

AN ANALYSIS OF ABRAHAM COWLEY'S
LOVE POEMS, THE MISTRESS

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PREFACE

My introduction to Abraham Cowley came through a paper written for Dr. Berkeley's class in seventeenth-century literature. In trying to find a suitable thesis topic, I reread Cowley's work and found it quite enjoyable. A review of critical comment revealed very little dealing specifically with The Mistress; therefore, it seemed profitable to undertake a study of this work in some of its more prominent aspects.

I should like to thank Drs. David S. Berkeley and Samuel H. Woods, Jr. for the assistance they have given in the preparation of the paper. I also wish to acknowledge the help of Mrs. Savage and Miss Donart of the Oklahoma State University Library in securing the loan of material from a number of different libraries.

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STRATHMORE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although The Mistress was admired as greatly during Abraham Cowley's lifetime as his other works, it was one of the first to suffer loss of popularity and, of all his writings, has been probably the one most neglected by critics. Gosse, in Seventeenth-Century Studies, says that

The Mistress was fated to become one of the most admired books of the age. It was a pocket compendium of the science of being ingenious in affairs of the heart. . . . To us it is the most unreadable production of its author.¹

In spite of the general neglect, however, The Mistress has never been completely unread during any period, and Tucker Brooke asserts that he finds "The Mistress still good reading"2

The first publication of this volume took place in England in 1647, which was during the ten or twelve year period that Cowley spent with the queen and her company in France. The publisher's Preface indicates that Cowley himself had nothing to do with this edition.

A correct Copy of these verses (as I am told) written by the Authour himselve, falling into my hands, I thought fit to send them to the Presse; cheifely because I heare that the same is like to be don from a more imperfect

one. It is not my good fortune to bee acquainted with the Authour any farther then his fame
 [I shall not] add one word (besides these few lines) to the Booke; but faithfully and nakedly transmit it to thy view, just as it came to mine, unlesse perhaps some Typographicall faults get into it, which I will take care shall be as few as may be, and desire a pardon for them, if there be any.³

We can assume that, if this manuscript actually did not come from Cowley, it was an accurate one and that the publisher was sincere in his promise to "faithfully and nakedly transmit it," since there is no record of subsequent mention of this edition by the author. Had it been spurious or tampered with, it seems likely that he would have made some effort to disclaim it, as he did "a Book, entituled, The Iron Age,⁴ and published under my name, during the time of my absence" (p. 4) and the pirated 1650 edition of The Guardian, of which he said:

So that I esteem my self less prejudiced by it [The Iron Age], then by that which has been done to me since, almost in the same kinds, which is the publication of some things of mine without my consent or knowledge, and those so mangled and imperfect, that I could neither with honour acknowledge, nor with honesty quite disavow them.
 (pp. 4-5)

Another point in favor of the authenticity of the 1647 version is the fact that when Cowley included The Mistress in his collected edition of 1656 he made few revisions in the existing poems. According to Sparrow, there is an

extraordinarily small number of the variants, which amount to well under a hundred (omitting the merest trifles and errata); . . . (with the exception of six poems omitted in A [1647] the same order of poems is preserved throughout [in the 1647, 1656, and 1688 editions].⁵

While Cowley's historical importance has always been recognized as sufficient to insure him some mention in literary histories of his period, few critics have felt him worthy of any intensive study. In most cases a few general statements about his reputation and the main groupings of his work are the extent of the treatment. Nevertheless, as Coleridge, along with several others, tells us:

"It may be assumed, as a critical axiom, that no man who, during his lifetime has obtained a very large share of applause is deserving of total oblivion. This is emphatically true of Cowley"6 I believe we could extend this to say that not only should he be not totally forgotten but no entire body of his once so highly-praised work should be ignored or familiar only through second-hand comment.

A cursory examination of the letters, poems, and essays of other seventeenth-century literary figures leaves no question as to the "very large share of applause" enjoyed by Cowley during his life and the years immediately following. Cowley is supposed to have been one of Milton's three favorite poets, apparently according to a statement by Milton's wife, and this idea has been frequently repeated. Dryden's "Essay on Dramatic Poesy" (1668) insists that "they [the last age] can produce . . . nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit as Mr. Cowley."⁷ Dennis refers to "Suckling, Cowley and Denham, who formerly Ravish'd me in ev'ry part of them";⁸ Oldham opposes the example of Cowley as the best of poets to that of Flecknoe

as the worst:

Who'er will please, must please us to the height.
 He must a Cowley or a Flecknoe be,
 For there's no second rate in poetry.⁹

Wotton lists Cowley with Milton, Butler, and Dryden, as those who "were able to give that unconstrained Range and Turn to their Thoughts and Expressions that are truly necessary to make a compleat Poem."¹⁰ In a letter to Samuel Pepys, Evelyn refers to "the death of the incomparable Mr. Cowley";¹¹ and the Earl of Mulgrave puts him with Milton as the highest pinnacle he can imagine in poetry.¹²

By the time of Johnson's Lives, the applause had begun to thin; nevertheless, Cowley is the earliest of the modern poets represented in the Lives. Johnson chose to deal with Cowley as the greatest of the "metaphysical" poets, and says that he "adopted it [metaphysick style], and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment, and more musick."¹³ Pope's question, "Who now reads Cowley?"¹⁴ is generally interpreted as anticipating the answer, "Nobody who matters"; but Emily Symonds observes that, in view of the great number of images that Pope borrowed from him, "it was just as well for Pope that his contemporaries did not read Cowley"¹⁵ She points out that a comparison of their work makes it obvious that Pope at least still read Cowley; and, contrary to his statement that the world had "Forgot his Epic, nay Pindaric Art," he himself apparently had forgotten very little of what he had read and did not hesitate to incorporate what he liked in his own work.

Coleridge regarded Cowley as one of the most important seventeenth-century figures and, in speaking of his prose, states that "Cowley, with the omission of a quaintness here and there, is probably the best model of style for modern imitation in general."¹⁶ He later defends Cowley's place as a poet:

!!--Yet Cowley was a Poet, which with all my unfeigned admiration of his vigorous sense, his agile logical wit, and his high excellencies of diction and metre, is more than (in the strict use of the term Poet) I can conscientiously say of Dryden.¹⁷

Until 1960, the one book in English which treated the life and writings of Cowley with a relatively great degree of completeness and authority was Arthur H. Nethercot's Abraham Cowley, The Muse's Hannibal (1931). Abraham Cowley; Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre (1931), by Jean Loiseau, holds an equivalent position in French. Robert B. Hinman's Abraham Cowley's World of Order, published in 1960, added considerably to the material available for the study of Cowley. Though Hinman's book is not so comprehensive as Nethercot's, it is concerned almost entirely with critical matters rather than biography, and is more valuable from this point of view.

Among other sources which I found useful in the preparation of this study are the unpublished doctoral dissertations of John Boal Douds (Cornell, 1936) and Lou Barker Noll (Colorado, 1956). Mr. Douds' primary interest is in finding and examining parallels between Cowley (also Herbert and Marvell) and Donne as a means of pointing up the superiority

of Donne to the other Metaphysicals. Mr. Noll has as his thesis the idea that "Not in essential sympathy with the exiled court, the poet has ingeniously used the method of metaphysical love poetry to satirize its own attitudes and devices." He believes that his "integrating wit . . . revels in the absurdity of the manner while simultaneously indicating the unfitness of the manner for honest love poetry."¹⁸ The approximately one hundred pages of his chapter on The Mistress are devoted to explaining to the reader what he considers the most effective way of reading and enjoying these poems.

There are many worthwhile articles to be found in the learned journals; but these, like the books, tend to pass over The Mistress in favor of the works generally considered to be better--The Essays, selections from the Verses Written on Several Occasions, and (especially in Loiseau and Hinman) The Davideis. On the other hand, some of the poems from The Mistress and the Miscellanies have been quite popular with anthologists and so have been and are known by more people than the "better" portion of Cowley's work.

In this study I have re-examined the poems from my own point of view, keeping in mind the critical comments which have been made about them. The elaborate, obviously contrived manner in which Cowley relates the experience of the lover has been the major complaint of most readers, and in the Preface to the edition of 1656 the author feels some need to justify his writing this type of poetry. "But

I speak it to excuse some expressions (if such there be) which may happen to offend the severity of supercilious Readers; for much Excess is to be allowed in Love, and even more in Poetry" (p. 10). However, it seems very unlikely that at the time he wrote them Cowley had any doubts about the suitability of his poems as expressions of actual, believable emotion. He was not, in fact, attempting to portray real-life passion, but to amuse his audience with the type of ingenious play with words and thoughts to which they were accustomed.

