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A Lesson in Rhetoric: Finding God Through Language in “Batter my heart”

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A Lesson in Rhetoric: Finding God

Through Language in

“Batter my heart”

Marc D. Giullian

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

A Lesson in Rhetoric: Finding God Through Language in “Batter my heart”

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A reexamination of John Donne’s *Holy Sonnet* “Batter my heart,” especially one looking at the sonnet’s relationship to Early Modern rhetoric, is long overdue. In this paper, I hope to show that a focus on Donne’s relationship to Early Modern rhetoric yields several useful new insights. I argue specifically that Donne was probably exposed to Non-Ramist rhetorical methods and theory at many points in his education, from his childhood to his college years to his years at the Inns of Court. Furthermore, Non-Ramist rhetoric has moral implications, suggesting that aspects of an author’s feelings, character, and desires can be analyzed by looking at the writer’s rhetorical choices in relation to a specific audience in a specific situation. After discussing Donne’s rhetorical education, I will look at how the rhetorical decisions of the poetic speaker in Donne’s “Batter my heart” *reveal* his opinions of God and *develop* his attitudes toward God over the course of the poem. Indeed, the poetic speaker uses rhetoric that exerts power back on him, causing him to change: whereas at the beginning of the poem the poetic speaker thinks he controls his relationship with God, at the end he sees himself as God’s humble subject. Ultimately, the poetic speaker’s feelings of utter separation from God at the end of the poem actually yield a sense that he has found God and has gained a sense of awe surrounding the Divine.

Keywords: John Donne, rhetoric, violence, doubt, “Batter my heart,” Holy Sonnets, Desiderius Erasmus, Peter Ramus, Donne’s education, rhetorical education, *cataplexis*, prayer

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Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction.....	1
Chapter I: Donne’s Non-Ramist Rhetorical Education.....	9
Chapter II: Non-Ramist Rhetoric and the Poetic Speaker of “Batter My Heart”	20
Conclusion: Rhetoric and Devotion: Discovering Holiness Through Language.....	42
Works Cited.....	44
Appendix I.....	48
Appendix II	56

A Lesson in Rhetoric: Finding God

Through Language in

“Batter my heart”

Introduction: Donne and Non-Ramist Rhetoric

During the Early Modern period in England a rhetorical education included more than learning stylistic and grammatical correctness, and different groups of rhetoricians approached rhetorical education in distinctive ways. While there were many subtle variations in pedagogy and theory based on the opinions of each rhetorician, two distinct groups emerged: Ramists and Non-Ramists. The Ramist group adopted the ideological premises of rhetorician Petrus Ramus, who believed two key things differentiating his rhetorical theory from that of the Non-Ramists. First, while Ramus had an idea of grammar that was similar to the Non-Ramists (namely that it is correctness of speech), he felt that rhetoric “should demonstrate the embellishment of speech first in tropes and figures, second in dignified delivery” (86). In other words, to Ramus rhetoric meant ornamentation of speech for a specific persuasive purpose. While rhetoric included the area of “dignified delivery” as well as ornamentation, rhetoric was a cosmetic art used to impress and convince an audience. Secondly, and as a result of his belief that rhetoric was a technical art made up of “embellishment of speech,” Ramus felt that rhetoric was not a moral art. He says that “although I admit that rhetoric is a virtue, it is a virtue of the mind and the intelligence, as in all the true liberal arts, whose followers can still be men of the utmost moral depravity. Nor is rhetoric a moral virtue..., so that whoever possesses it is incapable of being a wicked man” (87). Lest any doubt his position, he states again only a few lines later, “Therefore rhetoric will not be a moral virtue” (87). Ramus believed that rhetoric was an art that could be used by both good and evil men and could not “shape a good man” (88) any more than logical reasoning could make a man morally good or evil. In

other words, to Ramists rhetoric was a tool that, albeit effective, did not have any effect on the moral nature or character of its user.

In the field of Donne studies, when scholars have used rhetorical theory to examine Donne's work, most critical attention has been given to looking at how Ramist rhetorical theory lends itself to reading Donne's writings. Thomas O. Sloan, a major proponent for reading Donne's work in the light of Ramist rhetorical theory, has been especially influential. He interprets the major tenants of Ramist theory to mean that rhetoric "tends to regard the poem or speech or treatise as an artifact independent of the sensibilities of its creator or its hearer, concentrates on its form, and seeks to show forth its principles of composition" (33). Sloan's summary suggests that he sees the core of Ramist theory centering on the idea that rhetoric does not reflect the actual thoughts and feelings of the writer/speaker. Rather, Sloan argues, rhetoric allows a writer to show his skill by demonstrating his knowledge of, and aptitude at using, ornate language. This shows that Sloan, like Ramus, considers rhetoric a technical art that can be used by both good and evil men and does not develop a speaker's moral nature. Sloan further claims that Ramism had an important place in the English educational system, a claim substantiated by many of Sloan's contemporaries, which is why he argues that Donne's work should be read with Ramist rhetoric in mind—because Donne was a Ramist.

Yet Non-Ramist rhetoric actually had more influence in England at this time, as Nancy Christiansen argues in her recently-published book *Figuring Style: The Legacy of Renaissance Rhetoric*. Her research shows that Non-Ramists hearkened back to the more expansive classical curriculum developed both by Roman rhetoricians, including Cicero and Quintilian, and their Greek predecessors, most importantly Isocrates. Christiansen argues that the Non-Ramists' Greco-Roman predecessors believed that studying the figures and tropes of rhetoric developed good judgment within a student, which meant that a rhetorical education, above all else, centered on developing a

speaker's morality (92-101). Though Christiansen concedes that Ramists had some influence in England during the Early Modern period, she shows that Non-Ramist rhetorical theories exerted far greater influence on the educational system as a whole. In fact, as evidence of the extent of Non-Ramist influence, Christiansen shows that many Ramists in sixteenth century England were influenced by the Non-Ramist broad view of rhetoric and as a result actually "have more in common with the *Ad Herennium* or with Cicero than with [Peter] Ramus" (80). In other words, some aspects of Non-Ramist rhetorical theory were so attractive that English Ramists appropriated them even though the Non-Ramist ideas contradicted those of their founder. Christiansen provides this and other evidence to show that while the majority of older research argues that Ramists exerted wide influence in England, Non-Ramist rhetoric, especially Erasmus's theoretical views on style and figures, held wider sway in English rhetorical circles (65-79).

The differences between the two theoretical approaches to rhetoric sprang from the fact that Non-Ramists thought, contrary to the Ramists, that rhetoric reflected a speaker's thoughts and feelings instead of just being a persuasive tool that could be used by anyone. To be more specific, Non-Ramists felt that rhetoric both sprang from a speaker's judgment and reflected a speaker's thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, they felt that a study of rhetoric molded a speaker's sense of morality, developing him into a good man. The writings of Erasmus, who was one of the major proponents of the expansive view of rhetoric and one of the preeminent Non-Ramists, show the Non-Ramist understanding that rhetoric operated in the three previously mentioned ways. He offers advice that shows the speaker's active role in choosing how to speak: "...we must take special care not to do what some do and use the first thing that presents itself out of the heap in any context without exercising any choice at all...[The] man who is about to speak should exercise choice and take what is best" ("On Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style" 307-8). On the one hand, then, the Non-Ramist curriculum emphasized students making conscious speech-decisions, helping them

to recognize bad, good, better, and best uses of various linguistic strategies. The curriculum included exercises developed by Erasmus and others, which were designed to develop the students' ability to judge what was best to say or write in any given situation, showing that Non-Ramists believed what a student said sprang in part from the student's conscious judgment (Clark 189-94). Second, Erasmus shows that Non-Ramists felt that speech should also reflect the actual thoughts and feelings of an author. In *Ciceronianus*, Erasmus writes that "Two things are conducive to good speaking: that you know your subject thoroughly, and that the heart and feelings furnish words" (66). To emphasize his point, Erasmus claims that rhetoric which does not spring from a person's heart is "cold and dead" (75). While these statements may seem to contradict Erasmus's statement from *On Copia* claiming that speech involves conscious decision-making, there is no contradiction here. Rather, the fact that Erasmus states that the heart and feelings furnish words shows that to him, a speaker makes unconscious speech decisions that reflect his heart and feelings while also making conscious decisions about what is best to say. Rhetoric, then, comprises both conscious and unconscious speech acts that reveal a speaker's intellectual aptitude, disposition, and nature. Third, and most importantly for my argument, Erasmus argues that rhetoric could actually mold a student's character. This happened as a student developed good judgment and learned to speak appropriately in any situation. These two ideals, good judgment and appropriateness, were ultimately grounded in the belief that God gave utterance to man and also dictated the principles of good judgment and appropriateness to help his servants be as effective as possible. Thomas Wilson provides a brief summary:

Man (in whom is poured the breath of life) was made at the first being an everliving creature, unto the likeness of God, endued with reason, and appointed Lord over all other thing living. But after the fall of our first father, sin so crept in that our knowledge was much darkened, and by corruption of this our flesh, man's reason

and entendement were both overwhelmed...Therefore, even now when man was thus past all hope of amendment, God still tendering his own workmanship stirring up his faithful and elect, to persuade with reason all men to society. And gave his appointed ministers knowledge both to see the natures of men, and also granted them the gift of utterance, that they might with ease win folk at their will, and frame them by reason to all good order...these appointed of God called them together by utterance of speech, and persuaded with them what was good, what was bad, and what was gainful for mankind...[and these evil people] yet being somewhat drawn, and delighted with the pleasantness of reason, and the sweetness of utterance, after a certain space they became through Nurture and good advisement, of wild, sober; of cruel, gentle; of fools, wise; and of beasts, men; such force hath the tongue, and such is the power of Eloquence and reason, that most men are forced, even to yield in that which most standeth against their will.” (*The Art of Rhetorique*, Preface)

Non-Ramists latched on to the idea that rhetoric could develop morality within man; they believed that as students learned to speak well and judge situations appropriately, their character underwent a similar process of refinement. A passage in Erasmus’s *Ciceronianus* attests that Non-Ramists believed in the power of rhetoric to develop morality. He claims that training in rhetoric “improves the pliable nature, wins over the slightly rebellious, and corrects the perverted one” (76). This Erasmian view of rhetoric shows that to him, rhetoric was no trifle of learning how to ornament or persuade. Rhetoric could actually change a person’s nature for the better, whether it meant improving a pliable nature or fully correcting a perverted one. Erasmus and the Non-Ramists believed that rhetorical training exerted influence beyond the intellect to the point that it could change a person’s nature for the better. Thus, Erasmus says that “one cannot be a good orator who is not also a good man” (45); unless a person’s character is good he cannot reach the height of rhetorical expression because an

evil man's speech will contain discrepancies between his conscious and unconscious speech decisions, revealing him to be disingenuous. In short, the way that each group defined the rhetorical art was the major point of difference between them: one group, the Ramists, believed that rhetoric involved only conscious speech decisions and could therefore be used by anyone who had training. To the Ramists, rhetoric was a technical art. The other group, the Non-Ramists, believed that a speech was comprised of both conscious and unconscious speech decisions, which is why they believed that only a good man could attain the highest skill in language: unless a man's heart and feelings truly reflected what he said, he could not attain the heightened rhetorical effect that comes from sincerity. To the Non-Ramists, rhetoric was a moral art.

There have been many scholars, both in the discipline of literature and otherwise, who have recognized and supported the tenants of Non-Ramist rhetoric, namely the idea that rhetoric is a moral art. For instance, historian Hanna H. Gray summarizes Non-Ramist thought on this dual function of rhetoric:

...the imitation of stylistic and of ethical models are spoken of in identical terms; or the idea of always speaking appropriately, of suiting style and manner to subject, aim, and audience is treated as the exact analogue of behaving with decorum, of choosing actions and responses which are best in harmony with and most appropriate to individual character and principles on the one hand, the nature of circumstances on the other. (506)

In other words, says Gray, Early Modern rhetoricians believed that proper use of rhetoric could develop character and morality. Along with Gray, Christiansen points out that Manfred Hoffmann, in his book *Rhetoric and Theology: The Hermeneutic of Erasmus*, "notes that the aesthetic and the moral are indeed one in Erasmus" (23). Supporting Gray and Hoffmann's claims, Thomas M. Greene summarizes the similar view of Roger Ascham, an Early Modern rhetorician: "Ascham

thought...that the activity of choosing words sharpened the judgment to enable it to better choose actions” (614–15). Christiansen cites these and other authors who either identify or support the Non-Ramist view. Her book contains many more examples of Non-Ramists, both ancient and modern, who advocate the relationship between the aesthetic and the moral in rhetoric. The evidence clearly shows that even though Non-Ramists saw the rhetorical art as consisting in part of sharpening the intellect to enable it to create arguments based on a speaker’s opinions, rhetoric had the broader function of developing a student’s ability to think and act morally.

Christiansen’s study claims, and many studies like Donald Leman Clark’s *John Milton at St. Paul’s School: a Study of Ancient Rhetoric in English Renaissance Education* and Peter Mack’s *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* unwittingly help substantiate her claim, that Non-Ramist rhetoric held an important place in England. I hope to show, contrary to the claim of many studies that have explored Donne’s poetry through the lens of Ramist rhetoric, that Non-Ramist rhetoric would have shaped Donne’s understanding and use of rhetoric in his writings. While I agree with Sloan’s broad claim that Early Modern rhetorical theory lends new insights to contemporary scholarship on Early Modern literature, I believe that Sloan’s focus on the influence of Ramism in England, which was not nearly as significant as Sloan suggests, has left the stone of Non-Ramist influence on Donne largely unturned. Now that Non-Ramist rhetorical theory has been more clearly defined and defended by Christiansen, Greene, Hoffmann, and others, I hope to show that Non-Ramist rhetorical theory leads to productive interpretations of and gives unique insights into Donne’s writings. One such insight comes from reading Donne’s “Batter my heart” with Non-Ramist rhetoric in mind: instead of showing Donne unwinding a theological conundrum or commenting primarily on sexual/devotional postures in religious worship, the rhetoric of “Batter my heart” actually shows Donne arguing that man can only reverence and experience true awe of the Divine through humility. Specifically, Donne focuses on the fact that humility involves awareness of both

self and of God. By the conclusion of the poem, Donne argues that humility-as-self-awareness necessarily includes honesty in recognizing personal limitations and foibles. He also argues that humility-as-awareness of the Divine includes a recognition that a person must eventually admit that he cannot have a meaningful, reverential relationship with the Divine without relying on faith and admitting that there are certain things he cannot know about the Divine. Donne uses *catachresis*—a figure of speech that argues for a relationship of likeness between two things that are entirely different from one another—twice in the last two lines of the poem to draw his readers’ minds to consider the fact that their relationship with God is itself a *catachresis*. Donne does this to lead his readers to consider their own level of humility (that is, self-awareness and awareness of the Divine) as they apply the *catachreses* to themselves.

