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Redemption Typology in John Donne’s “Batter My Heart”

by

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In the seventeenth century, notes Barbara K. Lewalski, typological symbolism came to be considered as a way for the individual to explore one’s own spiritual state and to discover “the workings of Divine Providence in one’s own life.”

[T]he shift in emphasis in reformation theology from *quid agas* to God’s activity in us made it possible to assimilate our lives to the typological design, recognizing the biblical stories and events, salvation history, not merely as exemplary to us but as actually recapitulated in our lives. These various impulses led to a new, primary focus upon the individual Christian, whose life is incorporated within, and in whom may be located, God’s vast typological patterns of recapitulations and fulfillments operating throughout history.¹

John Donne’s Holy Sonnet XIV (“Batter my heart, three person’d God”) is clearly the product of such interior exploration and discovery, a meditation upon what Donne calls elsewhere the “repeating againe in us, of that which God had done before to Israel.”² For, in order to communicate to a Christian trinitarian god his readiness and complete desire for salvation, the speaker draws upon three images most often used in tandem by the Hebrew prophets to denounce sinful, apostate Israel: a vessel in need of repair, a usurped town under siege, and a woman trapped in a degrading sexual relationship. In Holy Sonnet XIV, the individual’s life repeats a larger
pattern, just as the larger pattern is only finally understood in terms of what it reveals about the Christian’s spiritual state: the speaker of Holy Sonnet XIV must be broken, beaten, and divorced just as Israel was for having been unfaithful to the one true God, and the full significance of Israel’s apostasy, punishment, and reclamation becomes clear only in the light of the Christian’s sin against, and redemption by, a trinitarian god. Recognition of the poem’s typological symbolism illuminates both the poem’s significant prophetic dimensions and a rhetorical maneuver that it shares with other Holy Sonnets by which the speaker attempts to manipulate God in order to effect his own salvation.

For the reader’s convenience, I reprint the sonnet here.

Batter my heart, three person’d God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow mee, ’and bend
Your force, to breake, bloue, burn and make mee new.
I, like an usurpt towne, to’another due,
Labour to’admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
But is captiv’d, and proves weake or untrue,
Yet dearly’l love you, and would be lov’d faine,
But am betroth’d unto your enemie,
Divorce mee, ’untie, or breake that knot againe,
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
Except you’enthral mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish me.

PROPHETIC ANALOGUES

The specifically Christian resonance of the poem’s language has been well analyzed by George Knox and A. L. Clements, among others. In 1961, Clements qualified Knox’s earlier insistence that “contemplation of the Trinity . . . determines the structure of the whole sonnet” (249), each of the three conceits in the poem describing the action of one of the Persons. Emphasizing the paradox of three-in-one, Clements demonstrated that Donne drew on rich biblical values and associations to implicate each of the Persons in the action of the other two, each set of commands (e.g., “breake, bloue, burn and make mee new”) listing verbs appropriate to each of the Persons and to the concerted action of the Trinity as well. So great is the speaker’s desire to be roused from his extreme sinfulness, and so great is
his need to be saved, that he calls upon all three members of the Trinity to act both as one and at once; he fears that the action of one alone at some later date will not be sufficient.

But while illuminating the deeply Christian language of the poem, such analysis has unfortunately distracted attention from the likewise deeply Hebraic resonance of the poem's three conceits. The imperfect pot destroyed by the potter, the apostatized city about to be razed to the ground, and the unfaithful wife punished for her adultery are iterative images or situations in the Hebrew prophetic oracles; each has its basis in the covenant which Yahweh made with Israel in which the Israelites' undeviating worship of Yahweh as their one true god guaranteed them his protection as his chosen people. Thus, the potter image recalls the incident in Genesis in which the Lord creates man to his purposes by molding clay, as well as suggests the fragility of all human qualities in themselves apart from the protection of their maker. In Jeremiah 18 the Lord himself draws upon both of these qualities when he orders Jeremiah to go to the potter's house, where the prophet finds the mechanic working at his wheel. Jeremiah relates how

Now and then a vessel he was making out of the clay would be spoilt in his hands, and then he would start again and mould it into another vessel to his liking. Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not deal with you, Israel, says the Lord, as the potter deals with his clay? You are clay in my hands like the clay in his, O house of Israel. At any moment I may threaten to uproot a nation or a kingdom, to pull it down and destroy it. . . . Go now and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that these are the words of the Lord: I am the potter; I am preparing evil for you and perfecting my designs against you. Turn back, every one of you, from his evil course; mend your ways and your doings.