Even if these poems are considered as not more significant than intellectual games, the fact that they were created by a single man during a relatively short period of time suggests that there should be present discernible patterns in both thought and technique. I have attempted to discover and analyze certain of the more prominent of these patterns and, in doing so, have become more and more convinced that the artificiality of emotion and experience which has often been thought so distasteful is a result of his concentration on devising exercises for the "wit" from conventional images and designs of the period, to the point of indifference toward other possible and more advantageous (in our opinion) effects of these means in imparting impressions of real and intense emotion. Consequently, the poems are almost entirely without stimulus to the reader's emotions or senses, and the chief pleasure to be found in them is that of mental agility in the reader recognizing and appreciating the great degree of such agility displayed here by Cowley.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS OF SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MISTRESS

Cowley's love poems have often been criticized on the basis that he had little, if any, personal experience with love, and so did not know what he was talking about. This charge in turn has been the basis for much controversy as to the circumstances under which these poems were written, but no conclusive evidence has been produced to cause us to reject the author's own statement on the matter. In his Preface to the 1656 collection, he states:

The Second part is called The Mistress,
Love-Verses; for so it is, that poets are
scarce thought free-men of their Company,
without paying some duties, and obliging
themselves to be true to love. Sooner or
later they must all pass through that
Tryal" (p. 10)

Apparently he believes that he has satisfactorily passed through the trial with these verses, for only about half a dozen of his other poems are concerned with love. While the question of his own participation in the situations and emotions he describes does not seem a particularly important point, the inflated amount of contradictory comment on this matter does make it require some notice.

One of the first sources for speculation about a real woman as subject of the verses is the memorandum which Spence in his Anecdotes attributes to Pope:

In the latter part of his life he showed a sort of aversion for women, and would leave the room when they came in: 'twas probably from a disappointment in love. He was much in love with his Leonora, who is mentioned at the end of that good ballad on his different mistresses. She was married to Dean Sprat's brother, and Cowley never was in love with anybody after.¹⁹

This idea was still being echoed as late as September, 1879, when the following item appeared in the Globe: "Cowley was at one time rather a lady's man, but Leonora did not treat him well, and married the brother of Dean Sprat."²⁰ Solly replies to this by noting that Cowley had no known contact with Sprat until several years after his mention of Heleonora as his new mistress, that Sprat was not made Dean until sixteen years after the death of Cowley, and that "the whole story is so vague and hazy that it is a tissue of baseless gossip."²¹ The poem to which Spence alludes, "The Chronicle," is not even a part of The Mistress, but is included by Cowley in that "Miscellanie of several Subjects, and some of them made when I was very young; . . . I know not by what chance I have kept Copies of them" (p. 9). Johnson seems to give no credence whatever to the theory that Cowley might have been writing about and to some particular woman. In his "Life of Cowley," he apparently accepts without question Cowley's statement that the poems are written to fulfill his duty as a poet to Love.

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who . . . refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley . . . whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.²²

Johnson goes on to question the judgment of Cowley in choosing his subject outside the range of his own experience and says: "It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to be so burdened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences."²³

Cowley's own comments offer no ground for the idea that he was writing with a particular woman or women in mind or that he was recounting his own experiences in the field of romantic love. He tells us that poetry is not to be taken as a picture from which we can judge the manners of the poet. Readers who tend to concern themselves overmuch with the factuality of this poetry should keep in mind his statement on this point: "it /Poesie/ is not the Picture of the Poet, but of things and persons imagined by him" (p. 9). From the silence of his biographers on this topic, we can assume that Cowley probably did not spend his time in searching for or trying to win a mistress or wife of his own. While he thought that a woman was capable of adding to the comfort of life,

she was evidently not the most important consideration in a pleasant life. This opinion seems to be indicated by his list, in "The Wish," of all that he requests in his life, with the mistress coming only at the end of the list, after house, garden, friends, and books.

Ah, yet, e're I descend to th' Grave
 May I a small House, and large Garden have!
 And a few Friends, and many Books, both true,
 Both wise, and both delightful too!
 And since Love ne're will from me flee,
 A Mistress moderately fair,
 And good as Guardian-Angels are,
 Only belov'd and loving me!

(stanza 2, p. 88)

In the poem accompanying his essay, "The Garden,"²⁴ he carefully specifies that, according to God's estimate, a garden, not woman, was the most valuable gift which he bestowed on man: "He gave him the first Gift; first ev'n before a Wife" (stanza 2, l. 13). Elsewhere in his writings Cowley often refers to his poetic art as his "onley Mistress," his "Wife," and his "Inseparable Companion." Since neither the author himself nor the audience for whom these poems were written considered personal experience a necessary prerequisite to the creation of love poetry, I think that we also can regard the matter as, if not completely insignificant, at least one of rather slight importance to the ordinary reader of the poems.

Although the main enjoyment of lyrics such as these does not come from the narrative involved, such narrative does contribute to the work when viewed as a body. There is no clear narrative thread traceable through each and every

one of these poems in order, but there is an over-all development in the feelings and position of the lover. The group is begun by "The Request" in which he laments his seeming inability to fall in love. "I'Have often wisht to love; what shall I do?" (l. 1, p. 65) He goes on in this first stanza to explain that not only will he have to woo a mistress, but first he must woo Cupid who is the giver of love. The poem ends with a challenge to Cupid to strike him with the arrow of love, or be caused by the poetical influence of his would-be victim to lose his power over all lovers.

Come; or I'll teach the world to scorn that Bow;
 I'll teach them thousand wholesome arts
 Both to resist and cure thy darts,
 More then thy skilful Ovid e're did know.
Musick of sighs thou shalt not hear,
 Nor drink one wretched Lovers tasteful Tear:
 Nay, unless soon thou woundest me,
 My verses shall not onely wound, but murther Thee.
 (stanza 7, p. 67)

It is possible that this demand to be wounded by love is an echo of Jonson's "How He Saw Her," in which he urges Cupid to strike him, and, when it does not happen, attempts to hit the lady with one of Cupid's arrows.²⁵ In the next poem, "The Thraldome," we learn that the dart has struck, and that the lover is about to begin his "Labour i'the' Quarries of a stony Heart." The several poems immediately following describe his gradual winning of the mistress' heart, with occasional inconsistencies, such as the sixth and seventh poems, "Inconstancy" and "Not Fair." These inform us that the lover is being berated by his lady

because he has deserted her for another; but, according to the poems before and after these, he has not yet succeeded in persuading her to accept his love in the first place. He is not however, pleading in vain, and after about eleven poems we see that his suit is convincing his mistress. From this point on through most of the remainder of the poems, Cowley describes the ups and downs of the relationship between the lover and an undetermined number of mistresses. The tone varies from the dejection of "The Heart-breaking" and "Looking on, and Discoursing with his Mistress," to the exhilaration of "The Rich Rival" and "Discretion," encompassing almost as many modulations of attitude as there are poems.

The pair entitled "The Welcome" and "The Heart fled again" provide additional story interest as he welcomes his heart back after it has been abused by women, only to lose it again almost immediately. The narrative found in the group culminates with the final poem, "Love Given over," when the lover resigns himself to lack of success with his mistress and a future life without hope (or fear) of love.

It is enough; enough of time, and pain
 Hast thou consum'd in vain:
 Leave, wretched Cowley, leave
 Thy self with shadows to deceive;
 Think that already lost which thou must never gain.

.

Resolve then on it, and by force or art
 Free thy unlucky Heart;
 Since Fate does disapprove
 Th' ambition of thy Love.
 And not one Star in heav'n offers to take thy part.

.

Alas, what comfort is't that I am grown
Secure of be'ing again o'rethrown?
 Since such an Enemy needs not fear
 Lest any else should quarter there,
 Who has not only Sack't, but quite burnt down the Town.
 (stanzas 1, 3, 6, p. 151)

The background of the poems and such fragments of narrative as may be found are interesting; but, as we begin to examine the devices used by Cowley in constructing his poems, we are dealing with those aspects of the work which were of most importance to him and which are the major concern of this study. As I have previously stated, Cowley was not trying to simulate the thoughts which a lover in these situations would actually have; he was not trying to win the heart of a woman with poems which would appeal to her vanity or sympathy; and he had no intention of creating the effect of spontaneity or naturalness. He was combining his skill as a poet with his knowledge as a scholar and man of the world to make fascinating mental exercises for his own pleasure in inventing them and the entertainment of his friends, who delighted in such cerebral pastimes.

Mr. Noll interprets The Mistress from the second aspect alone. Because his paper offers a comprehensive study of the detached lover ironically looking down on himself, I have seen no need to deal extensively with the matter. The poet speaks in the persona of the lover to many of the different objects and persons involved in his love: himself, his soul, his heart, a letter he writes to his mistress, a tree on which he has carved her name, a river in which she is bathing, beauty, sleep, a doctor

attempting to cure him of the wounds of love, his rival, an unnamed friend, the god of Love, and, of course, the mistress herself. The only departure from this persona is in the eighty-first poem, "Dialogue," which reports in dramatic third-person form a conversation between the lover and the mistress.