However, before analyzing the poem and showing how both of these arguments emerge from a Non-Ramist reading, the following chapter suggests that Donne more likely had a Non-Ramist education than a Ramist one. Then, in Chapter II, I will discuss how a Non-Ramist reading of “Batter my Heart” reveals Donne’s argument that humility leads to reverence and awe of God. Finally, to conclude, I suggest that Donne’s use of *catachresis* in the last two lines of the poem shows that he wants readers to consider man’s relationship to God as a *catachresis* by showing the poetic speaker discover that even though he is separated from and entirely different from God, he still has a meaningful relationship with the Divine.

Chapter I: Donne's Non-Ramist Rhetorical Education

While several sources provide unquestioned evidence that Donne's parents hired tutors to educate Donne at an early age, and while these sources also strongly suggest that Donne's tutors would have included rhetoric in their curriculum, no evidence exists to definitively show what kind of rhetorical education Donne would have received as a child. Most scholars who write on the subject of Donne's education assume that he had a Ramist rhetorical education, founded on evidence of Cambridge being a Ramist stronghold (Nelly 45) and the incorrect assumption that Ramism dominated grammar schools and university rhetoric classrooms (Clark 218). However, I believe that examining the historical evidence will show that Non-Ramists held far more influence than the Ramists in the classroom and that Donne would have been exposed to Non-Ramist rhetoric because of how widespread its influence was. In the following discussion, I will consider the evidence of Donne's early, university, and post-university education to show both that Donne was probably exposed to rhetoric during his early education and that Donne would more likely have received a Non-Ramist than a Ramist rhetorical education at the university and afterward at Lincoln's Inn.

The most important account of Donne's early education, comprised of a singular statement from Donne's first biographer Izaak Walton, suggests nothing more than that Donne received an education before entering college.¹ Walton's record gives no indication that Donne attended formal grammar school, so we can assume that Donne's pre-college education consisted entirely of what he learned from his tutors. Though Walton does say that Donne's parents hired tutors, the slight amount of information Walton gives leaves little to even conjecture about, except whether or not

¹ While John Stubbs characterizes Walton as Donne's "apologist" (4) and says that Walton's depictions of Donne cannot always be taken "at face value" (4) he, like most of Donne's other biographers, relies heavily on Walton's writing and trusts it almost completely in the matters of Donne's early education (Stubbs 23–25). R.C. Bald summarizes Walton's contributions best when he says that Walton's *Life* "is still a prime source for any modern life of Donne" even though Walton has a "disregard for exact chronology" (Bald 11), and a tendency to pick and choose information that portrays a reformed "Dr. Donne" (Bald 12-13) because it "preserves a number of facts about Donne that otherwise would certainly have been irretrievably lost" (Bald 11).

Donne's tutor was a Catholic/Jesuit or not and, more directly applicable to my argument, whether or not the fact that Donne had a "good command of the Latine Tongue" (Walton 12) meant that he had exposure to Cicero, Quintilian, or other Latin rhetoricians at an early age. Because the evidence is slight, I will only go so far as to claim that first, the evidence shows that Donne almost certainly received training in grammar at an early age. Donald Leman Clark explains that "grammar had always been first taught to little children after they [had] learned their letters and [could] read" (Clark 5). Clark also says that "the English boy in the humanistic grammar school was taught not English grammar but Latin" (6), suggesting that even though Donne did not attend formal grammar school, the fact that he had a "good command" of Latin means that his tutors must have trained him in Latin grammar. Second, because Clark then goes on to explain that grammar to Early Modern rhetoricians had a different meaning than it does now, to the point that "Grammar tended to encroach on rhetoric" (7) because grammarians often introduced "exercises suited to the training of orators...doubtless that they might not turn over their pupils to the rhetorician unprepared" (6), I feel it safe to suggest that because Donne would have undoubtedly had training in grammar, he probably would have been exposed to parts of the more advanced curriculum of rhetoric as well. The evidence allows for the reasonable assumption that Donne's first exposure to rhetoric occurred sometime during his tutoring before he entered the university.

That being said, no evidence exists to suggest whether Donne's early grammar and rhetorical education was Non-Ramist. Even though Christiansen shows that Non-Ramist rhetoric books were widely used across England,² we cannot assume that because such books circulated throughout England, Donne would have had Non-Ramist training from his tutor. Nonetheless, the trends give a broad view of the curriculum used for tutoring younger pupils in England and shows that it is at

² These include the books, often printed in several editions, by Melanchthon, Petrus Mosellanus, Joannes Susenbrotus, and Richard Sherry. See pages 61-67 of *Figuring Style: The Legacy of Renaissance Rhetoric* for the more detailed accounting of each author, their books, their influence, and their main sources.

least possible that Donne would have been exposed to Non-Ramist rhetoric during his earliest years of education. The strongest evidence supporting my claim that Donne would more likely have received a Non-Ramist education than a Ramist one during his early years is, like the former evidence, situational. Even so, it provides a much stronger case. Donne's family history, a heritage that his mother was invested in preserving, shows strong connections to Catholicism, Thomas More, and Erasmus himself. Dennis Flynn's book *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility*, shows that John Heywood, Donne's grandfather, was a member of Thomas More's inner circle and was familiar with Erasmus's works. In fact, Heywood's plan for his "*magnum opus*, a long narrative poem entitled *The Spider and the Fly*, [was] originally inspired by a passage from Erasmus" (26). Donne's family had clear ties to Erasmus and familiarity with Erasmus's writings. Flynn then characterizes the Heywood family not only as Catholic, but as Erasmian English Catholics whose religious values were imprinted deep into their identity as they struggled with the religious and political turmoil resulting from England's break from Rome. Flynn also claims that the family had a strong "tradition of humanism" (42) preserved by Donne's uncle Jasper Heywood, who translated Seneca into English and with whom Donne interacted directly, meaning that giving Donne a humanist education would follow family tradition. Returning to Clark's statement that humanist grammar schools taught Latin, not English, grammar, and considering Walton's statement that Donne had a "good command" of Latin in his early years, the circumstantial evidence for Donne having had Non-Ramist training early in life is intriguing. While none of these points explicitly provides evidence that Donne's tutor would have used a Non-Ramist curriculum to teach Donne rhetoric, all of the evidence strongly suggests that Donne's family heritage, including his family's connections to More, Erasmus, and humanism, would probably have resulted in his mother choosing a tutor whose views and whose curriculum aligned with the Heywood family values. In other words, given Donne's heritage³ combined with

³ Donne tells us himself how strongly his heritage impressed upon his mind in the introduction to *Pseudo-Martyr*: "as I

what we know about Donne's early education, it is more likely that Donne's tutor would have used a Non-Ramist curriculum than a Ramist one.

While a lack of information on Donne's early education makes it difficult to come to any certainty about his exposure to rhetoric, there is no question that Donne would have had a substantial rhetorical education at the university. Donne first entered Oxford University at Hart Hall and then transferred to Cambridge, if Walton's account provides an accurate history. Some scholars have suggested that Donne traveled to the continent after his first three years at Oxford, but I see no reason to disbelieve Walton's account. Dennis Flynn in particular argues that Donne did not attend Cambridge but travelled on the continent during the 1580's. He includes the broad argument that it was dangerous for Catholics to get an education in England (see chapter 8 of his book), and then adds the specific argument that Donne mentions details of the siege at Antwerp in his Latin Epigrams (140–141). He further adds the fact that a "John Donnes/Downes" was listed as a waiting gentleman to the Earl of Derby in a document from 1587 (134-35). There is also the case that Jasper Heywood, Donne's uncle, knew Derby and probably would have entrusted Donne to his keeping. Furthermore, Flynn argues against Donne attending Cambridge by pointing out that, first, Izaak Walton fails to explain how "Donne could have avoided the Thirty-nine Articles between the ages of sixteen and eighteen if he enrolled at Cambridge" (133); second, there is no evidence that Donne attended Cambridge (133); and third there is no evidence that Donne "continued at Oxford after 1584" (133). Flynn's argument is intriguing, but far from settling the matter decisively. I agree with Flynn that there are many interesting possibilities that open up if Donne had travelled abroad after a year at Oxford, but this alone does not mean that Flynn's argument overrules Walton's account. To begin, Flynn uses a clever rhetorical move to say, in essence, "My argument is stronger because I

am a Christian, I have been ever kept awake in a meditation of Martyrdome, by being derived from such a stocke and race, as, I believe, no family (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and for tunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, then it hath done" (p. 8).

have evidence...whereas Walton's account is garbled and lacking evidence." Specifically, Flynn points out Walton's sometimes-confused timeline and the lack of evidence to support Donne's attendance at Oxford (past the Michaelmas term) and Cambridge (133). In doing so, he implies that Walton's lack of evidence is evidence to the contrary (e.g. evidence that Donne didn't attend). Following this observation, Flynn proceeds to give his evidence for Donne's travelling abroad which makes his argument seem more valid than Walton's because he has evidence to present. But, even though Flynn makes his argument seem more compelling than Walton's with this rhetorical setup, it is not as compelling as he makes it seem. To point out a weakness in one of his main pieces of evidence, a clever Taco Bell commercial encourages viewers to buy a new breakfast item by having several men named Ronald McDonald endorse their product. If multiple men with the same (and unique) name live in the United States today, surely more than one John with a last name similar to Donne's could have lived in Early Modern England. Consider both the unstandardized spelling in Early Modern England and the fact that England had a considerable population in Donne's time. Another boy named John with a last name similar to Donne's (who can say whether Downes, Donnes, or another unknown variation represents the "real" last name of the boy in Derby's retinue) not only could have but would have lived in England. Beyond his evidence of a "John" travelling with the Earl of Darby, he also points out that many of Donne's early epigrams describe scenes at the siege of Antwerp. While I agree that Donne's epigrams do describe the siege, I do not think that these descriptions provide clear evidence that Donne was there, at Antwerp, instead of at Oxford or Cambridge. Such a momentous event was undoubtedly discussed in England, especially at the universities, and Donne could have received the various details he uses in his epigrams from conversations with others who had seen or written about the siege. Flynn also seems to forget that some evidence from his own book argues against Donne travelling abroad. Flynn mentions that John Syminges, Donne's step-father, ousted Jasper Heywood from his household because he "was

no longer going to endanger his own life and property” (116). The fact that Donne’s step-father was extremely cautious about drawing attention to his Catholicism and endangering his estate does not conform with Flynn’s evidence of Donne’s travels abroad. In a time which, Flynn says, “a measure of how distrustfully the Council regarded such travel (travel, that is, to the Catholic countries on the continent) is the suspicion about the son of so reliably Protestant a family as the Bacons” (166), surely the cautious Mr. Syminges would not allow his son, a member of so prominent a Catholic family as the Mores, to travel abroad for as many years as Flynn suggests and with such a prominently Catholic family as the Earl of Derby (162). Doing so would undoubtedly risk drawing attention to himself after he had been able to successfully evade the financial and social ruin of many of his Catholic colleagues at the Physician Society (Flynn 113) and would go against his nature, as Flynn himself defines it. While Flynn feels he has provided irrefutable evidence of Donne’s activities during his adolescent years, his evidence is not conclusive and is sometimes plagued with the same contradictions he accuses Walton of. Because of these facts, and the lack of conclusive evidence for Donne travelling abroad, I feel, as did R.C. Bald, that “there is no need to dismiss Walton’s statement” (46). I will proceed under the assumption that Donne attended Oxford for three years and then transferred to Cambridge, as Walton records.

Regardless of whether or not Donne attended Cambridge, and regardless of how long he stayed at Oxford (remember that Dennis Flynn suggests that Donne probably left Oxford soon after beginning his studies there), because it has been well documented that the first year of a freshman’s education at Oxford consisted of a study of rhetoric, there can be no argument by scholars on either side of the pro-/anti-Walton argument that Donne did not receive a rhetorical education at Oxford.⁴

⁴ William Costello, for instance, records that freshmen “spent at least half their time on ‘rhetoric’” (43), and Una Nelly’s statements that “In Donne’s time then it is well established that the two great arts of communication, rhetoric and logic . . . , were given considerable prominence in the university curriculum at Oxford . . . at the end of the first year, having mastered the ‘figures’ and ‘colours’ of rhetoric, the student could then give his entire attention to the study of logic . . .” (37–38) explains that if anything, Donne’s education would be lacking in logic if he had only spent a year at Oxford.

The consensus among scholars about the type of rhetorical education Donne would have received varies, but none doubt that he would have had a rhetorical education at the university.⁵ Walton provides the first evidence that Donne was exposed to rhetoric in college when he says that “[Donne’s] mother...appointed him tutors both in the mathematics and in all the other liberal sciences” which Walton later refers to as “arts” (14).⁶ The “liberal sciences” or “arts” included, among other subjects, the study of rhetoric. Clark identifies the importance of rhetoric among the liberal arts when he says, “In Imperial Rome and in Renaissance England, all seven of the Liberal Arts were honored as the basis of a liberal education...the core, flesh and skin of the educational apple were comprised in the linguistic arts of the trivium (Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic)” (3). The fact that Thomas Wilson, Abraham Fraunce, and Ralph Lever all refer to rhetoric as an art that complements the all-important art of logic,⁷ supports Clark’s claim. These arts, along with the study of languages, made up the liberal sciences. There is also a large body of evidence outlining the curriculum used at the universities during Donne’s time there. One of the best pieces of evidence comes from Una Nelly and shows the increasing importance of rhetoric in the university classroom. She argues for Donne receiving a rhetorical education based on the fact that Queen Elizabeth changed the Cambridge curriculum in the decrees of 1559 and 1571, both of which occurred before Donne was enrolled. Though the decrees specifically changed the curriculum at Cambridge, Nelly

⁵ Flynn mentions the incorporation of Ciceronian rhetoric into the curriculum (153), Tina Skouen says that “...every writer in the age of Donne would have learnt from Quintilian and the classical rhetoricians...” (Skouen 160), a claim also made by Nelly who mentions Cicero and Quintilian, along with Zeno, as being used to explain the function of rhetoric (37). Edward Le Comte says that “Without choice [Donne] followed the trivium—grammar, rhetoric, and logic or dialectic” (Le Comte 16). Bald says that “The curriculum was still largely based on the medieval trivium and quadrivium...Rhetoric and logic were therefore the main subjects of study for undergraduates and the bachelor’s degree was awarded on the basis of skill in disputation” (48). Of Donne’s years at Cambridge, Louis A. Knafla says, “An avid and voracious reader, [Donne] became skilled in formal logic and rhetoric...” (Knafla 40). Clearly, during Donne’s years at the university rhetoric would have been an integral part of his education.