Likewise, protecting as they did a small people from the threat of marauders and invading armies, the walls of the city symbolized the special protection that the Israelites were promised by Yahweh. The prophets insisted that attacks on Israelite cities were divinely directed punishment for the Jews' having broken the covenant. Indeed, the city walls risked becoming a symbol of the Jews' pride, so that destruction of the city was tantamount to smashing the sinful complacency which led the people to forget their Lord's commandments. Micah's warning can be taken as the general message of all eighth-century prophecy:
Get behind your walls, you people of a walled city;
the siege is pressed home against you.
(Mich. 5:1)

In Lamentations, Jeremiah records the confidence of the people in their security:

This no one believed, neither the kings of the earth
nor anyone that dwelt in the world:
that enemy or invader would enter
the gates of Jerusalem.
(Lam. 4:12)

Yet the enemy, Jeremiah warns his audience, “shall batter down the cities
in which you trust, /walled though they are” (Jer. 5:17). Chapters 1-39 of
Isaiah form a long, violent threat by the Lord against proud, idolatrous, walled
Jerusalem. Chapter 52 of Jeremiah is an account of the fall of Jerusalem,
while Lamentations is Jeremiah’s dirge for the disaster, wept as he sat amidst
the ruins of the once holy city.

As regards the third image, the Lord himself spoke in sexual terms of
his special relationship with his chosen people. In Hosea 2:18-23, for
example, the Lord “makes a covenant on behalf of Israel”:

I will betroth you to myself for ever, betroth you
in lawful wedlock with unfailing devotion and
love; I will betroth you to myself to have and to
hold, and you shall know the Lord. . . . Israel shall
be my new sowing in the land, and I will show
love to Lo-ruhamah and say to Lo-ammi, “You are
my people,” and he will say, “Thou art my God.”

In their pursuit of foreign gods, however, Israel and Judah were to be
considered as harlots who leave their loving husband and go to sit “by the
wayside to catch lovers”:

In the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me,
Do you see what apostate Israel did? She went up
to every hill-top and under every spreading tree,
and there she played the whore. Even after she
had done all this, I said to her, Come back to me,
but she would not. That faithless woman, her
sister Judah, saw it all; she saw too that I had put
apostate Israel away and given her a note of
divorce because she had committed adultery. Yet that faithless woman, her sister Judah, was not afraid; she too has gone and played the whore. She defiled the land with her thoughtless harlotry and her adulterous worship of stone and wood. In spite of all this that faithless woman, her sister Judah, has not come back to me in good faith, but only in pretence.

(Jer. 3:6-10)

The first three chapters of Hosea develop at length the analogy between the relationship of Hosea to his adulterous wife, Gomer, and that of Yahweh with sinful Israel; likewise, Ezekiel 16 repeats the Hosea story in miniature. The agony of the Lord as an unrequited lover refusing to throw off his adulterous wife, always willing to take her back, is one of the most powerful in Hebrew scriptures.

One may argue that other sources made these images or narrative situations potentially available to Donne and that, rather than meditating upon the significance of a biblical type to his own experience, he was imitating a literary or spiritual model. Spanish mystical writing, for example, saw the heart as an “interior castle” which might be besieged, and depicted spiritual rapture in terms of sexual ravishment. But the frequency with which the pot, the city walls, and the unfaithful spouse are used in tandem in biblical prophetic texts, and the probability that the mystics themselves derived the images from Scripture, suggest the Bible as Donne’s probable source. (Other considerations, I shall make clear below, reinforce the typological nature of the images’ operation.)

The linguistic convention of referring to cities in the feminine makes the conflation of the besieged or disobedient city with the adulterous woman a natural one. “How the faithful city has played the whore,” exclaims Isaiah (Isa. 1:21). Addressing Nineveh as

... blood-stained city, steeped in deceit,  
full of pillage, never empty of prey [...] 

the Lord swears through Nahum to

... uncover your breasts to your disgrace  
and expose your naked body to every nation,  
  to every kingdom your shame...  
Then all who see you will shrink from you and  
say, “Nineveh is laid waste; who will console her?”