As the lover speaks in the poems, he is not impulsively revealing his differing feelings; he is actively striving to analyze and elaborate on these feelings. In examining the emotions of the lover, Cowley evidently follows a poetic theory such as had been stated several years earlier by Puttenham:

. . . that though the language of our Poet or maker being pure & cleanly, & not disgraced by such vicious parts as have bene before remembered . . . be sufficiently pleasing and commendable for the ordinarie use of speech; yet is not the same so well appointed for all purposes of the excellent Poet, as when it is gallantly arrayed in all his colours which figure can set upon it"26

The most prominent figure which Cowley uses is, as would be expected, the conceit²⁷ by which he links abstract ideas through wit to as many and varied physical allusions as he can possibly fit into his basic plan. Mention of the term "wit" usually seems to bring forth a more or less successful definition of the term to fit it to the user's purpose. I am neither inclined nor qualified to add another to the great number of such definitions, and in further (perhaps rather loose) usage of this word, will rely mainly on Cowley's somewhat ambiguous interpretation in the "Ode. Of

Wit," particularly stanza 8.

In a true piece of Wit all things must be,
 Yet all things there agree.
 As in the Ark, joyn'd without force or strife,
 All Creatures dwelt; all Creatures that had Life.
 Or as the Primitive Forms of all
 (If we compare great things with small)
 Which without Discord or Confusion lie,
 In that strange Mirror of the Deitie. (p. 18)

This definition is supplemented by Hinman's explanation that "Cowley makes 'wit' a synonym for 'fancy,' both source and product of the artist's success."²⁸

Treating the first ten poems of The Mistress, Josephine Miles says that Cowley builds his conceits around a "constant basic reference . . . to the human relationship of love."

She further says:

The abstract is made concrete in arbitrary metaphor which supports the power of the artist to use the pertinences of nature and myth, the features of Egyptian tombs, or Orpheus' song, or trees in shade, or Moor or Succubus, or Autumn Fruits, or maze, or court, or robe, or flag, to make a bodily construction for the intricacies of spirit.²⁹

In order for such images to be successful, there must be a relation between them and the abstract notions which they represent. This relation occurs in the mind of the poet at the time the poem is created, but it must also occur in the mind of the reader if he is to derive any meaning or enjoyment from such devices. The poem displays the act of the poet's mind mediating between concrete and abstract; the reader must recreate that process of mediation.

For the sake of convenience in dealing briefly with so many poems, I have set up three categories in Cowley's use of conceits. These classifications have been made on the

basis that: (1) each poem treats one basic or primary feeling or emotion; (2) the images are intended to blend or fuse this feeling with an ingenious thought or thoughts for the delight of the reader; and (3) the technique involved in this fusion differs from phrase to phrase, stanza to stanza, and poem to poem. I believe that almost any one of the poems will fit within the categories which will be used, but many fit by portions into more than one. Therefore, I will use only those parts of individual poems which fit each particular category as it is discussed; and the reader should not assume that, because a poem is used to illustrate one category, it fits as a whole into this and only this group.

The first division to be dealt with is composed of those instances in which the images are piled one on another in a series of related and unrelated comparisons (usually short) to the stated idea. This method could perhaps be referred to as enumeration. It is the most easily segregated of the techniques under consideration. Before further discussion of Cowley's employment of this type and its potential advantages and disadvantages, it seems wise to look at a sample of the conceits we are talking about. The first stanza of "The Prophet" is a typical example:

Teach me to Love? go teach thy self more wit;
 I chief Professour am of it.
 Teach craft to Scots, and thrift to Jews,
 Teach boldness to the Stews;
 In Tyrants Courts teach supple flattery,
 Teach Jesuits, that have travell'd far, to Lye.
 Teach Fire to burn, and Winds to blow,
 Teach restless fountains how to flow,
 Teach the dull earth, fixt, to abide,
 Teach Woman-kind inconstancy and Pride.

See if your diligence here will useful prove;
 But, prⁱithe, teach not me to Love. (p. 101)

The central idea here is obviously that no one could teach this lover anything about loving since he already has the greatest mastery of it. The last half of the first line is an "Asterismus, merry scoffe, civill jest"³⁰ directed at the person who has presumed to suggest teaching him about love. The series of amplifying metaphors listed in "Anaphora, the figure of report" strengthen and explain the statement that he is "chief Professour" of it. Even the least interested reader should make the connection in this stanza, for what knows better how to burn than fire, or what than the wind how to blow. The allusions are divided into two groups, the first half being to human types, the second to forces of nature. The choices of comparison here were felicitous to the understanding of all the English readers of his day, since it was the common English opinion that Scots were crafty, courtiers obsequious, Jesuits prevaricating, etc. The natural allusions also were so universal as to be understood by all, without involving any of the changing and controversial theories as to the nature of the physical world.

The ingenious value of these conceits was not, however, all so apparent as these quickly grasped allusions. If it had been, readers who were accustomed to poetry of wit would have found little in this poem to stimulate the agility of their brains. The discerning reader can find in this stanza a typical, if rather weak, example of the sort of "double-hinged" conceit of which Cowley and his friends were so

fond. This example occurs in line 9, "Teach the Dull earth, fixt, to abide." Here the adjective "fixt" is an "amphibologia, or ambiguous term" which may indicate either of the current theories as to the nature of the earth's position. It may be interpreted as the following: teach the dull earth, which is fixed in one place, to abide (Ptolemaic theory); or, teach the dull earth, which does not abide fixed in one place, to do so (Copernican theory). Though the former meaning seems more fitting to Cowley's use, the reader found pleasure in his consciousness of both these interpretations and in his perception of Cowley's cleverness in relaying either or both interpretations through his manipulation of a single word within the line. In this stanza then, the enumeration of metaphors is intended, through the generally understandable nature of the choices, to convince us of the validity of the basic idea. The ingenuity within the figures offers the little additional fillip which perceptive readers at the time expected and required.

In "For Hope" we find the same technique used with a somewhat different purpose.

Hope, of all Ills that men endure,
 The only cheap and Universal Sure!
 Thou Captives freedom, and Thou sick Mans Health!
 Thou Losers Victo'ry, and thou Seggars wealth!
 Thou Manna, which from Heav'n we eat,
 To every Tast a several Meat!
 Thou strong Retreat! thou sure entail'd Estate,
 Which nought has power to alienate!
 Thou pleasant, honest Flatterer! for none
Flatter unhappy Men, but thou alone!

(stanza 1, p. 110)

Here the poet is explaining his initial statement, that hope

is the "only cheap and universal cure" for all ills, by showing how it is able to provide to each man the remedy for his misfortune and, therefore, to all men whatever remedies they may require. The captive may never actually achieve freedom, but he can find comfort in the illusion of future freedom so long as he can maintain hope for it. Cowley uses "Sinonimia, the figure of store" to show that hope promises health to the sick man, victory to the chronic loser, and money to the beggar, as long as they retain the ability to hope. The "Epitheton, quallifier, figure of Attribution" is here used to good effect in enforcing the sense of the argument. The poem just preceding this, "Against Hope," is another listing of numerous and varied comparisons in support of the central idea: "'Tis Hope is the most Hopeless thing of all" (l. 10, p. 109). Here Cowley draws even more heavily on his broad knowledge to produce what Walton calls a "characteristic miscellany of images from the law, science, gambling, etc., held together by his pleasant friendly tone."³¹

Used occasionally, such enumeration of figures strengthens the effect of the poems. Used excessively, it would very soon become stale and boring. This is one weakness which we cannot with justice assign to The Mistress. The nearest thing to overuse of the technique comes in the two poems last mentioned. Even here, though, Cowley uses good taste in varying the stanzas with other types of figures; and he wisely follows the suitably similar companion pieces with one of a conspicuously different nature, "Loves Ingratitude."³²

The second classification, as I have divided them, is that in which the conceits build on or advance a single idea, and might be designated as progression. A good example of this type is the poem just named, "Loves Ingratitude."

I Little thought, thou fond ingrateful Sin,
 When first I let thee in,
 And gave thee but a part
 In my unwary Heart,
 That thou wouldst e're have grown,
 So false or strong to make it all thine own.

At mine own breast with care I fed thee still,
 Letting thee suck thy fill,
 And daintily I nourisht Thee
 With Idle thoughts and Poetrie!
 What ill returns dost thou allow?
 I fed thee then, and thou dost starve me now.

There was a time, when thou wast gold and chill,
 Now hadst the power of doing ill;
 Into my bosom did I take,
 This frozen and benumbed Snake,
 Not fearing from it any harm;
 But now it stings that breast which made it warm.