⁶ R.C. Bald points out that in the first edition, this statement was prefaced by the statement “There he remained at Hart Hall...,” meaning that this tutoring occurred at Oxford, not during Donne’s early childhood.

⁷ Because nearly every author of a rhetorical or logical treatise acknowledges this, Fraunce and Lever included, I will only point to Thomas Wilson, author of the first treatise on rhetoric in English, who clearly defines rhetoric as an art in his introduction (Wilson, *The Rule of Reason Containing the Arte of Logique. Set Forth in English, and Newly Corrected by Thomas VWilson. Wherunto Is Added a Table, for the Ease of the Reader* 1–3).

asserts “we can assume that her revision at Oxford followed on similar lines” (Nelly 37).

Furthermore, because Donne continued his education at Cambridge for three additional years after leaving Oxford, the changes enacted by the decrees would have been implemented at Cambridge well before Donne attended there. These changes, according to Nelly, were made to “give greater emphasis to the study of dialectic,” and included a decree that “the programme for B.A. should follow a new pattern: first year—rhetoric; second and third year—dialectic; fourth year—philosophy” (37). Before, says Nelly, the B.A. consisted of studies in mathematics during the first year, dialectic during the second year, and philosophy during the third year (37). The fact that Queen Elizabeth’s decrees expanded the study of rhetoric to span the entire first year of schooling, coupled with the fact that the changes took place about 10 years before Donne entered college suggests that university administration and instructors would have had ample time to implement the new curriculum before Donne entered Oxford. Consequently, Donne would have had a substantial rhetorical education during his first year at Oxford and then at Cambridge.

Even though the type of rhetorical education Donne would have received at Oxford and Cambridge remains contested, there is strong evidence that it would have been a Non-Ramist, Erasmian curriculum. First, and most important, the university booklists for Oxford and Cambridge overwhelmingly favor Non-Ramist textbooks. Peter Mack shows that the three books that appear most often on university booklists, including Oxford and Cambridge, are Erasmus’s *Ecclesiastes*, Melanchthon, and Talon. As previously shown, Erasmus was one of the most influential figures in the Non-Ramist movement, and Christiansen shows that Melanchthon’s rhetorical theory was also Non-Ramist (21, 48-9). Talon’s rhetorical theory was Ramist, but as Mack notes, Erasmus’s book was far more popular than Talon’s, having 27 entries in the Cambridge inventories, while Talon’s only had 9 (52). Likewise, Melanchthon’s book was also more popular than Talon’s, having 13 entries in the booklists (52). Mack also mentions that “the only known complete text of an

Elizabethan lecture course on rhetoric” comes from John Rainolds (52), an Oxford professor, who Christiansen shows is undoubtedly a Non-Ramist (106). Rainold’s lectures were given from 1572-78, before Donne would have been enrolled, but the points are clear: Non-Ramist books were the most popular textbooks on rhetoric at all major universities, Non-Ramists held positions at the universities, and Non-Ramist rhetoric was taught at Oxford around the period that Donne would have been in school. All of this evidence supports the argument that Donne would more likely have been exposed to Non-Ramist rhetoric than Ramist rhetoric through the books he used, his professors, or both.

Second, Dennis Flynn who, on the subject of Queen Elizabeth’s changes to the curriculum, explains that “at Elizabethan Oxford...Tudor humanist criticism of medieval Latinity was used to elevate the standing of Ciceronian rhetoric in the curriculum and to sweep aside the solid theological, philosophical, and mathematical traditions of Oxford as old fashioned, barbarous, unclassical, and Papist” (Flynn 153). Though Flynn uses this as evidence that Donne traveled the continent instead of attending Cambridge, saying that Donne’s family would have sent him abroad to protect him from the changes at the university, Flynn draws attention to the fact that the Classical rhetorical tradition, especially Ciceronian rhetoric, began to hold an important role in the English university. As Ciceronian rhetoric became more important in the English university, Erasmus’s ideas about rhetoric also would have been viewed with increasing importance because Erasmus was one of the leading humanists who resurrected the Ciceronian curriculum. Furthermore, Cicero’s curriculum was associated more with the Non-Ramists than the Ramists.

Another evidence that Non-Ramist rhetoric dominated the university comes from Una Nelly when she says that the first year of education was focused on mastering “the ‘figures’ and ‘colours’ of rhetoric” (38). Nelly states that Thomas Wilson’s *The Rule of Reason* “...was regarded as the standard textbook for students at the Universities” (36) but she fails to recognize that Wilson’s

explanations of rhetoric in his textbook show him to have Non-Ramist leanings in matters of rhetoric, a fact that Christiansen points out in her book (26, 102-3) For instance, in the first few pages of his book on rhetoric, Wilson names the five divisions of rhetoric used by the ancient Roman rhetoricians (*The Arte of Rhetorique* 6) and his discussion of honest and dishonest speeches shows that he feels rhetoric is a moral art (*The Arte of Rhetorique* 8). Furthermore, while Nelly says that Cambridge “became the stronghold of Ramism in England,” Christiansen clarifies that later Ramists, especially those in sixteenth century England, began to acknowledge the broader view of the Non-Ramists regarding figures.⁸ Christiansen also shows that because Ramists saw figures as ornamentation, the works of true Ramists tended to drastically reduce the number of figures listed by their Roman predecessors (79-80). Non-Ramist books, on the other hand, contain the most substantial lists of figures (Christiansen 65-71) because figures were one of the main foci in the Non-Ramist curriculum (Christiansen 5). This suggests that a curriculum focused on figures would most likely have been a Non-Ramist curriculum because Ramus and his followers limited the number and function of the figure in their rhetorical theory, and because Non-Ramists taught figures as being of central importance to rhetorical study. Also, while Cambridge may have become a stronghold of Ramism in matters of logic, William Costello shows that Cicero, whose rhetorical theories resembled those of the Non-Ramists, and other classical rhetoricians remained the dominant figures in the study of rhetoric (43, 61), and university book lists show that Non-Ramists still ruled the Cambridge rhetoric classrooms. All of this evidence shows that rhetorical studies at Cambridge and Oxford centered on Non-Ramist rhetorical pedagogy and ideology.

Further evidence of Donne’s exposure to rhetoric comes from the fact that his initial chosen profession, the law, was steeped in the study of rhetoric. It is clear that rhetoric was of utmost

⁸ “Sixteenth-century Ramists have more in common with the *Ad Herennium* or with Cicero than with Ramus, for though they retain the Ramistic divisions of style and figures, they emphasize not indirection but appropriateness as the marker for figures, they allow authentic and sincere expressions as figures, and they consider figures an open category” (Christiansen 80).

importance to those practicing law because early English textbooks for lawyers included sections on both logic and rhetoric. Thomas Wilson, Abraham Fraunce, and Ralph Lever all wrote treatises on logic, each of which explored the interconnection between logic and rhetoric. While none of the authors of logic manuals and rhetoric textbooks agree with one another as to precisely where rhetoric ended and logic began (Clark 7), each admits that figures of speech contribute to logical argumentation and that logic can be found underlying most usage of figured speech.⁹ Furthermore, more recent scholarship also shows that many modern scholars recognize the importance that rhetoric held in the judicial sphere in Donne's day. R.J. Schoeck provides the most complete argument that Donne would have lived in an environment at Lincoln's Inn in which logic and rhetoric would have dominated the thoughts of his peers. Schoeck begins his argument by showing that from the Middle ages, legal studies and rhetoric had been bound to one another (110). He goes on to comment that in the sixteenth century, "the Inns of Court became...the chief center of literary activity in England" (110) and argues that the literary activity centered on "a concern with and interest in rhetoric" (111). Hence, it is probable that Donne was exposed to Greco-Roman-centered rhetoric more or less continually from an early age until he left the Inns of Court, and it is not likely that such constant stress on rhetoric, including style and figures, would not figure prominently in his own literary writing.

⁹ For instance, Thomas Wilson says in his *The Rule of Reason* that "Both of the Artes (logic and rhetoric) are much like" and quotes Zeno in showing how: "In so much that Zeno being asked the difference between Logike and Rhetorike, made answer by demonstration of his hand, declaring that when his hand was closed, it resembled Logike and when it was open and stretched out it was like Rhetorike" (3). In both cases, the "hand" is used, the difference between logic and rhetoric being in how the hand is positioned. Abraham Fraunce discusses how logic and rhetoric overlap on pages 2-3 of his *The Lawiers Logike*, and Ralph Lever argues for viewing rhetorical devices as arguments in his logic handbook *The Arte of Reason* (see pages 142 and 228 where he defines similitudes as arguments).

Chapter II: Non-Ramist Rhetoric and the Poetic Speaker of “Batter My Heart”

Res and Verba: Toward an Understanding of Rhetoric

Before proceeding to “Batter My Heart,” I will briefly outline the major theoretical points behind the Early Modern Non-Ramist understanding of the term “rhetoric.” First, as stated in the introduction to *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, Early Modern rhetoricians distinguished between *res* and *verba*: “A particularly important distinction was that involved in the interplay between *res* or matter – what was said – and *verba* or words – how it was said” (Anderson, Alexander, and Ettenhuber 2). Rhetoric was understood to be, at its most basic level, attention to both what was being said and to how it was said. Essentially, then, for Early Modern rhetoricians, rhetoric extended beyond just communicating information (*res*) or just attention to style (*verba*), but combined the two to give an enhanced experience where *res* and *verba* complemented one another because style enriched content and vice versa. A quote from Erasmus is again helpful here: “. . .we must take special care not to do what some do and use the first thing that presents itself out of the heap in any context without exercising any choice at all. . .the man who is about to speak should exercise choice and take what is best”(“On Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style”). Erasmus draws attention to the fact that choosing the *verba* that best suits a certain *res* requires exercising choice. Erasmus identifies two choices that a speaker makes: first, a speaker must judge his situation and second, he must choose the best possible figures suited to his situation. A speaker must first decide what is “appropriate,” which we have already established is the process of determining how to use language in the way that God has deemed good, and then portray his decision to his audience in the language he uses. The ethical decisions of speaking come at both levels of judgment. A speaker must be able to correctly identify what is appropriate and then he must choose to be true to the divine principles of speech. Choosing figures, then, is an ethical choice that measures man against divine rules of speech. Speech acts that show what a person feels is “proper” are, therefore, behaviors showing how well a person

conforms to, or departs from principles of good speaking. Because choosing figures of speech is an ethical decision, people's speech provides a window into their nature. Christiansen, who also recognizes figures as behaviors, agrees that rhetoric reflects speakers' thoughts and feelings and reveals important information about them as a person:

A figural/stylistic/rhetorical analysis is ultimately behavioral analysis...revelatory of all that behavior reveals: a speaker's conceptions about reality (both explicit and implicit), a speaker's purposes and achievement (both intentional and unintentional), a speaker's indebtedness to and departure from cultural influences (both self-conscious and not), and aspects of a speaker's personality (both crafted and actual).

(9)

In short, language is behavior revelatory of multiple aspects of a speaker's or writer's self; embedded within a speech or text are clues as to who a speaker inherently is as well as who he is trying to make himself appear to be.

Also, due to their belief that speech was behavior and reflected the actual and created parts of a speaker/writer's self, Non-Ramist rhetoricians saw morality underlying rhetoric. Language is made up of behaviors, or actions, meaning that to the Early Modern rhetorician what a person said and did had consequences in the external world: language is directed at an audience and can persuade the audience to think or act a certain way, and reflects on the speaker/writer himself because a speaker/writer's words showed him to be either moral (representing an image consistent with his behaviors, thoughts, and desires) or immoral (representing an image inconsistent with his behaviors, thoughts, and desires). The idea that a speaker's words reflected a person's character harkens back to the moral/rhetorical philosophy of Isocrates and Cicero who both believed, as did their admirer Erasmus, that "one cannot be a good orator who is not also a good man" (*Ciceronianus; Or, A Dialogue on the Best Style of Speaking* 45). To reiterate my point, Hanna H. Gray states that

“...the imitation of stylistic and of ethical models are spoken of in identical terms” (506). And again, from Thomas M. Greene, “Ascham thought...that the activity of choosing words sharpened the judgment to enable it to better choose actions” (614–15). In the rest of my paper I will use the term “rhetoric” in this sense: rhetoric is the process of using language which is itself behavior, and is therefore revelatory of a speaker’s thoughts, feelings, motivations, and character. Using this theoretical understanding of rhetoric, one with which I have argued Donne would have been familiar, I consider “Batter my heart” by looking at how the poetic speaker chooses to address God. The rhetoric that the poetic speaker chooses to portray his situation to some extent necessarily illustrates his understanding of God.

Opinions on the Poetic Speaker in “Batter my heart”

To begin, I will look at opinions on the poetic speaker of “Batter my heart,” hereafter to be referred to as simply “the Petitioner.”¹⁰ One major camp of Donne critics sees the Petitioner caught in a violent relationship with God—a relationship that they characterize as sexual either in a secular or religious sense.¹¹ Most scholars look specifically at the violence implied in the Petitioner’s statement: “for I / Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee” (lines 12-14),¹² and draw conclusions based almost entirely on the sexual language in those two lines. Some scholars, like Hans Osterwalder, Barbara Newman, Michael Schoenfeldt, and Lloyd Davies, see possibilities for understanding the violence of the poem through examinations of the gender or sex of the Petitioner. Osterwalder sees the eroticism of “Batter my heart” as “not derived

¹⁰ I will refer to the poetic speaker as “the Petitioner” and use “Donne” to refer to John Donne himself throughout the rest of my argument. I make this differentiation because I believe that Donne constructs the poetic speaker in a specific way in order to make a larger meta-argument about rhetoric. Also, due to the lack of a third person neuter in English, I will use the masculine “he” to refer to the Petitioner. My argument is not dependent on the poetic speaker having a specific gender or sex, because I examine how the rhetorical figures Donne uses directs the attention of his audience to or away from aspects of the text.