(Nah. 3:1-7)
The demolished city, object of ridicule to its more powerful enemies, is often compared to a ravished woman, her nakedness exposed to strangers (see, for example, Isa. 3:16–26, 23:15–16; also, Jer. 50:14, 51:47). The most extended use of this analogy is made at the opening of Lamentations where the ruined, depopulated city speaks as a childless, grieving widow who admits that her having “wantonly rebelled” is the just cause of her punishment.

Likewise, the besieged city admits of conflation with the clay pot. In Jeremiah 19:11, for example, the Lord threatens to “shatter this people and this city as one shatters an earthen vessel so that it cannot be mended.” All three images are implicit in Isaiah 54, where Yahweh promises the people redemption through the agency of the Suffering Servant, explaining how the “deserted wife” will be restored and the “storm-battered city” shall be mended and made invincible if only the people will return to the Lord. This particular passage moves abruptly to the concept of God as smith or potter (54:16) from that of him as loving bridegroom (“for your husband is your maker”—54:5). So tightly interwoven are the prophet’s images that, as in Donne’s Holy Sonnet XIV, it is impossible at times to separate tenor and vehicle.

PROVOKING SALVATION

Biblical Israel’s historical drama of disobedience and chastisement, as delivered in her prophets’ images of the imperfect pot, the besieged city, and the adulterous woman, clearly adumbrates the interior drama of the speaker of Holy Sonnet XIV, who hopes for divine action upon his sin-hardened heart. In the first quatrain, the speaker is partially imaged as a clay pot that is beyond simple repair; indeed, the damaged vessel must be completely broken or battered, as Yahweh threatened might happen in Jeremiah 18:1–11, and a new pot be blown and burned in the kiln, just as the speaker’s old self must be destroyed for his spiritual self to be renewed. The conceit of the besieged town in the second quatrain suggests a medieval psychomachia in which the king’s representative, Reason—that spark of divinity planted in man at the Creation, and so God’s “viceroy” ruling every individual in virtuous action—has been impaired (generically by Adam’s fall and individually by the speaker’s own folly), and so is either too weak to defend the self/town from attack, or has been so treacherous (“untrue”) as to betray the city to foreign occupation and the speaker into the captivity of sin. And in the third conceit, sin is associated with the sullying that a woman feels when trapped in a degrading relationship. The final movement of the poem is the woman/speaker’s paradoxical plea to be ravished by her true lover in order that she might feel chaste again, perversely enacting what Donne calls elsewhere the “amorousnesse of an harmonious Soule” (“Hymne to Christ,” 16). In these three metaphors of Israel’s salvation history, Donne
has discovered a tangible way of expressing the invisible or intangible action of grace upon the heart of the sinner, while at the same time revealing the spiritual reality that lies beneath the “fleshly” form of the Old Testament texts. The external events of Israel anticipate the internal events of every Christian, the typological significance of the prophets’ metaphors for Israel’s history growing clearer as this is understood.

If the typological dimensions of Donne’s three conceits are not immediately clear to the reader, this may be as much due to Donne’s conflation of the images as to the modern reader’s general ignorance of Scripture and of typological design. The debate which began in the 1950s over the integrity of the poem’s conceits required several exchanges before the vehicles of the metaphors were clearly identified. But as has been seen, in the Hebrew prophetic oracles, the three conceits function simultaneously, even at times interchangeably, as vehicles to the same implied tenor, and likewise the boundaries of Donne’s conceits are not clearly defined but shift throughout the poem in a fluid, almost kaleidoscopic way. The battering which the speaker begs for in line 1 refers to the process of forcibly opening a city’s gates, but is the same force applied to “breake, blowe, burn and make . . . new” the clay pot in line 4. “Labour to admit you” (6) is military in its immediate context of the speaker’s comparison of himself to “an usurpt towne” but is sexual as well in terms of the woman’s forcing herself to submit to penetration by the holy rapist; either reading conveys the diseased will’s struggle to submit to painful corrective action. Two of the conceits conspire in lines 5-10 to form a Spenserian allegorical romance in miniature, in which the heart, depicted as a woman engaged to a man against her will, is held captive in a city under siege. The woman’s being repossessed by her rightful lover is equivalent to the usurped city’s being liberated by its rightful lord; her paradoxically chastening rape includes a paradoxically freeing imprisonment within the city walls (12-14). Linguistically, Donne’s Holy Sonnet XIV is a poem of conflations. Clements has shown that just as the individual members of the Trinity are conflated theologically into one “three-person’d God,” so are the verb actions appropriate to one member in particular but applicable to the others as well. Likewise the terms of the three conceits substitute for and duplicate each other, as the dimensions of type and antitype are subsumed into an eternal drama in which the actors are both Israel and Yahweh, the individual Christian and the grace-giving Trinity.