What cursed weed's this Love! but one grain sow,
 And the whole field 'twill overgrow;
 Strait will it choak up and devour
 Each wholesome herb and beauteous flour!
 Nay unless something soon I do,
 'Twill kill I fear my very Lawrel too.

But now all's gone, I now, alas, complain,
 Declare, protest, and threat in vain.
 Since by my own unforc'd consent,
 The Traytor has my Government,
 And is so settled in the Throne,
 That 'twere Rebellion now to claim mine own. (p. 112)

The prevailing theme is the ingratitude of love toward the being which sustains it, and the reader's interest is held by the perfidious manner in which it has moved in and entirely taken over the being who had offered only a share in himself. The initial idea, then, is that the lover, who unsuspectingly offered love a portion of himself has been

completely overgrown with the pervasive power of that love until his heart and existence are no longer his own. That is rather explicitly implied in the first stanza when the lover says that he had no thought that such a thing might happen. The reader, of course, realizes that this is exactly what has happened. As each subsequent stanza contributes to the lover's account of just how the overthrow took place, his thankless condition becomes more and more emphatically distinct. The second stanza tells how, in the early stages of the relationship, the lover took pains to nourish his love, and how, now that love is mature and has all the nourishing power, it refuses him everything. As for the third, one is inclined to hope that the serpent in his bosom image was not so hackneyed three hundred odd years ago as it is today. If the reader remembers, though, that in Cowley's day it was no less desirable to make an ingenious use of an old figure than to present a new one, he can admit that the parallel is quite appropriate and effective in this instance. The next analogy, that to the weeds springing from only one seed to choke out a whole field, is a further demonstration of the progress in his overthrow by love. A minor facet which might be mentioned here is the evidence that love does not yet control his entire being. Though he fears its future loss, he is still in possession of his "very Lawrel," a symbol of particular poetic and/or academic distinction. Might this not be another hint of Cowley's opinion, frequently displayed elsewhere but not overtly stated in The

Mistress, that books and learning are more important and more to be desired than love? The final stanza contains perhaps the most effective conceit, the statement that he has freely given love power over him to the extent that it would be "Rebellion now to claim mine own."³³

The other category to be considered is that in which the figures serve to clarify and illuminate the basic idea or each other. The simplest designation for this use seems to be that of explanation. Again, suitable examples are numerous, but since it is impossible to deal with all of them, I have selected "Inconstancy" as representative. "Inconstancy" presents a rather unique and, so far as I have been able to discover, original theory.³⁴

Five yeare ago (says Story) I lov'd you,
 For which you call me most Inconstant now;
 Pardon me, Madam, you mistake the Man;
 For I am not the same that I was than;
 No Flesh is now the same 'twas then in Me,
 And that my Mind is chang'd your self may see.
 The same Thoughts to retain still, and Intents
 were more inconstant far; for Accidents
 Must of all things most strangely 'Inconstant prove,
 If from one Subject they t'another move;
 My Members then, the Father members were
 From whence These take their birth, which now are here.
 If then this Body love what th' other did,
 'Twere Incest; which by Nature is forbid.
 You might as well this Day inconstant name,
 Because the Weather is not still the same,
 That it was yesterday: or blame the Year,
 Cause the Spring, Flowers; and Autumn, Fruit does bear.
 The World's a Scene of Changes, and to be
Constant, in Nature were Inconstancy;
 For 'twere to break the Laws her self has made:
 Our Substances themselves do fleet and fade;
 The most fixt Being still does move and fly,
 Swift as the wings of Time 'tis measur'd by.
 T'Imagine then that Love should never cease
 (Love which is but the Ornament of these)
 Were quite as senseless, as to wonder why
Beauty and Colour stays not when we dye. (p. 73)

This "Dichologia, figure of excuse" is Cowley at his most delightful as he first admits the truth of the accusation against him, then proceeds to erect an apparently logical body of proof for his somewhat weak excuse. He calls on his knowledge of the scientific concept of the constant regeneration of the physical body and on the laws of nature to support his claim that fidelity in love should not be expected. Each of the succession of conceits offers a reason why constancy would be unnatural and even immoral. He explains that, first, since all the cells of his body have replaced themselves by reproduction, he is not physically the same man he was five years ago. Second, the flesh which makes up his present body is the product or offspring of the former body; therefore, the body of five years ago was the parent of the existing body, and repeating the love of the parent body would involve an incestuous relation. Fortunately his mind, though admittedly the same mind, has experienced a change corresponding to that of the body, and harmony is maintained within himself. Having established that this is the way things are, the poet proceeds to draw parallels with the natural world to support his claim that this is the way things should be. Because weather, season, and plants are in a state of continual change, he argues this as an incontrovertible law of nature, and insists that lack of change in his love would be a breach of this law. Thus he has presented two seemingly strong arguments to persuade his former lady that she was the one at fault in

expecting his love to remain constant through a period of years. One of the best lines in this poem offers the reader quick enough to grasp it a glimpse of the argument which is to follow. This is the dignified "Pardon me, Madam, you mistake the Man," or, as we would put it, "You must have me mixed up with somebody else." We can imagine that just then he pretends to realize who that somebody else was and goes ahead to explain the situation to the woman who was rebuking the change in him.³⁵

The words a poet selects can often be discussed in close connection with the figures which he constructs from these words. In the case of Cowley, however, word choice is something altogether different, and the generalities fitted to his figurative patterns must be reversed to describe the language he uses. The conceits we have examined are highly ornate; every possible embellishment is tacked on, occasionally at the expense of good taste or the reader's understanding. Cowley seems to maintain a constant attempt to avoid simplicity. An analysis of his diction, though, reveals quite the opposite of the elaborate complexity of his conceits. Monosyllables are the rule, and many of his lines are found to contain nothing else. Mr. Douds cites this as a parallel to Donne, indeed a "deliberate copying of Donne's . . . tone."³⁶ I find Douds lacking evidence in support of this statement. The more recent study by Miss Miles shows that the question of imitation in this matter need not come up between any particular poets. This was the

language commonly employed at the time. Miss Miles has designated as major words those which occur ten or more times per 1000 lines. Of the twenty-five words which compose the major vocabulary of "the volumes of poetry in the bookstalls of the 1640's,"³⁷ Cowley made major use of twenty-two. Only Quarles used more (twenty-three).³⁸ In the list of those used by Cowley, only one, heaven, contains more than one syllable, and he frequently elides this to heav'n. Not only are the words short, they are simple ones from common speech. Such long or unusual words as do appear in The Mistress are usually names or terms alluding to mythology and the Bible. These are selected for their value in forming new conceits and are not frequent or typical as words.

The major nouns in Miss Miles' lists are not concrete terms for visible objects; Cowley and his fellow poets were not concerned with the concrete. These nouns are, rather, the abstractions which offered the basis for speculation on the nature and activities of man, such words as day, earth, God, heart, heaven, love, soul. The verbs indicate, for the most part, simple actions--bring, come, find, give, go, take. We find also know, see, and think, which involve the intellectual activity so important to Cowley. The major modifiers, fair and great, are typical of all he uses in that they are simple, favorable, and rather hard to pin down as to exact meaning. Rarely does he describe anything in uncomplimentary terms. Even in the complaining and dis-

heartened poems, the derogatory modifiers are usually outnumbered by those in praise of the mistress and her ways. When he does use modifiers of unfavorable meaning, they are such as appear in "The Despair."

Beneath this gloomy shade,
 By Nature only for my sorrows made,
 I'll spend this voyce in crys,
 In tears I'll waste these eyes
 By Love so vainly fed;
 So Lust of old the Deluge punished.
Ah wretched youth! said I,
Ah wretched youth! twice did I sadly cry:
Ah wretched youth! the fields and floods reply.

When thoughts of Love I entertain,
 I meet no words but Never, and In vain.
 Never (alas) that dreadful name,
 Which fewels the infernal flame:
Never, my time to come must waste;
In vain, torments the present, and the past.
In vain, in vain! said I;
In vain, in vain! twice did I sadly cry;
In vain, in vain! the fields and floods reply.
 (stanzas 1-2, p. 86)

The phrases "gloomy shade, vainly fed, wretched youth, dreadful name, infernal flame" adequately convey an undesirable situation, but they do it without bringing in anything especially distasteful or lacking in decorum. This characteristic is true throughout Cowley's work. Although his choice of conceits may sometimes be questionable, his language never fails to stay well within the limits of good taste.

Miss Miles has proved that Cowley is not only using the same vocabulary most other poets are using; he is making greater use of it than almost anyone else. Here again he is relying on conventional material and adapting it to his own

purposes. Critics may feel that experimentation with less conventional means could have produced more significant results, but Cowley had no interest in a search for different materials. He confined his experimentation to what he could do with the materials in current use.

