound in this poem detailing an attempted seduction:

> Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defie,
> Until I labour, I in labour lie.
> The foe oft-times having foe in sight,
> Is tir'd with standing though he never fight.
> Off with that girdle, like heavens Zone glittering
> But a far fairer world incompassing.
> Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,
> That th'eyes of busie fooles may be stopt there.
> Unlace your self, for that harmonious chyme,
> Tells me from you, that now it is bed time.
> Off with that happy busk, which I envie,
> That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.

Your gown going off, such beautious state reveals,
As when from flowry meads th'hills shadowe steales.
Off with that wyerie Coronet and shew
The haiery Diadem which on you doth grow:
Now off with those shooes, and then softly tread
In this loves hallow'd temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes, heaven's Angels us'd to be
Receavd by men: thou Angel bringst with thee
A heaven like Mahomets Paradice, and though
Ill spirits walk in white, we easly know,
By this these Angels from an evil sprite,
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.
License my roving hands, and let them go,
Behind, before, above, between, below.
O my America! my new-found-land,
My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd,
My Myne of precious stones: My Emperie,
How blest am I in this discovering thee!
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.
Full nakedness! All joyes are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,
To taste whole joyes. Jems which you women use
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in mens views,
That when a fools eye lighteth on a Jem,
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them:
Like pictures or like books gay coverings made
For lay-men are all women thus array'd.

Themselves are mystick books, which only wee
(Whom their imputed grace will dignifie)
Must see reveal'd. Then since that I may know;
As liberally, as to a Midwife shew
Thy self: cast all, yea, this white lynnen hence,
There is no pennance due to innocence:
To teach thee I am naked first; why than
What needst thou have more covering than a man?
(qtd. in Shawcross 57-8)

In addition to the reference to "standing" (l. 4), the words "stand" (l. 12) and "upright" (l. 24) are also puns for the male erection, and Donne includes other puns with sexual connotations. For example, "man'd" (l. 28), "seal" (l. 32), and "know" (l. 43) all refer to sexual intercourse. Donne's use of such puns, and of the metaphors that compare the woman's body to objects of material value (America, gems, pictures, and books) function to create an arrogant and lascivious speaker, and Carey is correctly critical of his character.

However, Carey errs by associating these negative qualities with Donne himself, for Donne also fills his speaker's self-satisified words with inappropriate phrasings and Biblical allusions that ultimately work to undercut his position. For example, in lines 7-8 and 47-8 the speaker exhibits an arrogant scorn for "busie fooles" who allow themselves to be taken by the bright clothing of their mistresses and consequently never remove such apparel in order to "discover" the real prize that lies underneath. What the speaker apparently does not realize is that the very words he uses to

express his scorn (particularly lines 7-8) allude to Proverbs 17:24, which states that "Wisdom is before him that hath understanding; but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth." By making such an unwitting reference, the speaker himself reveals that he is as foolish as those he scorns; his eyes are equally drawn to things that ultimately are of little value. The very first lines of the poem similarly function to expose the speaker as an arrogant and lascivious fool who expends his efforts to achieve the wrong ends, because these lines recall Hebrews 4:11. A Christian reader of the poem would recall this Scriptural passage as stating in part, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest [of faith], lest any man fall."

Besides being freighted with ironic Biblical allusions, the speaker's attempt to seduce the woman is also filled with other phrases and words that distance the reader from the speaker's perspective. For example, the words "labour" (l. 2) and "Midwife" (l. 44) are certainly less than appropriate considering the speaker's intentions; he mistakenly reminds the woman of a possible consequence of their illicit affair. Other choices in wording are religious in tone, and these work equally well to create a similar ironic distancing. The speaker's reference to "Mahomets Paradice" (l. 21) seems especially ironic since it suggests heathen indulgence. Meanwhile, such phrases as "heavens Zone" (l. 2), "a far fairer world" (l. 4), and "imputed grace" (l. 42) remind the Christian reader of exactly the realm that is ultimately most important, and to which the speaker's attention ought to be

directed. Similarly, a Renaissance reader could perceive as ironic the claims of a speaker who toys with the teachings of that most important of "mystick books" (l. 41), the Bible, and who compares the joys of intercourse to the joys of "souls unbodied" (l. 34). The speaker may feel "blest" (l. 30), but we are entitled to doubt his claim.