There are two possible reasons for Donne’s typological application of these three biblical conceits to himself. First, desire for such unity as is signified by the linguistic conflations involved in the biblical conceits is at the heart of Holy Sonnet XIV, in which a spiritually shattered speaker recognized that his only hope of reunion with God, and of being made whole again, paradoxically lies in being further battered and broken: recreation
can come only after total destruction. The speaker of Holy Sonnet XIV is in effect imploring God to perform what the speaker of another Donne poem puts so simply: “Make all this All” (“Upon the Translation of the Psalms,” 23). The speaker suffers the isolation of the soul when it is divorced from God by sin, and desires to be subsumed back into that creating power without which it is nothing. Spiritual peace and harmony can come only when the individual no longer acts apart from God but in concert with God’s will. The passive posture of the ceramic pot in the hands of the potter, of the city before the besieging army, and of the bride before the holy rapist represents the speaker’s relinquishment of his individual will before the Almighty in his desire to find his identity only in the All, no longer in himself. But perhaps more significantly, the Hebraic types offer a possible solution to the dilemma which the speaker suffers. The speaker of Holy Sonnet XIV understands that no matter how ardent his desire may be to renounce sin, sheer human longing for salvation is insufficient to effect an individual’s recreation. Only God can set in motion the process of salvation by granting that prevenient grace which would allow him to truly repent, and so make him worthy of yet further healing, strengthening grace. As Robert Shaw observes, the movement of thought not merely in Holy Sonnet XIV but in all the Holy Sonnets “is often like that of a squirrel in its cage.” What Shaw calls “Donne’s passive posture” (in Holy Sonnet XIV his wish to be violently acted upon) stems from a fear of taking any initiative which is not clearly urged upon him by Heaven. “Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke,” he reasons with himself [in ‘Oh my blacke Soule!’], only to dash this comforting thought to pieces in the next line: “But who shall give thee that grace to begin?” Although the possibility of such grace is held out as a hope . . . , it is not apparent anywhere in the sonnets that Donne has experienced it as a reality—has received justification, as theology would say.12

“Except thou rise and fight for me,” the terrified speaker of “As due by many titles” reminds God, he is lost to Satan. Throughout the Holy Sonnets, Donne issues imperatives similar to those which characterize Holy Sonnet XIV:

Impute me righteous (“This is my playes last scene”)
Teach me how to repent ("At the round earths imagin’d corners")
repai re me now ("Thou hast made me")
Batter my heart... o’erthrow mee... Divorce mee... Take me to you, imprison me... ("Batter my heart")

It is as though, linguistically, Donne would force God to begin the process of salvation by provoking God to begin finally to act on his behalf.

Under such circumstances, typology’s peculiar ability to allow the spiritually attuned individual to understand his present circumstances, and in part even to prophesy his future, must have had particular appeal for Donne. For implicit in the biblical conceits employed in Holy Sonnet XIV is the very assurance of salvation that the speaker so ardently desires. The later prophets saw the demolished city as having been ordained from the beginning to be rebuilt; the restoration of Jerusalem was seen as proof of the Lord’s ongoing care for, and protection of, his chosen people. Thus, in Isaiah 54:11 ff., the Lord addresses his “storm-battered city,” promising complete restoration; chapters 60–66 of that scroll look forward to the reestablishment of Jerusalem, in keeping with the reinstitution of the covenant. Similarly Ezekiel and Zechariah experience visions of the city and temple restored (Ezk. 40–48; Zech. 12:1—14:21); Jeremiah even promised that once the city is rebuilt “it shall never be pulled down or demolished” again (Jer. 31:38–40). In Isaiah 49:16–19, the Lord promises that the widowed woman will be made a bride again, just as the city’s walls will be restored:

Your walls are always before my eyes...
Those who are to rebuild you make better speed than those who pulled you down...
By my life I, the Lord, swear it,
you shall wear [the people returning to inhabit you] proudly as your jewels,
and adorn yourself with them like a bride;
I did indeed make you waste and desolate,
I razed you to the ground,
but your boundaries shall now be too narrow for your inhabitants
and those who laid you in ruins are far away.