The use of these short, commonplace words has much to do with the colloquial tone which appeals to many readers today. Another important factor contributing to the appearance of easy, natural speech is the uncomplicated sentence structure which is used in so many of the poems. The simple diction and fairly ordinary syntax combine to give the feeling that the poet is speaking directly to the mistress, the observer, or whomever the poem addresses. The first two lines of "Honour" might serve as an example of this colloquial directness.

She Loves, and she confesses too;
There's then at last, no more to do.
(p. 144)

"The Resolution" displays a tone similarly colloquial, but different in mood and in the person addressed:

The Devil take those foolish men,
Who gave you first such pow'rs;
We stood on even grounds till then;
If any odds, Creation made it ours.
(stanza 1, p. 102)

This is, of course, the style of Donne and that which was popular at the time. In The Mistress, as in Donne's poetry, this effect is seen most often in the first line or two. It is not impossible, however, to find entire poems which display this tone. One such is "The Discovery."

By 'Heaven I'll tell her boldly that 'tis She;
 Why should she asham'd or angry be,
 To be belov'd by Me?
 The Gods may give their Altars o're;
 They'll smoak but seldom any more,
 If none but Happy Men must them adore.

.

If there be man, who thinks himself so high,
 As to pretend equality,
 He deserves her less than I;
 For he would cheat for his relief;
 And one would give with lesser grief,
 To 'an undeserving Beggar than a Thief.
 (stanzas 1-4, p. 98)

Cowley's use of this style can be, and often has been, compared with Donne's. In such a comparison, Cowley is nearly always found to lack the life and vigor which Donne produced; but, viewed by his work alone, Cowley seems to have used the colloquial style to about the best advantage for his own somewhat barren purpose.

We enjoy the natural rhythms of conversation in The Mistress, but these are by no means the only rhythms which Cowley used. He was very fond of complexity in the foot, meter, and rhyme used in expressing his thoughts, just as he was in the manner used to develop and illuminate those thoughts. Miss Miles has shown by a detailed analysis of stanza form in "The Request" that the over-all structure of the poem is very carefully designed to correspond with and emphasize the effects which the ideas produce.³⁹ Perhaps the first stanza will be sufficient to demonstrate the method which the poet uses.

I'Have often wisht to love; what shall I do?
 Me still the cruel Boy does spare;

And I a double task must bear,
 First to woo him, and then a Mistress too.
 Come at last and strike for shame;
 If thou art any thing besides a name.
 I'll think Thee else no God to be;
 But Poets rather Gods, who first created Thee.
 (p. 65)

I have already pointed out the double nature of the situation here. Miss Miles feels that it is not only double, but quadruple.

The speaker is self-conscious as poet as well as lover: . . . he informs the audience of the ambiguity of his search, and then informs the object of his search of its own ambiguity. . . . The stanza form provides the same double play in accent and rhyme, in the first four lines rhyming five-accent lines with five-accent and fours with fours, then shifting to alternates in couplet rhyme, with a final extra accent at the end, suggesting in effect, as does the thought, the undependability of obvious expectations. The syntax is rhetorical, full of punctuational gesture aware of audience, mixing statement, question, statement, imperative, threat, in quick succession. The structure of the whole poem follows the same succession, from a two-stanza statement of the speaker's eagerness at all costs to love, to one stanza's command to strike the burning arrows in, to two stanzas figurative questioning of man's place among the beasts and fishes as game for Love, for Venus or Diana, and a final stanza of challenge.⁴⁰

She has made a similar study of the relation of stanza form to thought in each of the first ten poems. Since this group proves to be typical of the whole in this respect, I will not further discuss the matter.

Johnson's "Life of Cowley" also offers rather extensive comment on Cowley's versification. While Johnson did not include Cowley among those poets whose verses often "stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear,"⁴¹

he does think he was generally careless with meter.⁴² Johnson's taste is not that of the modern reader when he complains lack of the "grandeur of generality"⁴³ and of "elegances either lucky or elaborate,"⁴⁴ but most of us do agree with his judgment of many of the rhymes as disappointing and unsuccessful because they fall on "pronouns or particles, or the like unimportant words."⁴⁵ Probably he was referring to lines such as are found in "The Soul."

If ever I an Hope admit,
Without thy Image stamp't on it:
Or any Fear, till I begin
To find that You'r concern'd therein;

.

If my Understanding do
Seek any Knowledge but of You,
If she do near thy Body prize
Her Bodies of Philosophies
(ll. 27-30, 63-66, pp. 83-84)

There are also plenty of satisfactory rhymes to be found, for example, "Leaving Me, and then Loving Many."

So Men, who once have cast the Truth away,
Forsook by God, do strange wild lusts obey;
So the vain Gentiles, when they left t' adore
One Deity, could not stop at thousands more.
Their zeal was senseless strait, and boundless grown;
They worshipt many a Beast, and many a Stone.
Ah fair Apostate! couldst thou think to flee
From Truth and Goodness, yet keep Unity?
I reign'd alone; and my blest Self could call
The Universal Monarch of her All.
Mine, mine her fair East-Indies were above,
Where those Suns rise that chear the world of Love;
Where beauties shine like Gems of richest price;
Where Coral grows, and every breath is spice:
Mine too her rich West-Indies were below,
Where Mines of gold and endless treasures grow.
But, as, when the Pellaeian Conquerour dy'd,
Many small Princes did his Crown divide,
So, since my Love his vanquisht world forsook,
Murther'd by poysons from her falshood took,

An hundred petty Kings claim each their part,
 And rend that glorious Empire of her Heart.
 (pp. 78-79).

One other criticism of Johnson's which should probably be mentioned is his statement that Cowley's "contractions are often rugged and harsh."⁴⁶ It is somewhat difficult to determine just what Cowley's contractions were, since not all are indicated in the same way. Letters are sometimes elided in the way familiar to us, as i'll or I'le as contraction for I will or I shall. The apostrophe is also used, however, in instances where no elision occurs, such as I'Have. It appears that this is intended to be elided by the reader to I've. If this assumption is correct, every such case in which an apostrophe occurs would be considered a contraction. Generally, I do not find these contractions bothersome, although occasional ones such as Thou'hadst (read Thou'dst) and into'her are difficult to accept. Most, however, cause no difficulty. Some are those used by all poets at the time --'tis, 'twas, 'twere, o're, ne're, etc.--, and most of the others are not so difficult or frequent as to handicap the reader. The fact that all Cowley's elisions are indicated by apostrophes might cause one to feel that the number is excessive, but any more than casual survey will reveal that this is not necessarily the case.

In choosing subject matter for these poems, Cowley was quite willing to use and reuse topics taken both from other poets and from his own previous work. While Donne was certainly not the only other poet from whom he borrowed,

Donne's twentieth-century popularity has produced more work in tracing similarities to him than has been done in connection with anyone else. As has been mentioned, Douds' entire chapter on Cowley is devoted to tracing likenesses of his work to that of Donne. T. S. Eliot has gone so far as to say that "Cowley's relation to Donne, in The Mistress . . . is that of an imitator; he has no grain of originality . . ."47 No one will argue that Cowley, like all the others who were writing this kind of poetry, did not imitate Donne, but I think that few will agree with Eliot that he did nothing but imitate, that he had nothing of his own to contribute. Whether the direction in which he changed was an improvement is another matter, but change he did in making his poems showcases for his wit rather than expressions of his passions. Even Johnson feels it necessary to notice the obvious similarity to Donne of one passage, but he excuses Cowley by saying that "he probably would not have written it, had it not mingled with his own thoughts, so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another."⁴⁸ The introduction of John Sparrow's edition of The Mistress contains an extensive list of borrowings which Cowley apparently made from Donne and from other contemporary poets.⁴⁹

By reading the titles of poems in The Mistress, one can see that the author often repeats the same theme or subject in a number of poems. We find such repetitions as "Platonick Love" and "Answer to the Platonicks"; "Incon-

stancy," "Called Inconstant," "The Inconstant"; "The Soul" and "Counsel" each used as titles for two different poems; "The Resolution," "Resolved to be beloved," "Resolved to Love"; "The Given Love" and "The given Heart."

Just as he treats the same topic repeatedly, so Cowley uses favorite notions again and again throughout his work. Among the most prominent of these is the one remarked by Johnson, that of expressing love "metaphorically by flame" to the extent that "that which is true of real fire is said of love, or figurative fire."⁵⁰ A superficial survey of contemporary poetry supports Johnson's statement that others also used this idea. Among poems in which it appears are these: Phineas Fletcher's "Eclogue III, Myrtilis," of "Piscatorie Eclogues"; Robert Herrick's "Upon Love"; Edmund Waller's "To Amoret," "Another," and "Chloris and Hylas. Made to a Saraban"; Sir John Suckling's "Loves World"; Richard Crashaw's "Wishes" and "A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Sainte Teresa"; Thomas Carew's "Mediocritie in Love Rejected"; Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"; and John Dryden's "Secret Love." It is true that, while Cowley seems to start with the idea of comparing love to fire, he usually ends by equating the two and using them interchangeably until the effects of love are no different from those of fire. This is found in "The Gazers," where love becomes so much like actual fire that he compares himself by "Parabola, resemblance misticall" to the salamander, which was believed to be

incapable of being burned, and to a martyr burned at the stake.