¹¹ Few contemporary scholars see the meaning of “ravish” as being non-sexual as George Knox suggests it is. Because I believe that the meaning of “ravish” is sexual, I will review the literature focused on sexuality in “Batter my heart.”

¹² Almost every scholar who has written on “Batter my heart” has had to offer an interpretation of the last two lines of the poem and those who look at the poetic speaker’s function in the poem have had to explain the violence of the Petitioner’s plea in the last two lines. The last two lines of the poem, therefore, provide an excellent place to compare and contrast opinions of the Petitioner in this poem.

from Neo-platonic love treatises or Biblical sources, but from worldly, sexual love” (207) mainly because of the overwhelming amount of violence in the poem. He concludes that “Undoubtedly the uniting part of the imagery applies to God’s love but rape is a weird kind of ultimate union” (207). Consequently, he places the Petitioner “metaphorically...into the position of a woman longing to admit God the lawful conqueror” (206) and in doing so, he focuses on the fact that the Petitioner occupies the gender position of a woman seeking sexual love. This last quotation shows that Osterwalder feels that the Petitioner is sincere in longing for God’s love, even though the Petitioner’s conception of his/her relationship to God is a little bit “weird.” Furthermore, Osterwalder’s focus on the hierarchical relationships of sexual love and his choice to view the Petitioner in the subordinate position in a secular sexual relationship with God show that he feels that the Petitioner is helpless, pleading for God’s intervention to consummate the desired relationship. Finally, Osterwalder’s interpretation shows that he feels the Petitioner functions on the plane of the erotic more than that of the religious. Osterwalder’s Petitioner may be sincere, but he has a physical more than an emotional or spiritual conception of love. Newman comes to a conclusion similar to Osterwalder’s about the Petitioner’s supplicative position and his sincerity by arguing that the Petitioner’s language invokes a longstanding Christian religious tradition with medieval origins. Newman sees the Petitioner using a “medieval tradition that is perhaps best known through Bernard of Clairvaux’s Sermons on the Song of Solomon, in which a masculine speaker adopts the position of the generically feminine Soul and speaks in a woman’s voice” (86). Similar to Osterwalder, Newman sees the Petitioner adopting a feminine gender position in his relationship to God, but she sees the Petitioner’s subordinate feminine position in the relationship as having erotic undertones that are religious instead of secular. Newman, again like Osterwalder, sees the Petitioner as sincere, though in this case he is a sincere male speaking in a feminine voice as he attempts to participate in a long-standing religious tradition to try to understand his relationship to God. The

fact that he adopts a feminine voice shows, in Newman's eyes, that he recognizes his subordination to God, who is the dominant male. Also, Newman sees the Petitioner as more intellectual than Osterwalder's physical Petitioner, because the Petitioner sees himself as part of a Christian tradition that uses sexual metaphor and changes in rhetorical voice to conceive of his relationship to God.

Others still, like Arthur Lindley and Paul M. Oliver, consider Donne's speaker sexually female in order to explore the legal aspects of the violence implied in the betrothal and rape of the poem.¹³ This approach suggests that the Petitioner is less sexually motivated, exchanging the sentimentality suggested by Osterwalder, Newman, and others for the much more strict, logical sphere of the law. This interpretation sees the Petitioner as a rational being trying to unwind the problem of his relationship to God by applying what he knows of the law to religion. The Petitioner of Lindley and Oliver is not a physical lover nor a religious intellectual so much as a trained lawyer trying to find truth through the exercise of intellect. While he may still be sincere, this Petitioner is not on a spiritual journey to find God so much as an intellectual journey to delineate man's relationship to God. Michael Schoenfeldt provides another view of the Petitioner when he argues that while "the experience of social submission...provided a vibrant model for the expression of devotional desire...when the language of religious devotion was explicitly eroticized, male worshippers were forced either to assume a feminine persona or to embrace a discourse of same-sex desire" (211). When he looks at "Batter my heart" specifically, he concludes that, "Donne solicits same-sex rape from a hypermasculine deity" (222), showing that he sees the Petitioner as a masculine figure asking to be overcome by an even more dominant masculine force. The sexual implications of Schoenfeldt's argument for homoerotic love between man and God argue that the

¹³ I am currently writing an article correcting many of Lindley's conclusions about both betrothal and rape, which are based on outdated laws that were written before the reign of Elizabeth and which were not actually used in legal practice during her reign (81). Paul M. Oliver identifies the legal implications of betrothal correctly in chapter 4 of his book *Donne's Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion*: "In Donne's time a formal betrothal...was as fully binding as marriage" (Oliver 123).

Petitioner understands that religious and secular concerns overlap in the realm of devotional worship, requiring that certain concessions be made in order to effectively approach the Divine. His Petitioner, however, is less-interested in the emotional aspects of love than Newman's or Osterwalder's Petitioner. Instead, his Petitioner is interested in the dynamics of domination and submission. By choosing a masculine persona instead of a feminine one, the Petitioner shows that he is focused on power structures – who is in charge and why – instead of spiritual enlightenment. Last, some scholars see the Petitioner as evoking religious mysticism through mentioning sexual, albeit more ecstatic than sensual, contact with the Divine. George Knox argues that the poem “involves no bisexuality on the part of the poet nor does it require our imagining literally the relation between man and God in heterosexual terms” (Item 2). Rather, Knox argues that “the traditions of Christian mysticism allow such symbolism of ravishment as a kind of ‘as if’” (item 2). Knox reads the violence as possessing transcendent qualities: instead of pointing to the fact that God is present in the violent sexual acts of the poem, the metaphor of rape/removal leads the mind elsewhere, pointing to a higher, mystical understanding than the literal sexual meaning. Knox, then, sees the Petitioner as a combination of an intellectual and a spiritual pilgrim: he uses the traditions of Christian mysticism to symbolize a religious event using a secular symbol.

The last opinion on the Petitioner that I will mention is that of George Parfitt. While others comment on the Petitioner's use of rhetoric indirectly (without calling their analysis a rhetorical one), Parfitt not only recognizes the importance of rhetoric in understanding the attitudes and character of the Petitioner, but he also provides a foil for my own argument about the Petitioner. Parfitt begins his argument by showing that the sonnets, including “Batter my heart,” use first-person pronouns, showing the preoccupation with self in the poems (90). Parfitt argues, however, that this sense of self is significant because the poet-figure (e.g. the Petitioner) takes a supplicative, submissive (and female) role. Parfitt argues that this sense of self as submissive supplicant reflects

Donne's own position during the years after his marriage and before his ordination. Parfitt then argues that the Divine Meditations cannot hope to answer the doubts they raise precisely because the rhetoric "foregrounds doubt and fear to the extent that the rhetoric itself is the peril, making despair almost seductive" (98). Parfitt, then, sees the Petitioner in a submissive role tempted, to some extent, by his own rhetorical creation to despair because of his separation from God. Parfitt's argument is a good one. From a surface examination of the rhetoric in the Divine Meditations, Parfitt argues that rhetoric, even though it is a creation of the Petitioner, acts upon him to tempt him to despair. In other words, Parfitt argues that what a person says can actually change or persuade him, that a rhetorical creation can exert power on its creator. While I disagree with Parfitt's conclusion, I believe that he taps in to the theoretical strain that guides the Petitioner's rhetorical decisions in "Batter my Heart:" the idea that rhetoric can reach beyond its creator to accomplish things that neither the creator nor his intellect can accomplish alone.

The Rhetoric of Prayer: A Non-Ramist Rhetorical Analysis of "Batter my heart"

I hope to show through a rhetorical examination of the Petitioner's words in "Batter my heart" that in the process of exploring his relationship with the Divine, Donne comments on the necessity of both aspects of humility-as-awareness in sincerely reverencing deity. Even though the Petitioner's rhetoric throughout the poem is, at least indirectly, a series of attempts to understand his relationship with God, he uses different rhetorical strategies as the poem progresses. The Petitioner's progression from one rhetorical strategy to the next shows that while the Petitioner's attempts to understand God ultimately fail, the rhetorical decisions he makes – how he addresses and speaks to God – develop his understanding of his relationship to God. As his rhetoric changes, his understanding of his relationship to the Divine also shifts. At the beginning of the poem his rhetoric shows he feels that he controls his relationship to God and therefore has the right to command God, but by the end of the poem his rhetoric shows that he has completely given up

control of the relationship to God and it is in that moment that he finds what he is looking for: reverence for and awe of deity. This change can be seen through a Non-Ramist rhetorical analysis of the poem because, as previously stated, Non-Ramists believed that rhetorical devices show a person's feelings, attitudes, and character. Because the rhetorical devices the Petitioner uses change, revealing his changes in attitude toward God, it is possible to trace the development of how he understands God from the beginning to the end of the poem.

The first time that the Petitioner expresses his relationship with the Divine, in the first four lines of the poem, he uses several rhetorical devices which reveal both that he is frustrated with God and that he feels he is in control of his relationship with God. The Petitioner's frustration with God comes through most clearly in lines one and two when he says to God "for you / As yet but..." and then lists the ways that God previously intervened and is at present intervening in his life. "As yet" serves to identify a temporal period; it means "hitherto, up to this time" ("As Yet"). This phrase shows that the Petitioner recognizes that God has been acting previously to bring about his salvation, but even though the Petitioner's use of "as yet" shows that he recognizes that God has been involved in his life up to this point, "as yet" carries a negative connotation in this case because it is followed by the word "but." Inserting "but," meaning "no more than, only, merely" ("But"), shows that the Petitioner is not satisfied with God's efforts; using "but" suggests that the Petitioner feels God has not been doing everything possible to help him. The Petitioner's words direct themselves at God in a biting way to show that while God has been involved in the Petitioner's life "up to this time," the Petitioner is frustrated that God has not done as much as the Petitioner expects.

Next, the Petitioner uses a specialized type of *amplificatio* called *progressio* in lines two and four to draw attention to the gap between what God is doing and what God should be doing, another way of showing his frustration with God and prescribing God's actions. "A technique of

amplification which develops a matter through a climactic series, each stage of the series being further subdivided into a series of favorable/unfavorable comparisons” (Lanham 27–28), *progressio* is meant to highlight disparity between two things and the Petitioner uses it liberally in lines two and four. Line two contains three mild verbs—“knock,” “breathe,” and “shine”—along with a set of two verbs stating God’s ultimate purpose, to “seek to mend.” Line four, containing verbs similar to those of line two with respect to meaning, shows the Petitioner using *progressio* to full effect: as many scholars have noted, “break” is an amplification of “knock,” “blow” an amplification of “breathe,” and “burn” an amplification of “shine.” In a similar manner, “make me new” amplifies “seek to mend.” In each case, the verb, or set of verbs, from line two parallels those of line four, highlighting the lack of attention God pays to the Petitioner when a reader compares the first list (what God is doing in the present) to the second (what the Petitioner thinks God should be doing). Beyond using *progressio* to highlight his frustration with God, the Petitioner’s use of *progressio* also shows the Petitioner prescribing what he thinks God should be doing (breaking, blowing etc...). At the same time he argues that God is not doing enough. Clearly, the Petitioner feels that he is in control of the situation to the point that he can use rhetoric that does the double work of blaming God and ordering him to change.

The first line also contains hints that the Petitioner feels that he knows what is best for himself and should therefore tell God what to do. In line one, for instance, he tells God: “Batter my heart.” This is not so much a plea as a command for God to exert his power to open the Petitioner’s heart. The verb “batter” carries with it connotations of a military siege, part of which included a battering ram striking the gates of a city “with the purpose (and result) of breaking down or demolishing them” (“Batter”). At this point in the poem, the Petitioner is ambiguous as to why the doors of his heart remain closed to God, but it is telling that he orders God to bombard or shatter his heart with force without telling God why his heart remains closed. The rhetoric suggests that at

this point in the poem, the Petitioner feels that the reasons his heart remains closed are unimportant in comparison to the fact that God is not doing more to open it. A sincere plea by the Petitioner for God to batter his heart would include reasons why he needs help.¹⁴ Without giving reasons why he cannot open his heart and focusing entirely on God's inaction, the statement comes across as an accusatory command.

Last, the Petitioner uses Biblical language to further strengthen his claim that he can prescribe how God should intervene in his life. That the verbs the Petitioner uses in lines two and four are Biblical is well-documented. For instance, J.C. Levenson suggests that the triad of verbs in the first quatrain evoke a "modern version of the Biblical potter-and-clay image" as "the various metaphors [in the first 4 lines] coherently suggest a single situation: God is a tinker, Donne a pewter vessel in the hands of God the artisan" (Item 31). R.D. Bedford suggests that instead of turning to Levenson's interpretation,¹⁵ critics should reiterate the biblical imagery of God as a potter and mankind as clay. He cites two main arguments for adherence to this metaphor: first, the fact that "God as a potter is of course a recurring biblical image..." (17), and second, that the wording of line three invokes the act of a potter using a "throwing wheel" to shape clay (18). Tunis Romein suggests a different interpretation altogether which, while not explicitly Biblical, incorporates all six verbs more completely than Levenson's or Bedford's suggestions and has Biblical undertones. Romein argues that "Perhaps God is being portrayed not as a metalblower who applies his breath to the flames, but as a glass blower who uses his breath to fill the vessel and give it new form" (13), showing how the metaphor of man as "an imperfect piece of blown crystal" (14) unifies all of the verbs the Petitioner uses under one metaphorical expression. Each of these metaphors has Biblical precedent and represents God's relationship to Israel. This move by the Petitioner attempts to give

¹⁴ Note that when the Petitioner tells God that knocking, shining, and breathing are insufficient, these are not reasons that the Petitioner needs help so much as reasons why God should follow his opening command to "Batter my heart."

¹⁵ Bedford argues that Levenson's interpretation is not a true modernization of the potter-and-clay metaphor because the image of God as a metal-worker "is biblical" (17).

authority and legitimacy to his commands for God to change. In essence, the Petitioner says to God, “I know what you need to do in my case because this is what you did for the Israelites in the Old Testament.” Paradoxically, the Petitioner attempts to command God to change from a kind god to the vengeful, violent god that the Petitioner sees underlying Old Testament metaphors by using God’s own words against him. That all of these attempts fail to elicit the response the Petitioner hopes is witnessed by the fact that he changes strategies immediately in the next two lines to a more moderate, though still unyielding, approach.