Widowed Jerusalem, far from being permanently reduced to lamenting the loss of her children—inhabitants, will live to marvel at their numbers; the city—woman who was thrown down will be raised up in greater glory than before. God is brutal in his punishment of evil, but his punishment can be to purify
as he exercises a paradoxically healing destruction. And this is the kind of chastening ravishment that the speaker of Holy Sonnet XIV would have directed toward himself.

Did Donne “discover” his own condition in that of apostate Israel? Or is the application of the biblical types to the speaker’s situation a shrewd rhetorical gambit on Donne’s part—an adroit maneuver, as it were, to remind God of what the outcome of the story should be? The terrible energy of Holy Sonnet XIV suggests no peace of mind on the speaker’s part regarding his spiritual future, but at the same time the poem’s lack of dramatic resolution leaves the question eternally open for readers. The poem’s failure to specify God’s response to the speaker’s provocative imperatives only strengthens the dramatic tension which characterizes the sonnet.

THE PROPHET IN THE POEM

Recognition of the typological dimensions of Holy Sonnet XIV allows even further insight into other aspects of the poem. For Church Fathers, Doctors, and Reformers, typology possessed a close relation to prophecy, for as Karlfried Froehlich has pointed out, the only way that early Christians could lay claim to the Jewish scriptures was by deliberately shifting “the interpretive center of the Old Testament canon from the Torah (Law) to the Neviim (the Prophets),” thereby reading “the events, persons, or institutions of the old dispensation . . . as ‘types,’ ‘figures,’ ‘shadows’ of things to come or to be fulfilled in the time of Jesus and his Church.” In stanza 8 of “A Litanie,” Donne praises the prophets for just such a typological function when he addresses them as the

Churches Organs, and did sound
That harmony, which made of two
One law, and did unite, but not confound.[]

The prophets’ inspired vision allowed them to speak secretly or mysteriously to later generations of the new dispensation even while speaking directly to the Israelites of the Mosaic law. They thus straddle the Old and New Testaments, harmonizing them without “confound[ing]” or blurring their discrete identities. In his ability to read his condition as a Christian in Old Testament texts, the speaker of Holy Sonnet XIV likewise functions as a prophet.

Once this is acknowledged, the peculiar linguistic character of Holy Sonnet XIV becomes clearer. Hugh Richmond thinks that he has found in a sonnet by Pierre de Ronsard the source of Holy Sonnet XIV’s vigorous opening, its “passionate, sexual intensity of . . . kinetic imagery,” its
“Hopkins-like massing of verbs,” and its “alliterative verbal intensity.” Yet Holy Sonnet XIV’s language is closer to Hebrew prophetic utterance, which Abraham Heschel describes as “urging, alarming, forcing onward,” both “luminous and explosive, firm and contingent, harsh and compassionate, a fusion of contradictions.” Simultaneous to his sending their foes against the Israelites, the Lord sent his word forth against the tribes of Jacob through the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 9:8). This direct paralleling of armed men with prophetic speech suggests a similarity of purpose: the prophet’s language must hammer and batter away at the sinful community’s psychological defenses just as surely as the Aramean and Philistine armies will attack the city’s physical defenses, its walls. Likewise, Ezekiel was ordered to perform an action emblematic of the prophet’s use of language. “Man,” the Lord said to him,

take a tile and set it before you. Draw a city on it, the city of Jerusalem: lay siege to it, erect watch-towers against it, raise a siege-ramp, put mantelets in position, and bring battering-rams against it all around. Then take an iron girdle, and put it as a wall between you and the city. Keep you face turned towards the city; it will be the besieged and you the besieger. This will be a sign to the Israelites.