I would not, Salamander-like,
 In scorching heats always to Live desire,
 But like a Martyr, pass to Heav'en through fire.
 (ll. 22-24, p. 143)

The "Usurption" offers another of the many examples of this synonymy of love with fire.

Thou all my Joys and all my Hopes dost claim,
 Thou ragest like a Fire in me.
 Converting all things into Thee,
 Nought can resist, or not encrease the Flame.
 (ll. 25-28, p. 128)

Cowley's variations on this theme are cited by Addison in explanation of what he considers "mixt wit."⁵¹

Another thought which must have had special appeal for Cowley is the identification of his soul with his mistress. This forms the basis for the second poem, called "The Soul" as well as a more or less major theme in many other poems. The argument presented in "The Soul" will serve to explain how Cowley used this idea.

Some dull Philos'opher when he hears me say,
 My Soul is from me fled away;
 Nor has of late inform'd my Body here,
 But in anothers breast does ly,
 That neither is, nor will be I,
 As a form Servient and Assisting there;

Will cry, Absurd! and ask me, how I live:
 And Syllogisms against it give;
 A curse on all your vain Philosophies,
 Which on weak Natures Law depend,
 And know not how to comprehend
Love and Religion, those great Mysterics.

Her Body is my Soul; laugh not at this,
 For by my Life I swear it is.
 'Tis that preserves my Being and my Breath,
 From that proceeds all that I do,

May all my Thoughts and speeches too,
 And separation from it is my Death.
 (p. 107)

Though he makes much mention of soul, often with mistress serving for soul as above, Cowley takes care to emphasize that soul without body is of no use to anybody in this world. In "Platonick Love," he says:

That souls do beauty know,
 'Tis to the Bodies help they owe;
 (ll. 22-23, p. 76).

In the same way that the lover spoke of love as a fire so often that he failed to distinguish between them at all; he feels that love is like physical illness or injury, and at times almost seems to feel that it is an actual disease. This idea is presented in the very first poem when he asks "the cruel Boy," a "Periphrasis, figure of ambage" representing Cupid, to wound him with the dart, and is carried throughout the book to the last poem:

The Fox, the Plague, and ev'ry small disease,
 May come as oft as ill Fate please;
 But Death and Love are never found
 To give a Second Wound,
 We're by those Serpents bit, but we're devour'd by these.
 (stanza 5, p. 152)

The second poem, "The Thraldome," continues the likening of love's malady to real illness.

I Came, I Saw, and was undone;
Lightning did through my bones and marrow run;
 A pointed pain pierc'd deep my heart;
 A swift, cold trembling seiz'd on every part;
 My head turn'd round, nor could it bear
 The Poison that was enter'd there.

.

But quickly to my Cost I found,
 'Twas cruel Love, not Death had made the wound:
Death a more generous rage does use;
 Quarter to all he conquers does refuse.
 Whilst Love with barbarous mercy saves
 The vanquisht lives to make them slaves.

(stanzas 1 and 3, p. 67)

In "Counsel," the pain of love seems at first to be physical pain; but, in the third stanza, the lover makes it plain that the cause of his distress is love, not curable bodily illness.

Gently, ah gently, Madam, touch
 The wound, which you your self have made;
 That pain must needs be very much,
 Which makes me of your hand afraid.
Cordials of Pity give me now,
 For I too weak for Purgings grow.

.

Perhaps the Physick's good you give,
 But ne're to me can useful prove;
Med'cines may Cure, but not Revive;
 And I'am not Sick, but Dead in Love.
 In Loves-Hell, not his World, am I:
 At once I Live, am Dead, and Dye.

(stanzas 1 and 3, pp. 94-95)

The disease is so extreme in "Love undiscovered" that the lover believes he shall die from it since he will not apply to his mistress for a remedy. "The Cure" and "The Incurable" continue the theme of love as a sickness, and in the "Noema, figure of close conceit" of "The Innocent Ill" the loved one is named as:

Thou Pleasant, Universal Ill,
 Which sweet as Health, yet like a Plague dost kill!
 (ll. 36-37, p. 146)

Antiperistasis, the principle of the burning glass, is another idea which fascinated Cowley because he could

use this to explain his continual assertion that love thrives best when it is rejected by its object.⁵² This concept is stated very explicitly in "The vain Love."

What new-found Witchcraft was in thee,
 With thine own Gold to kindle Me?
 Strange art! like him that should devise
 To make a Burning-Glass of Ice;
 When Winter, so, the Plants would harm,
 Her snow it self does keep them warm;
 (ll. 1-6, p. 81)

A comparison with stanza three of "The Request" shows how very similar ideas are sometimes repeated from one poem to another.

If she be coy and scorn my noble fire,
 If her chill heart I cannot move,
 Why I'll enjoy the very Love,
 And make a Mistress of my own Desire.
 Flames their most vigorous heat do hold,
 And purest light, if compast round with cold:
 So when sharp Winter means most harm,
 The springing Plants are by the Snow it self kept warm.
 (p. 66)

In "Eccho," this principle is used in contrast with love. Everything else profits by reflection; love alone does not.

By repercussion Beams engender Fire,
Shapes by reflexion shapes beget;
 The voyce it self, when stopt, does back retire,
 And a new voyce is made by it.
 Thus things by opposition
 The gainers grow; my barren Love alone,
 Does from her stony breast rebound,
 Producing neither Image, Fire, nor Sound.
 (stanza 3, p. 107)

This, however, is an unusual use of the idea. In most cases, Cowley uses it to support the paradoxical idea of love as thriving on coldness and rejection. The expression of the idea found in "Counsel" may stand as quite typical of his habitual statement of this concept.

What new found Rhetorick is thine?
Ev'n thy Diswasions me perswade,
And thy great power does clearest shine,
When thy Commands are disobey'd.
In vain thou bidst me to forbear;
Obedience were Rebellion here.
(stanza 4, p. 95)

CHAPTER III

FINAL GENERALIZATIONS

Throughout this paper I have been using only such poems and portions of poems as were pertinent to the limited aspects being discussed. This method should be helpful in understanding how and why the poems were written, but it requires use of the weakest poems as well as the best with no very clear indication of which are better, and fails to give a true impression of the enjoyment to be found in reading The Mistress. For this reason it seems best to conclude the paper by looking briefly at a few poems in toto. Differing a good bit from each other in subject and attitude, each of these poems may be considered representative of what is to be found in The Mistress.

The first to be considered is "The Spring."

Though you be absent here, I needs must say
The Trees as beauteous are, and flowers as gay,
As ever they were wont to be;
Nay the Birds rural musick too
Is as melodious and free,
As if they sung to pleasure you:
I saw a Rose-Bud o'pe this morn; I'll swear
The blushing Morning open'd not more fair.

How could it be so fair, and you away?
How could the Trees be beauteous, Flowers so gay?
Could they remember but last year,
How you did Them, They you delight,
The sprouting leaves which saw you here,

And call'd their Fellows to the sight,
 Would, looking round for the same sight in vain,
 Creep back into their silent Barks again.

Where ere you walk'd trees were as reverend made,
 As when of old Gods dwelt in every shade.
 Is't possible they should not know,
 What loss of honor they sustain,
 That thus they smile and flourish now,
 And still their former pride retain?
Dull Creatures! 'tis not without Cause that she,
 Who fled the God of wit, was made a Tree.

In ancient times sure they much wiser were,
 When they rejoyc'd the Thracian verse to hear;
 In vain did Nature bid them stay,
 When Orpheus had his song begun,
 They call'd their wondring roots away,
 And bad them silent to him run.
 How would those learned trees have followed you?
 You would have drawn Them, and their Poet too.

But who can blame them now? for, since you're gone,
 They're here the only Fair, and Shine alone.
 You did their Natural Rights invade;
 Where ever you did walk or sit,
 The thickest Boughs could make no shade,
 Although the Sun had granted it:
 The fairest Flowers could please no more, neer you,
 Then Painted Flowers, set next to them, could do.