Indeed, the more closely we scrutinize his language, the more doubtful his position seems. His witty reference to his "soft bed" as "love's hallowed temple," for instance, can not help but remind us of the many Biblical references to the temple (often identified with the human body) as the dwelling place of God ("know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" [1 Corinthians 3;16; see also 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 2 Corinthians 6:16]). Such references seem particularly ironic as possible echoes of Psalm 15:1-2: "Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly [see line 24], and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart?" Similarly, the references to the woman's "haiery Diadem" (line 16) and "white robes" (line 19) might easily have reminded Renaissance Christians of Job's claim, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed mee; my judgment was like a robe and a diadem" (Job 29:14). Furthermore, the reference to how "heaven's Angels us'd to be / Receav'd by men" (ll. 19-20), followed shortly by the speaker's expressed desire to let his hands go "Behind, before, above, between, below" (l. 26) might well have called to mind Jacob's dream of angelic visitation and God's ensuing promise to him: "thy

seed shal be as the dust of the earth, and thou shall spread abroad to the west, and to east, and to the north, and to the south, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 28:14). Donne's speaker may also feel "bles't" (l. 30) at the prospect of spreading his own seed, but any reader who caught an echo of the Bible in the speaker's language may well have flinched.

By making his speaker use such inappropriate phrasings and allusions during such a self-consciously witty attempt at seduction, Donne fully employs the traditional use of irony; he condemns his speaker through indirection. Although we may take delight in the speaker's witticisms, we must ultimately condemn his arrogance. In typical style, the ending of Elegy 19 works as a final negative commentary. Throughout the poem, the speaker has been characteristically prideful when claiming the special privilege of knowing the joys of nakedness. In the final line he asks the woman, "What needst thou have more covering than man?" A Christian reader could only reply that shame requires us to cover ourselves--the shame of knowing that humanity was once prideful enough to think it had a special knowledge and was therefore unanswerable before God. Such pride condemned humanity to a life of suffering, and by espousing tenets antithetical to Christian teachings the speaker shows a similarly unwholesome pride. Carey is right in pointing out the vulgarity of the speaker's position, but he errs in extending his criticisms to the poet. Donne has placed too many pitfalls in his speaker's misogynistic path, and he thus distances the speaker both from him-

self and from the reader.

Conclusion

Michael Murrin, in his book The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes Toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance, outlines the various forms that allegory can assume and defines irony as a type of "contradictory" trope (63). With special reference to Donne, Murrin further defines irony and identifies the problems of determining its presence:

> Tropological contradiction . . . depends heavily upon an oral context for its effects, a good reason for modern difficulties in interpreting poetry like that of Donne, where, if it is read one way, it becomes totally serious, but read in a different tone, can only be ironic. In such a situation it is rather captious to argue whether Donne was serious or ironic, for the poem will be either once it is read. Since Renaissance theory does not recognize nonoral poetry, it follows that we can make different poems out of a single text, since we have lost the proper frame of reference to determine which version is accurate. (63)

However, a Robertsonian would contend that the original context of a poem can be more fully determined than Murrin suggests. For example, N. J. C. Andreasen's arguments for a didactic and ironic reading of Donne's elegies are based on establishing the poems' connections with the long tradition of

Christian allegory. Read with this tradition in mind, the richness and depth that irony can reveal in these poems becomes apparent. Such irony also lends itself well to the Horatian dictum of *dulcis et utilis*, since we enjoy the speaker's slips and errors as we learn about the folly of cupidinous love.

It is certainly possible that the original readers of these poems read them in just such a way. Despite differences of opinion as to the morality of the poetry, scholars generally do concur that the elegies were written during the mid 1590's, during Donne's initial years at the Inns of Court. Doubtless, these sophisticated young men would easily have been titillated by the surface eroticism of the poetry, but they may also have been amused by the fallacious nature of the various speakers' thinking. Considering the pervasiveness of religion in their era (a pervasiveness that is hard to appreciate in our own largely secular age), these same young men would also have been well equipped to note how the speakers' unwitting and ironic references to Christian teachings condemn the libertine positions that they themselves advance.

Because the irony of the poetry functions to undermine not only these libertine positions but also the derogatory attitudes toward women that they embrace, we should be wary of accusing Donne of embracing such attitudes himself. Nonetheless, accusations of exactly this kind have filled the pages of many recent studies. In contrast, it has been my contention that Donne's appreciation of traditional Augustin-

ian literary theory--an appreciation seen in the inherent ironies of his erotic elegies--suggests that Donne valued morality above misogyny. Granted, many of those same traditional Christian principles dictated a hierarchical structure that placed man above woman. However, Donne seems to attend more to Christian teachings that emphasize the spiritual equality of the two sexes. The speakers in his erotic elegies allow their passions to rule their reason, and because of this they lose sight of what is ultimately important: the spiritual realm. They therefore appear as fools not only in the sight of Donne and the reader, but perhaps also in the sight of God, and they thereby offer us the chance to recognize, laugh at, and correct the foolishness we all exhibit.

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