(Ezek. 4:1–3)

The armed assaults on the city are really only emblematic. The city’s actual besieger is the prophet, and his weapon of attack is his language—violent, frenzied, impassioned to the point of sounding irrational—much the same language employed by Donne’s speaker in Holy Sonnet XIV. The figure that emerges from Holy Sonnet XIV, however, is a peculiarly Donnean sort of prophet, one who employs prophetic language to prophesy to God against himself! In the Old Testament the Lord employs the prophets to call the people’s attention to their divergence from the law; the prophet’s words are intended to shatter their sin-hardened hearts. But in Holy Sonnet XIV the speaker does not testify for God against a willful and disobedient people. Like Jeremiah, the speaker anticipates God’s violently dashing the clay vessel of his own creation to the ground, but in Holy Sonnet XIV the vessel represents not the recalcitrant and idolatrous city Jerusalem but the speaker’s own hardened heart. Like Hosea, he laments the unfaithfulness of the Lord’s betrothed, but the woman who has played the whore this time is neither Judah nor Israel, but himself. And like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, the speaker threatens the destruction of a proud and disloyal city, but ironically it is God’s attention which he must first get, not
that of the city's inhabitants, and the rebel city which he asks to be reduced to docility is, not Jerusalem, but his own helpless will. Rather than attacking the people's complacency and denouncing a sinful nation, the speaker storms God's ear to denounce himself, for unless God recognizes the speaker's contrition and acknowledges his desire to repent by offering him the gift of prevenient grace, the speaker is eternally lost. There is an extraordinary poignancy to the speaker's plight. So deep is his sense of sin that he must call upon all three persons of the Trinity in his meditation, and so extraordinary is his anxiety to receive some sign of election—even the seemingly negative one of healing destruction or of chastening rape—that he prophesies to God against himself. By describing his situation typologically, the speaker attempts to prod God into acting in the necessary way. For the desperate speaker—and the audacious poet—not even Scripture is exempt in the search to find ways to talk about the spiritual condition of the self.

NOTES


5. The exception is William R. Mueller, “Donne’s Adulterous Female Town,” Modern Language Notes 76 (1961): 312–14. Mueller’s insistence that the speaker’s comparison of himself with an adulterous female town be seen against “an Old Testament background” of similar images for the sinful community in the writings of the Hebrew prophets anticipates my thesis in part. However, Mueller failed to sound the depth of the resonance that the biblical conceits had for Donne, citing but three or four instances in Scripture (I have found over fifty), and ignoring the clay pot entirely.
is, for my purposes, the sharpest of the English translations linguistically. As Evelyn Simpson points out, Donne himself relied upon no particular vernacular translation, employing Coverdale, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible, and the Authorized Version in his sermons, often comparing and correcting their offerings with his own translation of the original (Sermons, 10: 306–28).


10. Debate over the integrity of the sonnet’s conceits began in 1953 when J. C. Levenson argued that a single situation lies beneath the multiple metaphors and switching of verbs, that “God is a tinker, Donne a vessel in the hands of God the artisan.” George Herman rejected this tinker metaphor to emphasize both the congruence and appropriateness of the language of triple activities as a three-personed God acts upon the woman–town. His objections caused Levenson to reconsider his original claim and to argue instead for Donne’s employing three separate conceits: a metal-working one in the first quatrains, a military one in the second, and a sexual one in the third. Their articles, which originally appeared in The Explicator (1953–54), are reprinted in Clements, ed., John Donne’s Poetry, pp. 246–59. Since then William W. Heist has argued that the unity of the poem is not of imagery but of theme, insisting that the images of the sonnet cannot be harmonized; see his “Donne on Divine Grace: Holy Sonnet No. XIV,” Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters 53 (1968): 311–20.

11. Such kaleidoscopic concrescence is mirrored by the very structure of the poem. In the first eight lines, the poem seems to be following the same plan as Shakespeare’s Sonnet 73, each quatrains introducing a new image, but one to the same effect as the others, thus intensifying the speaker’s statement. But after the conceit of the clay pot in lines 1–4 and that of the usurped town in lines 5–8, the conceit of the expected third quatrains spills over into what should be the final couplet, the language of sexual ravishment pertaining to the new conceit blending inextricably with that of military conquest from the second.