When e're then you come hither, that shall be
 The time, which this to others is, to Me.
 The little joys which here are now,
 The name of Punishments do bear;
 When by their sight they let us know
 How we depriv'd of greater are.
 'Tis you the best of Seasons with you bring;
 This is for Beasts, and that for Men the Spring.
 (pp. 70-72)

The poet begins with a conventional compliment to the mistress, expressed by the conceit of the beauty of nature being dependent on her presence. When she is gone, the result is not the usual poetic one. Spring does not, like Davenant's Morn,⁵³ refuse to come in the absence of the mistress. Rather than nature losing all its beauty for the

lover, he discovers the forgetfulness and stupidity of the trees and flowers. If they had the wit to remember that last year they were called forth by the mistress' beauty, they would never come out this year without her. Instead they are such "Dull Creatures" that they fail to notice the difference, and it was obviously with good reason that the form of a tree was chosen for Daphne "Who fled the God of wit." He goes on to say that, if conditions were now as they were in "ancient times," surely her power would be even greater than that of Orpheus because, as he states by the "Anti-pophora, figure of response" in the last two lines, not only the trees would follow her, but Orpheus himself would be drawn. The next stanza reverses the thought of the first three and says that nature is quite justified in showing her greatest beauty when the greater beauty of the mistress is not there to eclipse it. This is, however, a beautiful season only for those who require nothing more, because he tells her that:

When e're then you come hither,

'Tis you the best of Seasons with you bring;
 This is for Beasts, and that for Men the spring.

Another poem which most readers enjoy is "Written in Juice of Lemmon." The lover, who seldom declares himself directly to the mistress, here finds courage to write in invisible ink what he has not dared to see appear on paper. This way, she can either read it over a flame or destroy it with the flame, as she chooses.

Whilst what I write I do not see,
 I dare thus, even to You, write Poetry.
 Ah foolish Muse, which do'st so high aspire,
 And know'st her judgment well
 How much it does thy power excel,
 Yet dar'st be read by, thy just doom, the Fire.

Alas, thou think'st thy self secure,
 Because thy form is Innocent and Pure:
 Like Hypocrites, which seem unspotted here;
 But when they sadly come to dye,
 And the last Fire their Truth must try,
 Scrauld o're like thee, and blotted they appear.

Go then, but reverently go,
 And, since thou needs must sin, confess it too:
 Confess't, and with humility clothe thy shame;
 For thou, who else must burned be
 An Heretick, if she pardon thee,
 May'st like a Martyr then enjoy the Flame.

But if her wisdom grow severe,
 And suffer not her goodness to be there;
 If her large mercies cruelly it restrain;
 Be not discourag'd, but require
 A more gentle Ordeal Fire,
 And bid her by Loves-Flames read it again.

Strange power of heat, thou yet dost show
 Like winter earth, naked, or cloath'd with Snow,
 But, as the quickning Sun approaching near,
 The Plants arise up by degrees,
 A sudden paint adorns the trees,
 And all kind Natures Charecters appear.

So, nothing yet in Thee is seen,
 But when a Genial heat warms thee within,
 A new-born Wood of various Lines there grows;
 Here buds an A, and there a B,
 Here sprouts a V, and there a T,
 And all the flourishing Letters stand in Rows.

Still, silly Paper, thou wilt think
 That all this might as well be writ with Ink.
 Oh no; there's sense in this, and Mysterie;
 Thou now maist change thy Authors name,
 And to her Hand lay noble claim;
 For as She Reads, she Makes the words in Thee.

Yet if thine own unworthiness
 Will still, that thou art mine, not Hers, confess;

Consume thy self with Fire before her Eyes,
 And so her Grace or Pity move;
 The Gods, though Beasts they do not Love,
 Yet like them when they'r burnt in Sacrifice.
 (pp. 72-73)

The second, third, and fourth stanzas compare the paper on which the lover is writing to a person tried by fire. Using a hypocrite as figure of comparison, the writer shows by "Parabola, or resemblance misticall" that although the paper now seems "Innocent and Pure," when actually faced with the flame, the poem will begin to appear. Since it is not possible to sustain this illusion of purity, he commands the paper to go ahead to reveal what is written on it, and says that if she accepts it it will find itself enjoying the Flame. If she does not accept, it is to ask trial by an even hotter fire, the flames of love. This heat of love is likened by "Omosis, Resemblance" to the heat of the sun which was believed to generate spontaneous forms of life⁵⁴ as well as to foster growth of seeds. Just as the sun's warmth brings forth the plants, so the warmth of love should cause the paper to produce its A's and B's, until all the letters which compose the message stand flourishing in rows. The writer justifies himself to the paper for not using regular ink on the ground that, since the mistress will cause the words to appear, the poem will be able to claim her as its author. Finally, it is directed that, if she refuses to accept it, it should attempt to move her pity by burning before her eyes. After all, the gods accept even dumb beasts when properly offered as sacrifices.

This poem offers a good example of the deliberately undecorative imagery much used in the seventeenth century. A blank sheet of paper, the "Parisons, figures of even" of the A's, B's, and other individual letters are not images which would arouse any emotion in the reader. Perhaps the reason for such wide use of this type of images was that, being free from any emotional or sensual connotation, they left the reader quite free to observe the ingenious quality of the poem without distraction. Since intellectual appreciation was the aim of the poet, such images probably served him better than ones which would have provoked other sensations in the reader.

One last poem to be considered here is the short one entitled "The Separation."

Ask me not what my Love shall do or be
 (Love which is Soul to Body, and Soul of Me)
 When I am separated from thee;
 Alas, I might as easily show,
 What after Death the Soul will do,
 'Twill last, I'm sure, and that is all we know.

The thing call'd Soul will never stir nor move,
 But all that while a liveless Carkass prove,
 For 'tis the Body of my Love;
 Not that my Love will fly away.
 But still continue, as, they say,
 Sad troubled Ghosts about their Graves do stray.

The situation here appears to be that he has, at last, declared his love to his mistress and been at least partially accepted. She seems to be questioning him, as lovers do, about just how great his love is and how long it would endure if she were no longer with him. He answers that he knows no more about what his love would do than about what the soul

does after death, "'Twill last, I'm sure, and that is all we know." Since his love for her has come to reign in his soul, the soul is now nothing more than the body of that love. Thus if she were to leave him, this body would not be able to live; and his love, the soul's soul, as it were, could only hover as the unfortunate souls in the Phaedo were doomed to do around the graves of their bodies.

That Cowley's Mistress was written during the interim between the Elizabethan fad of Petrarchanism⁵⁵ and the dominance of précieuse ideas of love during the Restoration is obvious from the nature of the love he presents. It displays characteristics of each genre, yet it cannot be fitted satisfactorily into either. His is never the Platonic love of Petrarch or the Restoration suitor because he feels that purely spiritual love is intended for spirits--men have bodies and it would be foolish to ignore them.

So Angels love; so let them love for me;
 When I'am all soul, such shall my love too be:
 Who nothing here but like a Spirit would do,
 In a short time (believ't) will be one too.
 ("Answer to the Platonicks," ll. 1-4, p. 80)

Neither did he value the sort of fidelity which Petrarch displayed for Laura. Though he might occasionally make such a vow of everlasting constancy as the Restoration ladies expected from their lovers ("My Fate"), the sentiments of "The Inconstant" are much more prevalent.

I Never yet could see that face
 Which had no dart for me;
 From fifteen years, to fifties space,
 They all victorious be.
 (ll. 1-4, p. 133)

Cowley had no faith in the "Romantic" concept of one particular mistress predestined for each lover, but was quite willing to love first one and then another, pausing now and then when he found a lady who returned his love. Cowley's mistresses, too, failed to display the virtues of innocence and constancy attributed to the Restoration ladies. In "Not Fair," he compares his mistress to a succubus because of the way she at first concealed "thy falshood and thy pride / And all thy thousand faults beside." She is looking for money as well as love ("The Bargain," "The rich Rival"), and she does not hesitate to discard an old lover in favor of a new one ("Leaving Me, and then loving Many"). The ladies Cowley loved were not required to meet the golden-haired, ivory-skinned standards of beauty which were so important in Petrarchanism. For him, beauty can be "Here black, there brown, here tawny, and there white," and its effect is the same. His ideas on beauty are not so far removed from those of Restoration préciosité as from those of Petrarch, but this beauty does not have nearly the power which was to be accorded it in the Restoration. Beauty, in the poem by that title, is seen to be a "Weak Victor," with less power than most men might think. Again in "The Encrease" Cowley explains that beauty cannot be the sole agent in the enslavement of men by love, for his love continues to increase although he is "sure her Beauties cannot greater grow."

The most prominent trait common with Petrarchan love is

the ability of Cowley's love to nourish itself on the coldness and even rejection of his mistress. He is fascinated by this phenomenon and discusses it frequently in The Mistress. Earlier in the paper, I have mentioned his attempts to explain this paradoxical tendency by comparison with a burning glass.