The Petitioner’s language in lines five through six suggests a change in his attitude, from a domineering to a more moderate understanding of his relationship to God, because he backs off from commanding God to knock down the wall of his heart and instead asks God to intervene; the Petitioner presents himself as powerless to open his heart to God. This shift can be seen in the metaphor of the town that the Petitioner uses to represent his relationship with God. Before proceeding, however, I must note that I consider the town metaphor a continuation of the synecdoche that the Petitioner uses in line one when he commands God “Batter my heart.” As stated before, the word batter connotes siege. The usurped town in lines five through six, because the townspeople are powerless to admit the rightful ruler, would necessarily need to be put under siege in order for the rightful ruler to regain his throne. The link between these two thoughts highlights the changes that take place in the Petitioner’s language (and attitude) between line one and line five. The most significant change is that the Petitioner backs away from commanding God to batter his heart and instead suggests that God use force to intervene in his salvation, now including the reasons why he, the Petitioner, cannot open his heart to God. The Petitioner tells God that a usurper has taken him, the town, and then says “I... / Labour to’admit you, but Oh, to no end” (line 6). The Petitioner is building self-awareness—by realizing that he needs divine help to overcome his captivity because a usurper, along with his defective Reason, prevents him from

opening the gates of his heart to God—and awareness of the Divine—by realizing that God can do for him what he cannot do for himself. The Petitioner’s admission shifts the argument from a series of commands and accusations to a conversation and shows the Petitioner becoming more humble.

Yet, the Petitioner still retains a sense that he knows best what God should do. By using the rhetorical figure called *ennoia*, a “purposeful holding back of information that nevertheless hints at what is meant” (“Ennoia”), the Petitioner creates the illusion that God comes to the solution himself. The Petitioner begins the second quatrain by implying that some kind of violence was involved in the taking of the metaphorical town because “Usurped” implies more than just a change in leadership; it connotes a sense of how the change of power took place. Instead of a peaceful change of power, or one approved by the “town,” the usurper “seized, obtained...by usurpation or force; possessed unjustly or illegally” (“Usurped”). In usurping the town, the new leader acted against the will of the Petitioner. Second, the Petitioner shows that the usurper exercises some kind of power over him which represses his ability to admit God to the town. The Petitioner says “I,... / Labour to’admit you” (lines 5-6), but quickly follows that his efforts are “Oh, to no end” (line 6). These two statements constitute the Petitioner’s use of *ennoia* with which he essentially tells God “I’m trying to let you in, but I can’t because someone else is stopping me...and since I am pretty much powerless here, someone who can force his way into the town—hint, hint—should help me out.” Each description of the situation suggests to God that God needs to act to help the Petitioner because the Petitioner cannot act for himself. The Petitioner’s use of *ennoia* allows him to lead God to the “correct” conclusion without seeming totally prescriptive.

The Petitioner couples the *ennoia* with *commiseratio*, a rhetorical device aimed at “evoking pity in the audience” (Lanham 37), and *exphonesis*, an “exclamation expressing emotion” (Lanham 61), which is also a change from the rhetoric he uses in the first quatrain. These two rhetorical devices are both used to evoke sympathy or pity, which the Petitioner uses in hopes of spurring God to

action instead of continuing to use aggressive accusation. The Petitioner uses *commiseratio* and *epibonesis* simultaneously in the word “oh,” which he inserts between the phrase “but...to no end.” Placing the “oh” in the middle of the explanatory phrase fills the otherwise unremarkable statement with the emotion of hopelessness. The “Oh” shows that the Petitioner feels such strong emotion from being powerless to admit God that he cannot help but cry out about it. This cry of despair, this lament oozing *epibonesis*, portrays the Petitioner as grief-stricken in hopes that God will be moved by pity to act. This approach marks a change in direction for the speaker. While the Petitioner does still try to help God arrive at what the Petitioner thinks is the correct form of action (forcibly liberating the town), he tries to motivate God to action by evoking pity instead of trying to persuade God that the divine being’s actions are wrong.

In the next two lines, lines 7-8, the Petitioner’s rhetoric reveals a second shift in his attitude. By envisioning his relationship to God’s enemy as a betrothal, the Petitioner now admits that he is responsible for his inability to admit God into his life. This admission also absolves God of malpractice. Early Modern betrothal practice and law has been well-outlined in the work of Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts*, which, though not published until 1688, was written in the early 1600’s.¹⁶ Since Swinburne served as an ecclesiastical lawyer in various courts of York and attended the high commission court before his death, and since Lord Stowell cites his work in the books of Ecclesiastical law of the Church of England (Phillimore 710–711), his book is a reliable account of the legal understanding of betrothals in Donne’s lifetime. Also of note, Donne would have been well-aware of the laws surrounding betrothals both because of his marriage to Anne More, which her father tried to have annulled and for which Donne was briefly imprisoned (Bald 135), and because as Dean of St. Paul’s, Donne served on many an ecclesiastical court (Bald 415-22), which was the primary body concerned with resolving issues of betrothal and marriage

¹⁶ While there is no evidence of when it was actually written, Swinburne died in 1624, so it must have been written before then.

(Bald 419). To get straight to my point, Swinburne says that for a betrothal to be valid, both parties must consent to it (5, 237), meaning that one of two possible situations must have occurred: either God's enemy offered the Petitioner a betrothal and the Petitioner accepted, or the Petitioner offered God's enemy a betrothal and God's enemy accepted. Either way, God's enemy would not have been able to force the Petitioner into a betrothal, meaning that by using the word "betrothal," the Petitioner admits that he is fully responsible for his current captivity to God's enemy.¹⁷

Swinburne also helps account for the Petitioner's continued use of *commiseratio* in line nine and *exergasia* in line eleven. The Petitioner continues to try to evoke pity and to try to "work out" an escape from his betrothal because he knows that nothing, short of a divine miracle, can dissolve the bond. Swinburne tells that dissolving a spousal required that, "both Parties do *mutually* agree betwixt themselves to dissolve the contract" (236). The only way to legally break the bond between himself and God's enemy would involve both the Petitioner and the enemy agreeing to dissolve the spousal, which would never happen because God's enemy surely would not consent to letting the Petitioner go. The fact that the Petitioner tells God that he loves him and wants to be loved in return is meant to further evoke pity in God. Then, when he uses *exergasia* to list three ways that the spousal could be undone—first, through divorce; second, through untying the knot; or third, by breaking the knot—the Petitioner is again pleading for help. The pleas in lines nine and eleven, combined with the admission of his role in closing his heart to God, give the Petitioner's words a tone of humility, no longer the tone of authority so prevalent in the first quatrain.

The next shift occurs in line twelve when the Petitioner pleads, "take me to you, imprison mee." This request now shows that the Petitioner puts himself in a submissive role and leaves God the initiative to act. While these two phrases may seem to be a command or a suggestion, they

¹⁷ Unlike the Petitioner of Lindley and Oliver, the Non-Ramist Petitioner uses legal jargon to admit something about himself, that he is at fault for his captivity to God's enemy, instead of trying to elucidate man's relationship to God by means of a legal metaphor.

actually constitute two offers of marriage. Henry Swinburne again sheds light on the meaning of this plea:

[Of the] words whereby Spousals are contracted: Some are of the present time, as [I do take thee to my wife] and [I do take thee to my Husband &c.] and some of the future time, as [I will take thee to my wife] and [I will take thee to my husband, &c.]”
(55)

Swinburne further explains that “When the parties do Contract Spousals by words of present time, or by the words of the future time, having relation to the Execution or Substance of Matrimony, hereby are Spousals *de praesenti* Contracted” (82). In explaining the contracting of spousals, Swinburne repeats the phrase, “I take thee...” several times, a phrase which resembles the speaker’s plea, “take me to you, emprison me” (line 12). To alert readers that the Petitioner’s plea for God to “take me to you” is an offer of marriage, Donne places these words immediately after a discussion of betrothals. Making this offer of marriage shows that the Petitioner wants to be with God, but no longer wants to dictate the terms of that relationship, because doing so may overstep his bounds. Unlike in previous lines, the Petitioner now gives God full control in the relationship, knowing that he must wait for God to respond.

Furthermore, beyond offering himself to God and giving God the initiative to accept or reject the offer, the Petitioner also uses the rhetorical figure of *exergasia* by restating the offer two different ways. This figure comes from the Greek meaning, among other things “working out.” By “working out” his relationship to God (that is, stating it multiple times to try and get a grasp on it instead of just stating what the relationship is) as he tries to do earlier in the poem, the Petitioner admits that he does not fully understand his relationship to God. This humble admission shows that the Petitioner’s understanding of his relationship to God has changed drastically from the first lines

of the poem. In fact, this offer of marriage could be seen as an act of faith, one the Petitioner could not take earlier because he was unable to relinquish control over his relationship with God.

The most significant rhetoric of the poem comes in the last two lines, when the Petitioner both proposes a way that God can effectively cancel his unwanted betrothal to God's enemy, and then gives himself utterly to God. First, the Petitioner proposes a way for him to escape his betrothal to God's enemy. Swinburne outlines thirteen possible ways for a spousal to be undone but none can help the Petitioner. While the plea for rape in line fourteen seems to be a way out because, "when as the Party doth after the Contract made, commit *Fornication*, for the Innocent Party is at liberty, and may dissolve the Contract" (Swinburne 237), unless the enemy consented to dissolve the spousal, even rape would not be a way out of the betrothal. But, looking at the Petitioner's offer of marriage along with the plea for rape shows that when seen together, these actually do constitute a solution to the Petitioner's unwanted betrothal. One of the main conditions of the freedom of a *de futuro* contract (which is undoubtedly what the Petitioner entered into with God's enemy) was abstinence. Without abstinence, Swinburne warns, "Spousals de futuro do become Matrimony" (224). Even if both parties "protest before the Act done, that they did not intend thereby, that the Spousals should become Matrimony, yet this protestation is overthrown by the fact following; for by lying together, they are presumed to have swarved from their former dishonest protestation; And so the former Spousals are now presumed honest Matrimony." So powerful was this rule that, "albeit the Woman were betrothed against her Will (presumably after consenting, and then changing her mind), yet if she suffer her self to be known by him, to whom she was espoused, she is presumed to have consented unto him, as unto her Husband, whereby the Spousals are made Matrimony" (225). Presumed consent extended even into the realm of an espoused woman being raped against her will: "albeit the Man do by violence carry away the Woman, with whom he hath contracted Spousals, and have to do with her (even if it be against her will), hereby Spousals become Matrimony" (226). When

all of this information is considered, here is what the Petitioner seems to be thinking: if he contracts a spousal with God and then God ravishes him “against his will,” the spousal with God will irrevocably be consummated as marriage. Likewise, the Petitioner will not have fornicated with God, because the rape was “against his will,” and God’s enemy will not have any power to uphold or revoke the marriage. The Petitioner has found a legal loophole which, albeit far-fetched, will allow him to marry God and escape his betrothal to God’s enemy, who would surely never release him from their spousal.

There are, however, certain concessions the Petitioner makes as he proposes this solution that make it different from the prescriptive solutions in the first quatrain of the poem and which show that his understanding of his relationship to God has changed entirely from the beginning of the poem. First and foremost, the Petitioner leaves himself entirely in God’s hands and at God’s mercy. The first way the Petitioner shows that he is giving control of the relationship to God is through the rhetoric of lines twelve through thirteen: “for I / Except you’enthral mee, never shall be free.” By saying that God must enthrall him, or make him a slave, also suggesting that God is to be the slave-master, the Petitioner essentially says “God, you should be in total control of our relationship, like a slave-master is in control of a slave.” Then, in line fourteen, the Petitioner restates the same general idea in sexual terms: “Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.” While this may resemble the Petitioner’s commands in the first quatrain, asking God to ravish him in order to make him chaste is different. Instead of telling God how to act, the Petitioner’s rhetoric shows that he has come to a realization of what must happen to him in order for him to have the relationship with God that he seeks. By admitting his guilt, the Petitioner conceptualizes his relationship with God differently than before. Now, the Petitioner’s tone carries no blame or resentment with it—he has exchanged them for sincerity. His admission also shows God that he is now prepared to let God control the relationship, and he attempts to prove his dedication by relinquishing control over his

own body. The Petitioner also suggests that he has given total control to God because the word “ravish” also can mean “to remove (a person) from earth, esp. to heaven” (“Ravish” def. 4a) and “to transport (a person, the mind, etc.) with the strength of some emotion; to fill with ecstasy” (“Ravish” def. 4b). Making God the subject of a verb that has multiple possible meanings in the sentence draws more focus to the word “you” than the striking sexual meaning of “ravish.” Whether the Petitioner says that God must remove him from earth to heaven or fill him with ecstasy, the way that he frames the sentence by saying “except *you* ravish...” (emphasis mine) suggests that the Petitioner sees God in control. Furthermore, the fact that the non-sexual meanings of “ravish” constitute actions that the Petitioner cannot do for himself (he cannot transport himself to heaven nor fill himself with ecstasy) shows that the Petitioner’s rhetoric no longer has a commanding tone, but a humble tone which admits his limitations. In short, beyond suggesting that God is in total control like a rapist is in control of a victim’s body, the Petitioner also suggests that God is in total control of their relationship by leaving room for other meanings of “ravish” to reinforce the implications of the primary sexual meaning.

The development from pride to humility that the Petitioner’s rhetoric shows over the course of the poem comes to a climax in line 14 because, beyond showing that he now believes that God should be in total control of their relationship, he also uses the rhetorical device *cataporesis*, “an extravagant, unexpected, farfetched metaphor” (Lanham 31), which shows that the Petitioner feels sense of awe surrounding God that did not exist at the beginning of the poem. Specifically, the Petitioner’s use of *cataporesis* actually does three important things for the poem: first, it reinforces the distance between the Petitioner and God; second, it confirms the relationship between God and the Petitioner because the rhetorical device is a symbol for their relationship; and third, it shows that the Petitioner feels a sense of awe about God. To begin, *cataporesis* reinforces the distance between God and the Petitioner by emphasizing the utter unlikeness between himself and God in the last two

metaphors of the poem. First, he says that he cannot be “free” except he is enthralled by God, a clear use of *catachresis* because the concepts of freedom and thralldom are opposites; the way that the Petitioner uses these words asserts that there is a relationship between the two of them (e.g. freedom comes as a result of thralldom) even though they seem to be absolutely unlike one another. This *catachresis* also secondarily highlights the fact that the Petitioner now sees a distance between himself and God, with himself as a slave and God as the slave master. A slave is subject to the will of his master, while the master chooses how to live for himself, showing one way that there is a distance between slave and master—one does not have the freedom to choose while the other does. The second *catachresis*, in line 14, functions similarly to the one in line 13. The Petitioner suggests that chastity can only come as a result of something that will destroy it—ravishment. Again, there is a hierarchy here. A rapist is able to accomplish his/her designs because he/she is in a position of power over the victim. The victim, because he/she cannot prevent the rapist’s designs, is in a subordinate position. Both of these *catachreses* show that the Petitioner now sees himself in a different kind of relationship with God than he does at the beginning of the poem; he now sees himself and God as different and distanced from one another.

