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June Wayne and John Donne: Reverse *Ekphrasis* Exemplified and Explored

Ann Hurley and Jebah Baum

At the annual conference of the John Donne Society at Baton Rouge in 2009, scholars Helen Brooks, Paul Parrish, and Jonathan Post (in absentia) announced a new "find"—a set of lithographs (primarily) created in response to selections from Donne's poems by the artist and lithographer, June Wayne. While Wayne's lithographs had never been literally lost, they were new to the Donne Society as a group, and their presentation by Brooks, Parrish, and Post was the occasion of much interest. The limitation of time at a conference was an obvious deterrent to further inquiry, but our responses to the presentation were also inhibited by our lack of technical knowledge about lithography and, additionally, by the need for a mode of inquiry that would more fully unlock the intriguing conjunction of verbal and visual artists, a conjunction that requires insight not only from both literary studies and art history, but also from a means of looking at the specific overlap of these two disciplines.

This essay proposes to use those two areas of inquiry as a starting point for further exploration of the Wayne/Donne collaboration insofar as it is being co-written by a practicing artist and a literary scholar. Jebah Baum is a visual artist with professional expertise in a wide variety of printmaking media and as such he can supply the technical background in lithography that is essential to our increased understanding of Wayne's use of Donne. Ann Hurley, from the Donne Society, has pursued research interests in the intersection of literature with the visual arts and can thus attempt to meet the need for a more specific methodology that will allow us to look at Wayne and Donne together rather than from a side by side perspective, i. e. prints *on* poems as opposed to prints *and*

poems. That methodology we are tentatively labeling "reverse *ekphrasis*," a term that may need some preliminary definition before we get to the substance of our essay.

"*Ekphrasis*," it will be recalled, is the act of writing about an art object: that is, the verbal evocation of visual art. It is perhaps better phrased, in the words of scholar James Heffernan, as "the verbal representation of visual representation," a definition that underscores, at least in part, the challenge of using a verbal text unfolding over time to deal figuratively with the spatiality of visual art.[1] Conversely, then, reverse *ekphrasis* would require the use of visual properties to convey the temporality of verbal art. *Ekphrasis*, in only ostensible contrast to reverse *ekphrasis*, has a long history, from Homer to Ashbery and beyond, and as such it has accrued a number of conventions. Reverse *ekphrasis*, while also practiced over time, has a less explicit history but can indeed lay claim to a tradition, and appears, most recently in the mid-twentieth century, in the largely European form of the *livre d'artiste*. It is significant that June Wayne decided to stage her visual engagement with Donne's verbal art in that particular mode of representation, thus calling attention to the fact that she is encountering the verbal artist on his own turf, the book, and situating her prints among his poems.

We will be handling our discussion of the Wayne/Donne collaboration initially by dividing our responses into our two areas of experience. Jebah Baum will provide the technical background for further discussion of Wayne's use of lithography, and Ann Hurley will situate her remarks about the collaboration in further discussion of reverse *ekphrasis* as it pertains specifically to the Wayne/Donne *livre d'artiste*. We then hope to come together in an exploration of a more ambitious reflection on the subtleties of this collaboration between visual and verbal arts that engages the essence of artistic representation, that oscillation between word and image, from thought to form, that "teases us out of thought" and into total absorption in the experience of (unmodified) art.

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[1]Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 3.

In choosing the graphic medium of stone lithography to creatively engage John Donne's poetry, June Wayne confined herself to a very specific visual vocabulary. Nevertheless, by utilizing the full range of lithographic techniques she created a tex*tur*al richness in her images that echoes the tex*tu*al complexity of Donne's verse. The materials: litho crayons, tusche washes, solvent washes, acid etching and mechanical scraping produce a variety of blacks and grays that range from subtle rendering to expressionistic drips and splatters. The scale of her images as they relate to the presentation of the text instantly conveys that these are not mere illustrations, but independent works that take inspiration from the poems and are intended to be measured against them. This effect is partially achieved through Wayne's use of bleed printing, wherein the image encompasses the entire page leaving no frame or border (a modernistic approach that she was quite early to embrace) and also in the way that the blocks of text are presented: independent of the images, yet comparable in size, color and method of printing.