Several of the poems display a melancholy of the type expected of the précieux. Cowley sheds the tears of the lover in "The Despair"; his heart is broken like a Venice-glass in "The Heart-breaking"; and he goes so far as to die by his mistress' beauty in "The Concealment." Much of his love is expressed by more active passion, however. For instance, in "The Frailty" he rages and bites his "Chain," though it produces no better results than did the weeping. Another evidence of Cowley's relation to Petrarchanism and préciosité is found in "Her Unbelief," in which he worships his mistress as a religious idol or goddess. Like the attitude of melancholy, this trait did not, in Cowley's poetry, reach enormous proportions. Another easily observed difference from the précieuse poetry of the Restoration and later lies in the language which Cowley used to express his melancholy and his extravagant compliments to his mistress. The Restoration précieux was noted for the elegance of his speech and the elevation of his diction. We have already seen that Cowley's diction was generally unaffected and simple.

Thus it appears that Cowley's love poems, like those of others in his time, can best be considered as a link between

two more distinctly classified types--Petrarchanism, which had developed out of the code of courtly love, and the "whining" love of the Restoration, stemming from the writings of Scudéry, Gomberville, and LaCalprenède. Actually it is surprising that he does not show more similarity to the code of the "whining" gallant, since he spent nearly one-fourth of his life in France, moving in the circles from which the English copied these manners.

Though The Mistress has been the only concern of this paper, it must not be forgotten that this was only a small part of Abraham Cowley's total production. He has been named as one of the most versatile writers of all time. He worked in almost every recognized literary form of his time, with the notable exception of dramatic tragedy, and introduced at least two new forms previously unknown in English, the Biblical epic and the Pindaric ode. Both were eagerly accepted, and in later developments extended to such heights as Milton's Paradise Lost. Cowley's dramatic comedies are nothing more than mildly amusing; but, in every other genre which he attempted, he achieved contemporary fame and is still accorded at least minor success. His "Essays in Verse and Prose" are probably now the most widely read and appreciated of his works, as they have been most of the time since the early eighteenth century. The Davideis, A Sacred Poem of the Troubles of David, is still praised by some critics for its excellent imagery and adaptation of stanza structure to content. His Latin poems were said by Johnson to accom-

moderate, without much loss of purity or elegance, "the diction of Rome to his own conceptions."⁵⁶

While those who find Cowley still enjoyable would not ask nor expect that he ever be restored to his original prominence as a writer, they feel that his minor position is secure and that no one need hesitate for fear of dullness or datedness to sample his work. The many scientific allusions are no longer very meaningful; much of the classical reference is outside the knowledge of most present-day readers; but many of the arguments this lover offers to advance his case with his mistress retain even yet much of their cleverness. The Mistress has neither the life and passion of Donne nor the appealing piety of Herbert and Crashaw, but anyone who has an interest in seventeenth-century ways of thought, or who enjoys "wit" in the sense of Addison and the earlier critics, should find here much that suits his taste. The reader who wants a pleasurable sample of seventeenth-century poetry might well look at Cowley along with the better-known literary figures, for, as Cowley puts it, "It is a ridiculous follie to condemne or laugh at the starres, because the Moone and Sunne shine brighter."⁵⁷

NOTES

¹Edmund W. Gosse, Seventeenth-Century Studies; A Contribution to the History of English Poetry (London, 1883), p. 184.

²Tucker Brooke, "The Renaissance (1500-1660)," A Literary History of England, ed. Albert G. Baugh (New York, 1948), p. 667.

³Abraham Cowley, Poems: Miscellanies, The Mistress, Pindarique Odes, Davideis, Verses Written on Several Occasions, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1905), p. 456. Further references to this volume will be indicated by page numbers inserted parenthetically in the text.

⁴His reference was to the book The Four Ages of England, or the Iron Age, with other select poems, 1648. See J. E. Spingarn, ed., Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, Vol. II, 1650-1685 (Bloomington, Indiana, 1957), 334.

⁵John Sparrow, "The Text of Cowley's Mistress," Review of English Studies, III (1927), 23-24.

⁶Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century, ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley (Duke University, 1955), p. 634.

⁷John Dryden, Essays of John Dryden, selected and ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford, 1926), I, 34-5.

⁸"Letter 30. Dennis to Dryden, 1693-94?" The Letters of John Dryden, with Letters Addressed to Him, collected and ed. Charles E. Ward (Duke University, 1942), p. 68.

⁹John Oldham, "Horace's art of Poetry, Imitated in English. Addressed by way of Letter to a Friend," Quoted by Mark Van Doren, John Dryden, A Study of His Poetry, (New York, 1946), p. 271.

¹⁰William Wotton, "Of Ancient and Modern Eloquence and Poesie," from Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning (1694) Chapter III, Reprinted in Spingarn, III, 207.

¹¹Evelyn's Letter to Samuel Pepys, Says-Court, 12 Aug. 1689, Reprinted in Spingarn, I, 329.

¹²John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, Duke of Buckinghamshire, An Essay upon Poetry (1682), Reprinted in Spingarn, I, 296.

¹³Samuel Johnson, Johnson's Lives of the Poets, ed. Mrs. Alexander Napier, Bohn's Standard Library Edition, (London, 1908), I, 27.

¹⁴Alexander Pope, The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. John Butt (New York, 1942), IV, 201, l. 75.

¹⁵Emily Morse Symonds, Mr. Pope, His Life and Times (New York, 1909), II, 556.

¹⁶Coleridge, p. 415.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 489.

¹⁸Lou Barker Nohl, "The Lyrical Achievement of Abraham Cowley" (unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1956), p. 2.

¹⁹Joseph Spence, Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters of Books and Men, a Selection, ed. John Underhill (London, no date), p. 37.

²⁰Quoted by Spero, "Cowley and Sprat," Notes and Queries, 6th Series, III (1881), 153.

²¹Edward Solly, "Cowley and Sprat," Notes and Queries, 6th Series, III (1881), 153.

²²Johnson, I, 8-9.

²³Ibid., p. 9.

²⁴Abraham Cowley, Essays, Plays, and Sundry Verses, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1906), p. 422.

²⁵Ben Jonson, "How He Saw Her," Seventeenth-Century Verse and Prose, ed. Helen C. White, Ruth C. Wallerstein, and Ricardo Quintana (New York, 1959), I, 138-9.

²⁶George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), p. 159.

²⁷The term conceit will be occurring frequently and needs a fairly exact definition. I use that of Felix E. Schelling: "A conceit, in the parlance of the old poets, was

was any striking, apt, or original figure of speech employed to illustrate or beautify a passage rhetorically." Felix E. Schelling, The English Lyric (Boston, 1913), p. 55.

²⁸Robert B. Hinman, Abraham Cowley's World of Order (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), p. 124.

²⁹Josephine Miles, The Primary Language of Poetry in the 1640's (Berkeley, 1948), p. 48.

³⁰The names used to describe figures are those given by Puttenham (pp. 154-276) and are applied according to his definitions.

³¹Geoffrey Walton, "Abraham Cowley and the Decline of of Metaphysical Poetry," Scrutiny, VI (1937), 184.

³²Among other examples of the technique of enumeration, note "The Change," "Clad all in white," "Leaving me, and Then Loving Many," "The Soul," "Maidenhead," "Impossibilities," and "The Inconstant."

³³Other instances of the technique of progression are to be found in "The Spring," "Platonick Love," "Answer to the Platonicks," "The Discovery," "Written in Juice of Lemmon," "The Dissembler," and "Weeping."

³⁴This theory may have been suggested by Donne's "Womans Constancy" ("Or say that now / We are not just those persons, which we were?"), but the development of the idea appears to be original with Cowley.

³⁵The technique of explanation is used in "Silence," "The rich Rival," "Looking on, and discoursing with his Mistress," "The Separation," "The Gazers," "The Innocent Ill," and others.

³⁶John Boal Douds, "The Poetry of Donne, Herbert, and Marvell" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1936), p. 114.

³⁷Miles, p. 4.

³⁸Ibid., p. 31.

³⁹Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 46-47.

⁴¹Johnson, p. 22.

⁴²Ibid., p. 68.

43Ibid., p. 52.

44Ibid., p. 68.

45Ibid., p. 69.

46Ibid.

47T. S. Eliot, "A Note on Two Odes of Cowley," Seventeenth Century Studies, Presented to Sir Herbert Grierson (Oxford, 1938), p. 235.

48Johnson, p. 47.

49John Sparrow, ed., The Mistress and Other Selected Poems (London, 1926), pp. xv-xvii.

50Johnson, p. 47.

51Joseph Addison, The Spectator, ed. G. Gregory Smith, Everyman's Library Edition (New York, 1907), I, 233-234.

52For a more complete discussion of the scientific implications of this principle, see Hinman, pp. 41-44.

53Sir William Davenant, "Song," Seventeenth Century Verse and Prose, p. 348.

54Hinman, p. 46.

55The remarks concerning Petrarchanism are based largely on information supplied by Mr. Donald Eidson, a fellow graduate student.

56Johnson, p. 16.

57Cowley, Essays, p. 3.

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