But, even as the *catachresis*, being a comparison, shows the Petitioner separated from and subjected to God, it confirms the relationship between the Petitioner and God. The *catachresis* in line 13, for example, which casts the Petitioner into the role of “slave” and God as “slave master,” does not go too far in saying that freedom can only come through captivity. In fact, the suggestion that spiritual freedom can only be found in subjection to God is a common theme in the Bible. A few examples will suffice. To begin, Christ describes what it means to be “great” as a Christian when he says, using *catachresis*, “...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant” (*King James Bible*, Matt. 20:26-27). To be spiritually great in God’s kingdom, a person must be a servant. More specific to my argument about

freedom through being a servant, Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant” (*King James Bible*, 1 Cor. 7:21-22). Paul says, in essence, and along the same lines of the Petitioner’s rhetoric in line 13, that to be free a person must be Christ’s servant. These examples from the Bible reconcile the two dissimilar concepts of “freedom” and “captivity” that the Petitioner uses in line 13 because they show that the even though the Petitioner takes the role of slave, he has found that having the power to open his heart to God, entering a loving relationship with him, and attaining the spiritual greatness he seeks (namely, from line 4 of the poem, being made “new”) only come through subjection to God.

Taking the idea of finding likeness in unlikeness even further, Donne uses *cataplexis* in line 14 to show that even in a moment of separation there can still be a sense of closeness with the Divine. In fact, the language of line 14 shows the Petitioner closer to God than any of the preceding language in the poem. Though the idea of rape is in itself repulsive, it does express a physical closeness between the Petitioner and God, because sex, whether consented to or not, requires physical contact. Thus, even though the *cataplexis* of line 14 expresses utter difference between the Petitioner and God, it shows a closeness that is not attained anywhere else in the poem. The Petitioner’s rhetorical argument in line 14 forms itself into another *cataplexis* when the argument is taken to its logical end: suggesting that chastity can only come through rape argues, when those concepts are applied to the Petitioner (as victim) and God (as rapist), that man can attain closeness with God in a moment of utter separation. Even though the victim and perpetrator of a rape are utterly separated by their desires (the victim desires not to be raped, the rapist wants to have his way with the victim), they are physically close in the moment that their desires are irreconcilable. While limitations preclude a lengthy exploration of the theological implications of this argument, it is

certainly significant that the Petitioner's rhetoric argues that closeness with the Divine only comes at moments of complete separation. Briefly, the Petitioner's realization shows that man must have faith, that is, belief in God without unequivocal evidence of His existence, in order to approach and feel a sense of reverence of the Divine.

Third, the *catachresis* that the Petitioner uses in line 14 shows that he feels a sense of awe about God because, even though he suggests chastity through rape, there is a sense that the Divine can reconcile the difference between the two and make the Petitioner holy. This idea has been discussed by many, but the most compelling argument comes from William Kerrigan who argues that Donne's language in line 14 shows, because it anthropomorphizes God, that "...at such moments [when his accommodations failed] Donne worshipped human evil with the difficult faith that evil is, when predicated of God, perfection" (363). Kerrigan argues that because Donne anthropomorphizes God, he gives God human attributes that require Donne to accept that human evil is perfection when it is an attribute of his anthropomorphized God. In other words, if Donne wants to anthropomorphize God to try to understand Him, he has to come to terms with the fact that an anthropomorphized God will have some of the evil attributes of humanity. While Kerrigan's argument accounts for all aspects of the poem's *catachresis* and logically accounts for the seeming contradiction presented by the *catachresis*, there are alternatives to his opinion. One of the most obvious comes from the poem itself. Instead of assuming that the Petitioner tries to unravel (and, as Kerrigan argues, succeeds in unraveling) a complex theological understanding of the Divine, we can take the Petitioner's word that reason can simply fall short of explaining some things. Contrary to Kerrigan's argument, I feel that the *catachresis* at the end of the poem argues that the Petitioner's understanding simply falls short of understanding a being so different from himself. Instead, the language shows that at the moment of acknowledging that he cannot fully comprehend his relationship with God, he still feels close to the Divine. However, even as he fails to understand

God, the Petitioner discovers a sense of awe. I have already shown how the *catachresis* in line 14 shows that the Petitioner feels close to the divine in the same moment that he feels utterly separated from God. This paradox in turn rhetorically creates a sense of awe about the divine. Awe of the divine is “Dread mingled with veneration, reverential or respectful fear; the attitude of a mind subdued to profound reverence in the presence of supreme authority, moral greatness or sublimity, or mysterious sacredness” (“Awe” def. 2). In short, the Petitioner never resolves the problem that he does not understand his relationship to God, suggesting that by the end of the poem, we are to understand that only God’s omniscience can reconcile the difference between a petitioner and the Divine. This is the Petitioner’s leap of faith—believing he has a meaningful relationship with a being that nevertheless evades every attempt at explanation and understanding. Once the Petitioner realizes that God reconciles what he cannot, combined with his discovery, expressed in the rape *catachresis*, that God is completely in charge of the relationship, he discovers both veneration and profound respect for God simultaneous to his dread (or respectful fear) of God.

To put it another way, the Petitioner creates a sense of awe of the Divine for the reader in precisely the same moment that he discovers it for himself. Instead of resolving the theological question of how man can come to know a being as vast and complex as God, the rhetoric of the poem comments on the fact that rhetoric can change attitudes and perceptions—in this case, make a proud person more humble—and bring man to better know himself. This humility leads the Petitioner to realize that he does not have to fully understand all aspects of intimacy, connection, and proper devotion in his relationship to God to understand that he *has* a relationship with the divine, consequently leaving him feeling a sense of awe and reverence at the end of the poem.

Conclusion: Rhetoric and Devotion: Discovering Holiness through Language

While some, like George Puttenham, have argued that *catachresis* is nothing less than “the figure of abuse” (150), Donne argues the opposite. Instead, says Donne, *catachresis* is the rhetorical device of sublimity—the trope of God himself. Donne makes his argument by using two *catachreses* that he never fully resolves and leaving the resolution to his readers. Even though I previously stated that there are ways of finding likeness in the unlikeness of the two *catachreses* (by considering the Biblical usage of the concepts of servitude and freedom and second by considering the physicality of the rape), Donne does not explicitly resolve the paradoxes himself. Instead, he presents the paradoxes to his readers and then becomes silent, allowing his readers the opportunity to resolve the paradoxes themselves. Donne’s silence does double work here. Not only does it allow his readers to participate in a process of resolving the paradoxes in the poem, it involves them in a process of knowing God similar to the Petitioner’s. As Donne’s readers consider how the Petitioner can find freedom through slavery and chastity through rape, Donne leads them to consider the fact that their own relationship with God is also a *catachresis*. By using *catachresis* as the unifying trope of the poem, Donne argues that man and God, two beings unlike one another, can still have a meaningful, even intimate, relationship despite their differences and encourages his readers to follow the same process as his poetic speaker.

Furthermore, Donne suggests to his readers that they, like the Petitioner, do not know as much about themselves or God as they think they do. Donne shows over the course of the poem that the Petitioner lacks self-knowledge even though his language shows that he is confident he knows himself. In the beginning of the poem, the Petitioner asserts that he knows how God should intervene in his life and takes no responsibility for his heart being closed. Then, later in the poem, the Petitioner comes to the realization that he alone is at fault for his closed heart. At the end of the poem the Petitioner finds that once he acknowledges his fault and gives his will over to God, he

discovers a sense of awe in relation to the Divine. Donne argues that the Petitioner does not know himself, but discovers himself over the course of the poem. In the same way, Donne argues that the Petitioner does not understand his relationship with God at the beginning of the poem but comes to understand it better by the end. In this sense, we might think of the poem as a sermon: similar to his argument about the *catachreses*, Donne's argument about self-knowledge and knowledge of God are ultimately aimed at his audience. Donne suggests to his readers that they, like the Petitioner of the poem, do not know as much about themselves or about God as they think. Thus, by dramatizing the transformation of the Petitioner from the beginning of the poem to its end, Donne leads his readers to consider their own limitations and find their own gaps in self-knowledge so that they, too, can find the transcendent truth they seek.

Re-examining "Batter my heart" using Non-Ramist rhetorical theory paints the picture of a John Donne whose hardship in the years preceding his decision to join the church were not filled with bitterness or despair, but learning. Perhaps the poem was inspired by events or feelings in Donne's own life. Perhaps Donne's dependence on the charity of friends and patrons humbled him during the time the poem was written. Perhaps Donne's belief in God was tried and tempered during his years of scarcity before his years of plenty. We will never know for certain but one thing becomes abundantly clear when reading this poem in the light of Non-Ramist rhetoric: the Donne that wrote "Batter my heart" had changed significantly from his early years. This poem shows a Donne whose wisdom and attention to spiritual things had developed considerably from the saucy Jack Donne of the earlier poems: this is a Donne whose crucible of failed social and economic advancement molded him into the man who would become the enigmatic preacher, the revered Dean of St. Paul's.

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Appendix I

Rhetorical Figures in “Batter my heart”

Preliminary Notes

This appendix contains a list of the many and various figures and tropes Donne uses throughout “Batter my heart.” I have chosen to include such a list for two reasons: first, to make it easier to see how much interplay there is in the poem between various figures and tropes, and second to give a better idea of how many tropes can be used in a poem of only 14 lines.

Furthermore, I hope that the list will give my reader an idea of how much thought and rhetorical planning can go in to writing poetry if a person is aware of the figures and tropes available for use, as Donne and other authors in the Early Modern period would have been. While there is no record of how Donne composed this poem, the fact that he would have had a rhetorical education suggests that he must have consciously used at least some of the tropes and figures he learned during his schooling (please refer to Chapter I for a discussion of Donne’s education). All definitions come from Richard A. Lanham’s *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*.

*Figures and Tropes by Line*Line 1:

- Adhortatio – A commandment, promise, or exhortation intended to move one’s consent or desires. Used in the statement “Batter my heart” in an attempt to convince God to change his interactions with the Petitioner from a mild approach to a more violent approach.
- Synecdoche – substitution of part for whole, genus for species, or vice versa. Used at the beginning of line 1 by using the word “heart” as the ‘part’ substituting for the ‘whole’ of the Petitioner’s desires or for the Petitioner himself.
- Aporia – true or feigned doubt or deliberation about an issue. Used at the end of line 1, “for you / As yet but...,” to express that there is doubt on the issue of whether or not God’s previous effort was up to snuff.
- Enthymeme – an abridged syllogism, one of the terms being omitted as understood. In lines 1 and 2, by stating “Batter my heart” (his conclusion) and then saying “for you / As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend” (major premise), the Petitioner omits the implied minor premise “I am unsatisfied with the knocking, breathing, shining, and seeking to mend.”

Line 2:

- Accumulatio – heaping up praise or accusation to emphasize or summarize points or inferences already made. The list “knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend” can be seen as a list of accusations to emphasize the Petitioner’s dissatisfaction with God’s previous effort.
- Disjunctio – Use of different verbs to express similar ideas in successive clauses. The sets of verbs “knocke”/“breake,” “breathe”/“blowe,” “shine”/“burne,” and “seeke to mend”/“make me newe” are all examples of disjunctio.

- Isocolon – phrases of approximately equal length and corresponding structure. Lines 2 and 4 are examples of isocolon, they each contain three verbs and a three word statement that are made in phrases of equal length and of corresponding structure.
- Progressio – a special kind of Auxesis that involves building a point around a series of comparisons. Used in each of the following comparisons: “knocke” to “breake,” “breathe” to “blowe,” “shine” to “burne,” and “seeke to mend” to “make me newe.” These comparisons also include elements of incrementum, words or clauses placed in climactic order.
- Diazeugma – one subject with many verbs. The list of verbs in line 2 all with the subject “you” constitutes diazeugma.

Line 3:

- Assonance – Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. A brief example of assonance can be seen in the beginning of the line: “That *I* may *rise*,” and is significant because 1.) it draws attention to the word “I” and 2.) because the same kind of assonance occurs in the following line with the words “your” and “force.”
- Adhortatio – A commandment, promise, or exhortation intended to move one’s consent or desires. Used in the statement “That I may rise, and stand” in an attempt to convince God that changing his interactions with the Petitioner from a mild approach to a more violent approach would be best.
- Amphidiorthosis – To hedge a charge made in anger by qualifying it either before the charge has been made or (sometimes repeating the charge in other words) after. The use of the phrase “That I may rise, and stand” hedges the charges made against God in line 2 by showing that the Petitioner only charged God because he wants to “rise” and “stand.”

- Dehortatio – Dissuasion, advice to the contrary. Used in line 3 when Donne advises God to overthrow him, and continues in to line 4 when he asks God to bend His force to “break,” “blowe,” “burne” and “make me newe.”

Line 4:

- Consonance – resemblance of stressed consonant sounds where associated vowels differ. The “b” in the three consecutive verbs “break,” “blowe,” and “burne” all constitute consonance.
- Cacemphaton – sounds combined for harsh effect. The 3 “b’s” of “break,” “blowe,” and “burne” create a set of three harsh stresses that bring to mind the beating of a battering ram on a gate.
- Diazeugma – one subject with many verbs. The list of verbs in line 4 all with the subject “your force” constitutes diazeugma.

Line 5:

- Antapodosis – a simile in which the objects compared correspond in several respects. The simile comparing a town to a person corresponds in several respects: the heart is a gate, reason is a viceroy, God is the overthrown ruler, and many other correspondences could be drawn.
- Dicaelogia – defending one’s words or acts with reasonable excuses (lines 5-8). The two excuses in lines 5-8 are, first, that the Petitioner is doing his part to admit God (“Labour to admit you...”) and second that reason has betrayed him so he needs god’s help (“Reason...should defend / But is captiv’d or proves weake or untrue.”).
- Proecthesis – defending what one has done or said, by giving reasons and circumstances. The Petitioner defends what he has said in lines 1-4 by the reasonable arguments that he is doing his part to admit God (“Labour to admit you...”) and that reason has betrayed him

so he needs God's help ("Reason...should defend / But is captiv'd or proves weake or untrue.").