Stone lithography came into practice in the early nineteenth century and was immediately utilized by fine artists as an exciting new technology, not only for reproduction purposes, but also as a medium in its own right with a unique expressive vocabulary. Francisco Goya's wonderfully successful bullfight series was among the earliest examples of an artist creating original images in lithography. Late nineteenth century artists like Odilon Redon and Gustav Moreau made lithography a primary part of their artistic production. It should be noted that June Wayne's Donne portfolio is visually indebted to both of these great symbolists.

In stone lithography images are rendered on the surface of a levigated limestone in grease-based media and fixed there by creating a resist in the remaining open pores. The original drawing is then replaced with ink and transferred under great pressure to sheets of paper. Lithographic crayons and tusche are made to be soluble in water allowing artists to work in ways similar to watercolor technique. Oil-based solvents can be applied to the surface of the un-etched image and thus the artist can combine techniques of both oil-based and water-based media. Autographic ink works well with quill pens and is often used to render solid colors in fine detail. The image may also be reversed, wherein the drawn or positive areas become white and the negative areas take on ink. The surface of the stone may be abraded mechanically with needles,

scalpels, and snakeslip stones, revealing previously filled in areas. Etching the surface with nitric acid affects the amount of ink the stones pores will retain and it is also possible to burn through dark areas in this way. Images may be developed in color by over printing with multiple stones. Thin zinc plates, which are more transportable, may be substituted for stones, and although they are less tactile to work with, they produce largely the same results. Photolithography, also widely used by artists, will not be discussed here, as in this portfolio Wayne restricted herself solely to manual techniques.

Wayne has clearly confronted the issue of creating images that have integrity independent of the words from which they take their inspiration. Her inclusion of rejected impressions and/or states at the end of the portfolio points us towards that understanding. She asks us to consider why these images/states were rejected, and the images (both those accepted and those rejected) offer clues. In fact, they are revealing both for what they contain and what they don't. For example, Wayne's representational symbolism and her less than facile drawing style would seem to lean towards illustration and creates a tension within the work. There is a palpable awareness of the fragile balance that she is trying to strike, and she utilizes several lithographic devices that impact the overall visual effect. (More on this point will be considered below.)

It is perhaps useful to compare Wayne's work with lithographic tusche washes to the glazing techniques utilized by ceramic artists. Tusche is composed of oily substances suspended in water that may be applied to the stone with brushes, sponges, and pens, or flicked or atomized and sprayed onto the surface in delicate or crude dot patterns. Although it is possible to obtain a high level of control, this material lends itself to organic textures and somewhat random results. Wayne has chosen to embrace this quality of randomness and intentionally manipulates the washes (appropriately called "*peau de crapaud*" or "skin of the toad"), developing complex surfaces that evoke an apt simulacrum to the unpredictable nuances achieved in ceramic glazes. Extrapolating the process even further she first put sand on the stone and then laid her washes over it, increasing yet again the variability of the texture. On one occasion she didn't have any sand handy and used salt instead. This burnt white spots into the image, a technique Wayne then utilized throughout the portfolio to excellent effect. Including oil-based solvents in the washes adds one more quality by giving the surface a clotted or marbled

look. Wayne unapologetically utilizes all of this extensive vocabulary. The sumptuous surfaces of these lithographs may even seem mannered to some observers and raise the specter of craft (or "cooking" in print shop vernacular) were it not for her determined attention to visual narrative.

With sensitive restraint, she re-enters her images, scraping gently into the stone with a needle revealing white contours or draws into them with autographic ink and the sharp edge of a quill pen. Many of her washes are built up in several layers until a black field surrounds the figures. Other times she renders form with litho crayons, which come in grades from soft to hard—the softest ultimately occupying the most pores on the stone and creating the blackest impression. Most often she uses a combination of these techniques: under drawing with hard crayons, overlaying with tusche washes and over drawing again with soft crayons, manipulating the surface with water and solvent and then scraping with needles, razors, and snakeslip stones, and adding black contours with pen and autographic ink. The starry effect was achieved by strategically placing single grains of salt that abraded the surface and penetrated the tusche washes, leaving faint auras around their point of entry.