- Enthymeme – an abridged syllogism, one of the terms being omitted as understood. The two premises are that Donne is laboring to admit God and that it is to no end. The implied conclusion is that God needs to save him.
- Allegory – extending a metaphor through an entire speech or passage; the rhetorical meaning is narrower than the literary one, though congruent with it. The entire second quatrain uses the extended city metaphor (while each part is a simile, the entire quatrain together is an extended metaphor).
- Simile – one thing is likened to another, dissimilar thing by the use of *like*. "I, *like* an usurpt towne..." (emphasis mine).
- Memsis – complaining against injuries and pleading for help. This happens throughout the poem but is most obvious here when he says "Reason...should defend" and pleads for help in letting God in.

Line 6:

- Commiseratio – evoking pity in the audience. Adding the word "oh," which Donne draws attention to by using a capital "O," is meant to evoke an emotional response of pity. This expression also has elements of *threnos*, a lamentation, or more generally as *exuscitatio*, emotional utterance that seeks to move hearers to a like feeling.
- Ecphonesis – exclamation expressing emotion. Though Donne does not use an exclamation point, "but Oh, to no end" is an exclamation of emotion.
- Apocarteresis – giving up one hope and turning to another. Donne gives up hope of his own efforts fixing the situation, turns to reason and then to God.

Line 7:

- Assonance – Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. “Reason,” “mee,” (twice) and “defend.”
- Enthymeme – an abridged syllogism, one of the terms being omitted as understood. The two premises are that Reason should defend him and that it proves weak or untrue, implying the conclusion that he needs something else (God) to defend him.
- Metaphor – changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it; assertion of identity rather than, as with simile, likeness. Reason is God’s viceroy.

Line 8:

- Metaphor – changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it; assertion of identity rather than, as with simile, likeness. The metaphor about reason is continued in this line.
- Adjunctio – the use of one verb to express two similar ideas at the beginning or end of a clause. Reason either proves weak or proves untrue.
- Paristasis – amplifying by describing attendant circumstances. In this case, the attendant circumstances are expressed in an either/or. Either reason is “captiv’d,” or “proves weak or untrue,” each situation, regardless of which is true, amplifies the previous statement.

Line 9:

- Commiseratio – evoking pity in the audience. Stating that the Petitioner “dearly” loves God and “would be loved” in return, the audience is moved to pity for the Petitioner.
- Adianoeta – an expression that has an obvious meaning and a secret one beneath. There could be an implication here that the Petitioner is not loved in return by God.
- Mempsis – complaining against injuries and pleading for help. This is the “pleading for help” that comes after the injuries complained against in lines 7-8.

Line 10:

- Metaphor – changing a word from its literal meaning to one not properly applicable but analogous to it; assertion of identity rather than, as with simile, likeness. God’s “enemy” is the betrothed, or fiancé, of the speaker.
- Paristasis – amplifying by describing attendant circumstances. By saying the Petitioner is betrothed to God’s enemy, Donne describes a circumstance attendant to his loving God and wanting to be loved by him that amplifies the situation.

Line 11:

- Adhortatio – A commandment, promise, or exhortation intended to move one’s consent or desires. There are three: “Divorce mee,” “untie,” and “breake that knot againe.”
- Deesis – vehement supplication of either of the gods or of men. Stringing the three pleas “Divorce mee,” “untie,” and “breake that knot againe” so closely together makes the supplication vehement.

Line 12:

- Adhortatio – A commandment, promise, or exhortation intended to move one’s consent or desires. There are two: “Take mee to you” and “imprison mee.”
- Asphalia – offering oneself as surety for a bond. Donne offers himself to God in a betrothal and as a prisoner.

Line 13:

- Chiasmus – the ABBA pattern of mirror inversion. This happens in lines 13 and 14. Line 13 is in “AB” structure and line 14 is in “BA” structure.
- Adynata – a stringing together of impossibilities. The impossibilities are “I won’t be free unless made a thrall” and in line 14 “I will not be chaste except ravished.”
- Paradox – a seemingly self-contradictory statement, which yet is shown to be (sometimes in a surprising way) true. There are two of these: “I won’t be free unless made a thrall” and

in line 14 “I will not be chaste except ravished.” Neither are logical statements, but both make some sense when considered in Christian cultural/theological contexts.

- Antithesis – conjoining contrasting ideas. The ideas of freedom and captivity, ideas that contrast with one another, are linked together.
- Assonance – Identity or similarity in sound between internal vowels in neighboring words. “mee,” “be,” and “free” all have the same vowel sound, significant because the “mee” is what wants to “be free.”
- Paraenesis – warning of impending evil. While the expressions of lines 13 and 14 are meant primarily to evoke a response, they do so by means of warning of the impending consequences of not being made a slave or ravished.

Line 14:

- Demonstratio – vivid description. The image of chastity through rape is vivid in that it brings a vivid image into the mind.
- Epiphonema – Striking epigrammatic or sententious utterance to summarize and conclude a passage, poem, or speech. The entire last line summarizes and concludes the entire poem.
- Hyperbole – exaggerated or extravagant terms used for emphasis and not intended to be understood literally. The rape is not meant to be understood in a symbolic/emblematic sense and not literally.
- Paradox – a seemingly self-contradictory statement, which yet is shown to be (sometimes in a surprising way) true. The idea of rape bringing chastity seems contradictory but can be reconciled in various ways.
- Antithesis – conjoining contrasting ideas. The ideas of chastity and rape, ideas that contrast with one another, are linked together.

Appendix II

Transcribed MS Versions of “Batter my heart”

Preliminary Notes

I have ordered the MS in the appendix according to the order used in Peter Beal’s *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, which was invaluable in identifying and finding copies of the MS containing “Batter my heart.” I have chosen to use Beal’s ordering of the manuscripts in the appendix because his index enabled me to find the information I needed quickly and efficiently, saving valuable time and allowing me to focus more on transcribing than locating the poems. The 7th volume, 1st part of the *Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne* was also invaluable in tracking down and compiling the modern shelfmarks for various manuscripts that had changed since Beal’s book was published, namely the Luttrell MS, and for compiling a list of the sigla used in previous Donne scholarship to refer to the various MS.

In the transcriptions I have tried to preserve the essence of the handwritten copies as closely as possible. To begin, I have mimicked the alignment of the lines in the various MS by indenting the transcriptions. When the MS contain characters aligned higher than normal alignment, I have spaced the typed characters above normal alignment. In most cases, when characters are spaced above normal alignment, they remain roughly the same size as the preceding characters but occasionally they are smaller and I have varied the size accordingly.

Last, I have tried to simulate the variation among characters in the MS handwriting. The most prominent example of this is the use of both long and short “s” characters in the MS. I have used a long “s” when the “s” in the MS does not resemble examples of a short “s” from the same MS. I have also varied the “e” character when the MS handwriting uses 2 versions of the “e” character: sometimes the MS handwritten “e” resembles the Greek lowercase epsilon, “ε,” instead of the lowercase English “e,” sometimes it does not. If both variations of the “e” character appear

in the same MS, I have used both the “ε” and “e” characters in the transcription. If only one type of the “e” character appears in the MS, regardless of whether the handwriting resembles the “ε” or “e,” I have used the English character (“e”). I have chosen to do this because showing variation among the versions is more of a priority than trying to represent the MS handwriting, which can only be accurately shown by the scans of the original MS.

I have included notes for each transcription to explain the alignment, spacing, and character decisions I have made. I have only included notes for lines that require explanation.

Dowden MS:

1. Batter my hart, threë Person'd God; for you
2. As yett, but knocke, breath, shine, & seeke to mend
3. That I may rise, and stand, orethrowe mee, & be'nd
4. Your force to breake, blowe, burne, and make mee newe,
5. I, like an Vfurpt towne, to Another due,
6. Labor to admitt you, but oh to no End.
7. Reafon your Viceroy in Mee, mee shold defend,
8. But is captiu'd, and proues weake, or vntrue,
9. Yett dearly I loue you, and would be loved fayne,
10. But am betroth'd vnto your Enimye,
11. Diuorce mee, Vntyē, or breake that knott agayne,
12. Take Mee to you, Imprison mee, for I
13. Except you inthrall mee, neuer shall be free,
14. Nor euer chast, except you rauish mee.

CITATION: Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. e. 99, ff. 45v-6.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: D

NOTES:

- Line 2: This is the first line in which both variations of the “e” character appear. I have used the “e” at the end of “knocke” and the “ε” in “breathe” as benchmarks to determine whether to use the “e” or the “ε” characters to represent the MS handwriting in the rest of the poem.
- Line 3: I have put the mark resembling either an apostrophe or a comma between lines 2 and 3 with the word “bend” because it seemed too displaced toward “bend” for it to have been a comma following “mend” in line 2.
- Line 4: The comma following “burne” looks like it may be an extension of the stem of the “h” of “Another” in line 5, but because the comma narrows before touching the stem of the “h,” it is clearly not part of the “h,” but a comma following “burne.”
- Line 5, Note 1: I have represented the “v” beginning the word usurpt as a capital “v” because it more closely resembles the size of the “v” in “Viceroy” (line 7), undoubtedly a capital letter, than the “v” in “loved” (line 9), which is clearly lowercase.
- Line 5, Note 2: this is the first of two uses of the long “s” in this MS version of the poem, the other being “Reason” in line 7.
- Line 6, Note 1: While the “e” of “end” is not written large enough to immediately be considered an uppercase letter, it resembles, both in size and shape, the uppercase “E” of “Enimye” more than the lowercase “ε” of either “breathe” (line 2) or “due” (line 5).
- Line 6, Note 2: I have chosen to represent the uppercase “E’s” of “End” (line 6), “Enimye” (line 10), and “Except” (line 14) as an “E” instead of an “ε” because there is no variation among them; even though all three “E’s” resemble a larger version of the lowercase “ε” in that they are curved, not straight like the E of the Garamond typeface, there is no need for contrast to express variance among the letters so I have used the normal uppercase “E.”
- Line 7: Though the word “in” following “Viceroy” looks like it has been written “ni” instead of “in,” because previous “i” characters in the poem have a flare on the left side and the dot of the “i” placed with the next word, see “rise” (line 3) and “like” (line 5) for examples, I have put “in” as opposed to “ni.”
- Lines 7-8: There is a page break between these lines in the MS.

Newcastle MS:

1. Batter my hart, three Person'd God; for you
2. As yett, but knocke, breath, shine, & seeke to mend
3. That I may rise, and stand, ore throwe mee, & bend
4. your force to breake, blowe, burne, & make mee newe,
5. I, like an vsurp't towne, to Another due,
6. Labor to admitt you, but oh to no Ende
7. Reason your viceroy in mee, mee shold defend,
8. But ys Captiu'd, & proues weake, or vntrue,
9. yett dearlye I love you, & would be loved fayne,
10. But am betroth'd vnto you Enemye,
11. Diuorse mee, vnty, or breake that knott agayne,
12. Take mee to you, Imprison mee, for I
13. Except you inthrall mee, never shalbee free
14. Nor ever Chast, except you rauish mee.

CITATION: British Library, Harley MS 4955, f. 141.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: H49

NOTES:

- Line 1: In this poem, there are no variations among the "e's" so I have used the regular "e" character throughout.
- Line 3, Note 1: Because the other "e" characters in the poem that are followed by another letter do not have as large a gap between them as the "e" of "ore" and the "t" of "throwe," I have put a space between "ore" and "throwe."
- Line 3, Note 2: I have put a comma after "mee" instead of a semicolon because the flare on the right side resembles those on the words "rise" and "ore throwe," leading me to believe that the mark after "mee" is a comma and not a semicolon. I have done the same for other instances throughout the poem: "newe" (line 4), "towne" (line 5), "due" (line 5), "mee" (line 7), "vntrue" (line 8), "fayne" (line 9), "Enemye" (line 10), and "agayne" (line 11).
- Line 4: Though all of the other letters at the beginning of the lines are capitalized, the "y" of "your" resembles the "y's" in "you," (line 1) "yett" (line 2), and "viceroy" (line 7), all lower case letters. Because the "y" of viceroy would most likely not have been capitalized, I have chosen to represent the other "y's" in the poem that resemble it as lower case.
- Line 8: I have used a "u" in "proues" because, even though the bottom left side of the character makes it difficult to tell whether the writer intended to write a "v" or a "u," the bottom left edge is curved like the other "u" characters in the poem, instead of having the two defined points used when writing "v's." Consequentially, I have used a "u."
- Line 9: See note on line 4 for an explanation of why the "y" on "yett" is lowercase.
- Line 13: I have chosen to put a comma after "mee" because there is a light mark that looks more like a comma than an apostrophe going with "shalbee."

Cambridge Balam MS:

1. Better my Hart, Three Person'd God; for you
2. As yett, but knocke, breath, shine, & seeke to mend
3. That I may rise, & stand, overthrowe me, & bend,
4. Your force to breake, blowe, burne, & make me new.
5. I lyke an Vsurpt Towne, to another due,
6. Labor to admitt you, but oh to no end
7. Reason your Viceroy in mee, me should defend,
8. But is captiv'd, & proves weake or vntrue,
9. Yet dearely I love you, & would be Loved fayne,
10. But am betroth'd vnto your Enemyes,
11. Divorce mee, Vntye, or Breake that knott againe,
12. Take me to you, Imprison me, for I
13. Except you inthrall mee, never shall be free
14. Nor ever chaſt, except you ravish Mee.

CITATION: Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 5778, f. 15.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: C57

NOTES:

- Line 3: I have chosen to insert the glyph “ſt” instead of the long “l” because the lower half of the MS handwriting resembles a short “s” more than a long “s.” I have done the same with the word “chast” in line 14 for the same reason.
- Line 5, Note 1: Because the “v” of “Vsurpt” is written larger and with more flourish than the lowercase “v’s” in “overthrowe” (line 3) and “never” (line 13), I have capitalized it.
- Line 5, Note 2: Because the “t” of “towne” resembles the capital “t” of “that” at the beginning of line 3, I have capitalized it.
- Line 7: As with “Vsurpt” (line 5), because the “v” of “Viceroy” is larger and more flourished than the lowercase “v’s” in the rest of the poem, I have capitalized it.
- Line 8: this is the only variation of the character “e” in the poem. It resembles an “ε” more than an “e,” and I have chosen to present it as such.
- Line 9: The “l” of “Loved” resembles the capital “l” of “Labor (line 6) more than the lower case “l” of “lyke” (line 5) and “love” (line 9).
- Line 11: As with “Vsurpt” (line 5) and “Viceroy” (line 7), because the “v” of “Vntye” is larger and more flourished than the lowercase “v’s” in the rest of the poem, I have capitalized it. There is also a strong argument for capitalization based on the fact that the first letter of the other verbs in this line, “Divorce” and “Breake,” are both capitalized.