If all of this begins to sound quite sensual, it is fair to say that Wayne was well aware of the physical engagement of working with stone and indulged herself in the medium with unbridled abandon. Though her images are not ecstatic in the way of Pablo Picasso or Jackson Pollack, they are determinately sensual and undeniably libidinal, and her choice of medium was certainly made from a desire to evoke physical sensation. Complementing this carnal apotheosis, however, is a quality of spirituality implied both by the attitudes of her figures and the alchemical nature of the highly variable lithographic process.

Wayne was working in Paris with a master printer and so hers was a multi-leveled collaboration, first with John Donne, then with her French printer, and then with her German binder. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that this edition was an act of love and one that eventually led to her founding the celebrated Tamarind Press. She saw stone lithography as a trade worthy of perpetuation and her conviction brought this process back to life in the U. S. A. at a time when it had all but disappeared. The practice of making artists books was not yet prevalent in this country, although it had a long tradition in France, and it is no accident that she went there to publish this portfolio, in a country where artists had long collaborated with writers to create marvelous books and

portfolios equally devoted to both art forms. The artist's book is an art form in and of itself (both in the west and in the east), where poems and pictures naturally accompany each other and often even originate from the same pen. It is interesting then that there is no adequate word associated with the role of the artist in this collaboration. Our use of "reverse *ekphrasis*" here is thus not only instrumental in exploring the Wayne/Donne object before us, but also, perhaps, an attempt to fill that void.

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Given Jebah Baum's introductory remarks on the technicalities of lithography, and particularly his emphasis on the physicality of that mode of print-making, a discussion of reverse *ekphrasis* should now emphasize the material nature of the Wayne/Donne collaboration that sets it apart from the usual mode of a visual response to a text, which, whether a painting or print, is usually only two dimensional. The *livre d'artiste* mode that Wayne selected—given its three-dimensional nature, and its insistent physicality, whose spatial resonance must yet be experienced through a controlled temporal sequence—presents us with an object whose representational nature is teasingly complex. The material nature of the *livre d'artiste* both brings to the surface and at the same time collapses the distinctions between spatial and temporal representation, image and word, artist and poet, and, most intriguingly, this artist and this poet, June Wayne and John Donne. Exploring some of the conventions of reverse *ekphrasis* in the context of the complex representational nature of this collaboration is, then, a useful starting point.

For example, the *livres d'artiste*, those artist books over which the visual artist appears to have primary control, might seem equivalent to the practice of written *ekphrasis* where the verbal artist exercises the greater power. But who is in control in reverse *ekphrasis* where arguably the visual artist controls the medium but the verbal artist provides the inspiration and content? And is the diversification of power so clearly demarcated when the visual artist selects a medium, lithography, that recasts in material terms the sensuality and physicality in the content of the verbal artist's work. Is the relationship between visual and verbal artist complimentary? complementary? or actually antagonistic?

Moreover, moving more specifically toward the Donne/Wayne collaboration, what does it mean when the same word—"print"—is used for the respective sites of both visual and verbal instances, lithographs and printed text, wherein the reader/viewer is engaged in Wayne's *livre d'artiste* featuring Donne's printed sonnets?[2] Who here, finally, is *l'artiste*—Wayne? Donne? Their mysterious merging, that "abler soul" is Donne's answer from "The Extasie," but Wayne has given us its "body" in the "book."

Our comments thus far, then, are intended to stress the particular nature of the Donne/Wayne, Wayne/Donne *livre d'artiste*. Wayne's intuitive selection of Donne as a source of inspiration and her equally intuitive choice of lithography as the medium for the representation of that inspiration is justified by its resultant success: a *livre d'artiste* that transcends its individual collaboration into an integrated whole.[3]

More specifically, in conventional *ekphrasis*, the verbal artist attempts, decorously, to match in style and tone the style and tone of the visual

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[2]The printed edition that Wayne used has not been identified. Robert Conway, in his notes to the *catalogue raisonné* of her work, suggests that it might have been John Hayward's Nonesuch edition printed in 1929 (*June Wayne: The Art of Everything. A Catalogue Raisonné 1936–2006* [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007], p. 143.)

[3]June Wayne has commented about the serendipitous selection of Donne: "I used to play records when I was working. I happened onto this recording by Christopher Hassall, the English actor, of Donne on one side and Wordsworth on the other. As I listened, those poems literally began taking over my hand, and I began to draw those very romantic, although also somewhat macabre, wash drawings. I began making images to match the poems." In respect to her selection of lithography, she had said that a colleague (in a context different from Donne's poems) had suggested that lithography, as a medium new to her, might offer her fresh insight, and the decision to embed her new set of Donne lithographs in the medium of an artist's book, while slightly less sudden was also guided by intuition: "I felt that I should face Donne squarely. I had derived energy from him [in the earlier lithographs inspired by his poems], but now I was proposing that I really engage the text and make a suite for which that particular text is responsible for what I've done in the print. I wanted to prove that, even though there were hundreds of years between us, there was a true collaboration between me and Donne. . . . To do a *livre d'artiste* . . . seemed the right vehicle, an art form with a long tradition to which I might bring some nuance of my own" (*Catalogue Raisonné,* p. 119).

artifact that has inspired the verbal response. In so doing, of course, he/she calls attention to his/her own talent. But as Jebah Baum points out, Wayne's reticent style of rendering the figure presents a dramatic contrast to her otherwise confident expressionistic painterly approach. By de-emphasizing some of her own craftsmanship in the interest of the larger effect of spontaneity,[4] the visual equivalent of Donne's highly personal spoken voice, she has achieved a more integrated effect for the whole piece. Relatedly, in post-Romantic exercises of conventional *ekphrasis*, the poet often calls explicit attention to the making of the visual artifact, thus subtly invoking his/her own creativity. Again, however, Wayne both follows and subverts convention here by selecting as a site for her lithographs a book—of a size that, while still large enough for a wall-hanging, nonetheless insists on its temporal nature by including page numbers, thus implying that it be handled textually rather than spatially as would be an artist's portfolio. And, in one more turn of apprehension, while the paginated function of the book mode reinforces a reading experience, the fact that the leaves of the book, and intriguingly those containing the text, as well as those with the lithographs, are detachable and can thus be individually displayed, reinforces a spectator or connoisseur's mode of artistic experience, even though these are words, in parallel with the images, that have that same potential for visual display.[5]

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[4]For example, Wayne notes that she worked on the book in a very tight time frame, due to her printer Durassier's schedule: "At the hotel at night, I would make a wash sketch of what I would draw the next day. . . . It was all done quickly, even the drawing of the motif itself" (*Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 143).

[5]Again, Wayne as an artist, incorporated chance event into the final effect of the integrated work as a whole. Her selection of a Berlin printer, paper type and print type were all intentional, but when she came to send the lithographs to Berlin for printing, the Russians were blockading Berlin and she feared sending them there. Thus, she says, "the blockade changed the format of the book markedly. I had planned to have the poems printed on the inside of the double fold opposite each litho, but I could not risk sending the lithos to Berlin. . . . Instead the poems were printed on a separate page and shipped directly to Los Angeles. I inserted them into the folds when I assembled the books in my studio. That is why the poetry page is loose within each fold." This incident is a useful illustration of the separation of intention from final effect when that final