St. Paul's MS:

1. Batter my hart three persond God, for yo.^w
2. As yett but knock, breath, shine, & seeke to mend
3. That I maie rife, and stand, orethrow me & bend
4. Yo^f force to breake, blow, burne, and make me new
5. I, like an vsurpt towne, to another due,
6. Labor to admitt yo^w; but oh to noe end
7. Reafon your Viceroy in me, me should defend
8. But is Captivd, and proves weake or vntrue,
9. Yett deerly I loue yo^w;, and would be loved faine,
10. But am betrothd vnto your enemy,
11. Divorce me, vntie, or breake y^t knott againe,
12. Take me to yo^w imprifon me, for I
13. Except yo^w inthrall me, never shalbe free
14. Nor ever chaft except yo.^w ravifh me.

CITATION: St. Paul's Cathedral Library, MS 49. B. 43, f. [60].

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: SP

NOTES:

- Line 2: While the handwriting of "mend" and the other words ending in "d" have a flare that would seem to imply a following comma, because "stand" in line 3 has a comma following it in addition to the flare on the "d," I have not put commas after any of the lines with a word ending in "d" unless one is clearly written in.
- Line 7: While the word "in" of line 7 appears to be written "ni," because the placement of the dots of other "i's" in the poem are displaced, see the "i" in the word "inthrall" in line 13 for another example of a displaced "i" dot, I have used "in" instead of "ni" in line 7.
- Line 8: I have used a "v" instead of a "u" in "proves" because it resembles the "v" in "vsurpt" more than the "u" in "loue:" the pointed flare on the first stroke of the "v" does not appear on the "u" of "loue."

Denbigh MS:

1. Batter my hart three perfon'd God for yo^W
2. As yet but knock, breath shine, and seeke to mend
3. That I maye rife, and stand, orethrow mee, and bend
4. yo^f force to breake, blowe, burne, and make mee new,
5. I like an v^furped towne, to another due,
6. Labour to admitt yo^W; but oh; to noe end
7. Reason yo^f vice-roy in mee, mee should defend
8. But is captiu'd, and prooves weake, or vntrue
9. Yet dearely I love yo^W, and would be loved faine
10. But am betroth'd vnto yo^f Enemie
11. Divorce mee, vntie, or breake that knott againe
12. Take mee to yo^W, imprifon mee, for I
13. Except yo^W enthrall mee, never shalbe free
14. Nor ever chaft except yo^W ravish mee

CITATION: British Library, Add. MS 18647, f. 106v.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: A18

NOTES:

Line 8: For the word "prooves," there are clear "p," "r," "v," "e," and "s" characters. Because the remaining writing represents more than a single character, and because both characters resemble "o's," I have put 2 "o's" in "prooves."

Line 10: Because of the exaggerated lines on the first "e", suggesting that it is set apart from the other "e's", I have capitalized the first "e" of "Enemie."

Norton MS:

1. Batter my heart three perfond God; for yo^W
2. as yet but knock breath fhine, & seeke to mend
3. That I may rife and ftand, orethrowe me, and bend
4. yo^f force to breake, blowe, burne, and make mee newe
5. I like an vfurp'd towne, to another due,
6. labour to admitt yo^W, but oh to noe end
7. Reason yo^f Viceroye in me, mee fhould defend
8. but is captiv'd, or proves weake, or vntrue
9. yet deerely I loue yo^W, and would be loved faine
10. but am betroathd vnto yo^f Enimye,
11. Divorce me, vntie, or breake that knott againe
12. take me to yo^W; imprifon me, for I
13. except yo^W inthrall me, neuer fhall be Free
14. nor euer chaft, except yo^W raviſh me.

CITATION: Harvard Library, fMS Eng 966.3, f. 99.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: N

NOTES:

Line 1, Note 1: while there may seem to be a hyphen between “three” and “perfond,” because the othr “e’s” of the poem have a flare that extends from the middle of the character—see “shine,” (line 2) “seeke” (line 2), and “orethrowe” (line 3) for other examples—, I have chosen not to put a hyphen between the two words.

Line 1, Note 2: the “f” of the word “for” seems to be 2 letters, but because the “f” of “for” on line 12 also looks like 2 letters, and because I could think of no other alternative except using 2 “f’s,” I have chosen to use one “f” and consider the preliminary line a flare before the “f” character.

Line 2, Note 1: while the flares of the last “k” of “knock” and the “h” of “breath” could be seen to imply commas, I have not represented them as such because no commas are explicitly written in.

Line 2, Note 2: Though the handwriting of the “s” of “fhine” does not resemble the long “s’s” of “perfond” in line 1, “seeke” in line 2, or “rife” in line 3, I have chosen to represent it as a long “s” because it does not resemble the short “s” of “Reason” in line 7. The “s’s” of “ftand” (line 3), “fhould” (line 7), “fhall” (line 13), “chaft,” and “raviſh” (line 14) each resemble the handwriting of the “s” of “fhine” in line 2 and all precede consonants while the other long “s’s” all precede vowels. I have interpreted this to mean that while the long “s’s” preceding vowels do not resemble the “s’s” preceding consonants, both are nevertheless long “s’s”. I account the difference in the “s’s” to a convention of the handwriting of the writer.

Line 7: the “in” of line 7 looks like it is written “ni” because of the placement of the dot of the “i.” This is also true for the “i” of “imprison” and the “i” of “inthrall.” In each case, I have chosen to write with the “i” preceding the following “n” or “m” because many of the other “i” dots in the poem do not align exactly above their stem.

Line 8: because the line after the last “e” of “weake” resembles the commas after “blowe” and “burne” in line 4, I have represented it as a comma.

Puckering MS:

1. Batter my hart three perfon'd God, for you
2. As yet but knock, breath, shine, & seek to mend,
3. That I may rife, & stand, orethrowe mee, and bend
4. your force to breake, blowe, burne, & make mee newe
5. I like an vfurped towne, to another due,
6. Labour to admitt you; but oh, to noe end
7. Reafon yo^f Vice-roy in mee, mee should defend
8. But is captiue'd, and proues weake, or vntrue,
9. Yet dearly I loue you, & would bee loued faine
10. But am betroath'd vnto yo^f Enemy
11. Diuorce mee, vntie, or break that knott againe
12. Take mee to you, imprifon mee, for I
13. Except yo^w enthrall mee, neuer shall bee free
14. Nor euer chaft except yo^w rauifh mee

CITATION: Trinity College, Cambridge Library, MS R. 3. 12 (James 592), p. 232.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: TCC

NOTES:

- Line 4: The “y” of “your” does not have the same flourish that the “y” of “Yet” (line 9) and more closely resembles the other lowercase “y’s” throughout the rest of the poem.
- Line 7: The “v” of “Viceroy” is written larger and with more flourish than the other “v’s” of the poem, because of which I have capitalized it.
- Line 13: I have represented the offset character of “yo^w” as a “w” instead of a “u” because in other manuscripts a “w” is clearly used. In this case, what may seem to be a flourish on a “u” character is not merely for show, but is one of the stems of a “w.”

Dublin MS:

1. Batter my heart, three perfon'd God; for you
2. As yet, but knock, breath, shine, & seeke to mend
3. That I may rife and stand, orerthrowe mee, & bend
4. Yo^r force to break, blowe, burne, & make mee newe,
5. I, like an vfurp'd towne, to another due,
6. Labour to' admitt you; but oh to noe end
7. Reafon, yo^r Vice-roye in mee, mee should defend,
8. But is captiu'd, & proues weakε or vntrue,
9. Yet dearly I loue yo^w, and would bee loued faine
10. But am betroath'd vnto your enemye
11. Divorce mee 'vntyē, or breake that knott againe;
12. Take mee to yo^w, imprifon mee, for I,
13. Except yo^w inthrall mee, neuer shalbee free
14. Nor' euer chast except yo^w ravish mee

CITATION: Trinity College, Dublin Library, MS 877, f. 120.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: TCD

NOTES:

None.

O'Flahertie MS:

1. Batter my Hēart, Threē-persond God, for yo^u
2. As yet but knocke breath fhine and fēeke to mend
3. That I may rife and stand, or'ē throw mee, and bend
4. Your force to breake blow burne, and make mee new
5. I, like an vfurpd towne to another due
6. Labour to admitt yo^u, but o to no end
7. Reafon yo^r viceroy in mee mee should defend
8. But is captiu'd and proues weake or vntrue
9. Yet dearely I loue yo^u, and would bæe loued fayne
10. But am betrothd vnto yo^r enemy
11. Divorce mee, vntyē, or breake that knott agayne
12. Take mee to yo^u, emprifon mee, for I
13. Except yo^u enthrall mee never shall bæe frēe
14. Nor ever chast except you rauish mee.

CITATION: Harvard Library, MS Eng. 966.5, f. 19v.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: O'F

NOTES:

Line 1: I have used both the “ε” and the “e” characters to represent the variations in the handwriting of the “e” character throughout the poem.

Line 11: the third letter of the word “divorce”, which could be either a “u” or a “v,” because the letter is more pointed at the bottom, I have put down as a “v.”

Luttrell MS:

1. Batter my heart three-perfond God, for you
2. As yet but knocke, breath, fhine, & feeke to mend
3. That I may rife & stand, orethrow me and bend
4. your force to breake, blow, burne, & make me new.
5. I, like an vsurpd Townte to another due
6. Labour to admitt you, but o^h to no end
7. Reafon your Vice-roy in me me should defend
8. But is captiu'd & proues weake or vntrue
9. Yet dearly I loue you, & would be loued faine
10. But am betrothd vnto your enemye
11. Diuorce me vntye or breake that knott againe
12. Take me to you, imprifon me, for I
13. Except you enthrall me neuer shall be free
14. nor euer chast except you rauish me.

CITATION: Geoffrey Keynes Library, Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 8468, f. 104v.

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: Lut

NOTES:

Line 2: the comma after “knocke” is situated right above the “d” of “stand” in line 3.

Line 4: I have put a period after “new” because there is a light mark that does not resemble a bleed-mark and which, while not as defined as the period after “me” in line 14, still resembles a period more than a mistake or random dot.

Line 9: while the word “faine” may look as though it is spelled “fanie” because of the placement of the dot of the “i,” the “in” of “faine” resembles the “in” of “againe” in line 11. In the word “againe,” the stem of the “i” is taller than both of the stems of the “n” and of the three stems that make up the “i” and “n” of “faine,” the first stem is tallest, and is therefore most likely the “i.”

Line 12: as with “faine,” because the first stem is taller than the rest, it is most likely the “i” stem even though the dot is not directly over it.

Westmoreland MS:

1. Batter my hart, three-perfond God, for you
2. As yet but knock, breathe, shine, & seeke to mend;
3. That I may rise, & stand, overthrow me; and bend
4. Your force to breake, blow, burne, & make me new.
5. I, like an vfurp'd towne to'another dew
6. Labor to'admit you, but Oh to no end.
7. Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
8. But is captiv'd and proves weake or vntrew.
9. Yet dearly I love you, & would be loved faine:
10. But am betroth'd unto your enemy:
11. Divorce me, vnto or breake y^t knott agayne,
12. Take me to you, emprison me, for I
13. Except you enthrall me neuer shall be free,
14. Nor euer chaste except you raiishe mee.

CITATION: New York Public Library, Berg Collection, Westmoreland MS., f. [38v].

TRADITIONAL SIGLUM: W

NOTES:

- Line 1: Because the “s” of “persond” does not resemble the “s” of “As” at the beginning of line 2, and because that same “s” is used later in the poem, I have designated it as a long “s” while the “s’s” resembling the “s” of “As” in line 2 I have designated as short “s’s”. I have used the long “s” in “shine” (line 2), “seeke” (line 2), “stand” (line 3), “Reason” (line 7), “should” (line 7), “emprison” (line 12), “shalbe” (line 13), and “rauishe” (line 14).
- Line 5: Because the curved mark after the “I” does not, upon close inspection, seem to be part of the “I,” I have chosen to put it down as a comma following the “I.”
- Line 6: While the “o” of “Oh,” does not immediately look like a capital letter, when compared to the size of the other “o’s” of the poem, it is twice as large. Because of the size difference, I have capitalized it.

1633 Poems:

1. Batter my heart, three perfon'd God; for, you
2. As yet but knocke, breathe, fhine, and seeke to mend;
3. That I may rife, and stand, o'erthrow mee, 'and bend
4. Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.
5. I, like an ufurpt towne, to'another due,
6. Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
7. Reafon your viceroy in mee, mee fhould defend,
8. But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue,
9. Yet dearely'I love you',and would be lov'd faine,
10. But am betroth'd unto your enemie,
11. Divorce mee,'untie,or breake that knot againe,
12. Take mee to you, imprifon mee,for I
13. Except you'enthrall mee,never fhall be free,
14. Nor ever chaft,except you ravifh mee.

CITATION: Donne, John. *Poems, by J.D. VVith elegies on the authors death*. London: M[iles] F[lesher], 1633.

NOTES:

General Note: in this printing, "Batter my heart" is listed as Holy Sonnet X.

1635 Poems:

1. **B**atter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
2. As yet but knock, breathe, shine, & seek to mend;
3. That I may rise, and stand, o'rthrow me,'and bend
4. Your force to break, blow, burn, & make me new.
5. I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due,
6. Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end,
7. Reason your Viceroy in me, me should defend,
8. But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue,
9. Yet dearly'I love you', and would be lov'd faine,
10. But am betroth'd unto your enemy,
11. Divorce me,'untie, or breake that knot againe,
12. Take me to you, imprifon me, for I
13. Except you'enthrall me, never shall be free,
14. Nor ever chafte, except you ravish me.

CITATION: Donne, John. *Poems, by J.D. With elegies on the authors death*. London: M[iles] F[lesher], 1635.

NOTES:

General Note: in this printing, "Batter my heart" is listed as Holy Sonnet XIV.