This blending of modes of apprehension focuses on what may well be the particular strength of the Donne/Wayne collaboration—its provocative emphasis on the nature of representation through this deliberate refusal to sustain any focus on the visual over verbal or *visa versa.* Genre, in this case the use of the art of reverse *ekphrasis* embedded in the words of a celebrated poet, can thus become a mode of exploring what art is. Wittgenstein says that "all seeing is seeing as," and both *ekphrasis* and, in this case, reverse *ekphrasis* in Wayne's artist's book, become the "articulation of the transforming gaze" both literally and figuratively.[6] By intermingling one mode of representation with another, and, in this case, by artfully refusing priority of one mode over the other, the Wayne/Donne collaboration asserts that the essence of representation is not a re-presentation of something already in existence but the articulated presentation of a new creation—neither Donne's nor Wayne's work but the experience of seeing this new work from entirely its own perspective. And the essence of that perspective is that emphasis is given to its active making as the reader/viewer (one and the same person) is asked to attend, quite consciously, to this blended mode of perception. As a mode of exploring what art is, then, the Donne/Wayne collaborative artist's book tells us that what art is is both making and the engaged perception of that making. As Cole Swensen puts it, art, particularly art like the Wayne/Donne artist's book that calls attention to its own making, "can speak literally, figuratively, concretely and abstractly, all at one time."[7]

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Wayne began her Donne series with a number of wash drawings inspired by a recording of Donne's verse but quickly found that medium inadequate.[8] What she responded to in Donne was, she said, "a

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effect is perhaps more powerful than the original intention might have produced (*Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 143).

[6]The quoted passages and reflections in this paragraph are indebted to an untitled paper presented at the AWP (Association of Writers and Writing Programs) Annual Conference in Chicago, February 2009, by the poet, Cole Swensen.

[7]Swenson.

[8]*Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 119.

combination of courtly and vernacular language." It was lithography, "an art form with a long tradition," that provided her with such a visual vocabulary, and she appears to have been drawn to that mode of expression for its sensuous physicality. Speaking later of her reaction to Donne's verse, she commented, "I didn't notice the religious connection, because [Donne's] sentiment was so physical."[9] Yet lithography, alone, was not the final answer, nor was it even the finding of a printer, Marcel Durassier, who could achieve the subtlety that Wayne sought. Instead, it was Wayne's decision to present her lithographs together with the poems that inspired them in the form of a *livre d'artiste* that met her need to depict the "more rigorous and overt collaboration," which she said had been only "implicit" in her previous work with Donne.[10]

Since we are emphasizing the integrity of the whole volume as a distinct work of art, it is important to record the tactile and material qualities of Wayne's artist's book before moving on to a consideration of the various lithographic and poetic combinations that constitute the interior of the work. The book, in the form of unbound, loose pages, is encased in a black linen box measuring 15 1/2 x 11 5/8 x 1 1/4 inches. Its spine is stamped in gold with its title as "John Donne Songs & Sonets—Lithography by June Wayne." The cover of the box is similarly labeled in gold on black: "JOHN DONNE SONGS & SONETS" and in gold on gray, "LITHOGRAPHS BY JUNE WAYNE." The whole is surrounded with a white border, and the effect is of an elegant simplicity that is carried throughout the book. The inner cover has a half title lithographed in Wayne's hand—"Songs and Sonets." This half title, in script, is centered and presented in three lines, one word/line. It is large enough to occupy most of the page, in dramatic contrast to the more restrained use of block letters for the other iterations of the title. Intriguingly, the script also calls attention to itself as script in that the capital script "S" of "Songs" differs from the script used for the capital "S" of "Sonets." The cumulative effect of these details, both bold and subtle, is to call attention to the graphic properties of Wayne's lettering, as opposed to its signifying properties, and to emphasize the work of the visual artist in "collaboration" (Wayne's word) with the poet in her graphic handling of his (usually signifying) words. This handling of

[9] *Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 119.
[10] *Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 119.

script also reinforces the effect of restrained elegance in Wayne's choice of the rather austere Antiqua face in the printed text to follow.

Finally, on the next leaf (again folded within a second leaf, a procedure followed throughout the book) in letterpress is printed "John Donne/Songs and Sonets" and below it in block caps, partially italicized, "*CHEZ L'ARTISTE*/MCMLIX." Further details of the printing are noted on the recto side of the text leaf indicating that the edition was limited to 110 examples on Rives paper. The selection of that paper also reinforces the tactile properties of the book as its weight and texture invite handling. This final introductory page is completed with June Wayne's drawing of her mushroom chop and her signature. The text was set and hand printed by Brüder Hartmann, West Berlin, in the Antiqua face designed by J. S. Erich Justus Walbaum in 1800. The book has 106 pages and 15 lithographs, twelve in monochrome and three in color. There are also appended three *planche refusées*, two of "The Apparition" and one of "Valediction: Forbidding Mourning." Fourteen of the images measure 15 1/8 x 11 1/8 inches and are each printed on the inside right of a sheet of paper measuring 15 1/8 x 22 1/8 and folded to make four pages. The first page bears the poem's title, and the poem is printed on one or both sides of a single interleaved sheet. Thus the poems are cradled in the sheets bearing the lithographs. Of the three color-images, one extends over a double-page spread and the accompanying poem, "The Exstasie," is printed on all four sides of a second folded sheet. One hundred twenty-three copies were made. Of these 110 were done on Rives BFK paper with the printed edition number, signed by the artist and embossed with her distinctive mushroom chop; three were printed on Japon nacré paper and 10 *hors de commerce*, numbered 1–X, for Wayne's collaborators. The copy we used was the New York Public Library's, listed as number 9.

The poem/lithograph collaborations are introduced in a table of contents format listing both titles and page numbers, a choice that echoes the printed book instead of that of many *livres d'artiste*, which are more frequently treated as portfolios rather than as books. Again a nice tension between book and portfolio, text and lithograph, word and image is evoked, a tension that Wayne maintains throughout the work. It should also be noted that she follows print format when handling words in that she always italicizes non-English words and phrases. Here her approach is consistent with that practice: the title of the first selection

"*Hexastichon Bibliopolae*" (Publisher's Sextuplet), a verse written by John Marriott in praise of Donne and used as the preface to the first (1633) edition of Donne's poems, is thus italicized. The titles of the following 14 poems by Donne are again in Roman print.

Since, as Jebah Baum will point out below, Wayne's book of her prints and Donne's poetry offers us the opportunity to explore the intersections of visual and verbal art, and since as Ann Hurley has been arguing, it also provokes us to ponder the nature of representation where art, like most products of human making, is engaged in noting the conditions of its own production, we should turn now to some specific instances of that making by analyzing three of the poem/lithograph collaborations: "Twicknam Garden" and "A Valedicton: Forbidding Mourning" (to be discussed by Baum) and "The Extasie" (to be considered by Hurley). The first two collaborations are in monochrome; the third is in color and extends over one full folio sheet.

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In the left foreground of the composition for "Twicknam Garden" (see Gallery, fig. 9, p. 189), an androgynous, solitary, unclothed figure stands poised in a relaxed *contrapposto* on a textured swirling lava-like surface.[11] The left leg is pointing out towards us while the right foot, bearing the weight of the figure, is pointed to the side at a ninety-degree angle. An awkwardly drawn elongated left arm crosses in front and holds a staff or rod of some sort, masking the right arm that drops nonchalantly to the side. The head, at three-quarter profile, is cast in dramatic shadow, and although the eyes are cloaked in darkness (contributing to the face's mask-like appearance), it is more articulated than most in the portfolio with clearly visible features. A nondescript bowl-shaped crop of hair rings it. Full lips form a slight smile, and there is a benign expression on the figure's face. The overall impression is one of ease.

To the left is a stylized fountain erupting in a vertical spume that ends in five striped swirling arches. The fountain, equal in height and mass to the figure, is positioned slightly to the rear, and its base defines the background edge of the picture plane. It sheds leaf-shaped droplets and

[11]The complete text of Donne's "Twicknam Garden" appears above, p. 188.

the whole thing appears in stasis—like a weeping frozen palm tree. The background is made up of tusche washes that have been manipulated with solvents to create tiny vertical dashes (an effect similar to humidity on a windowpane), and large generalized leaf-shaped forms, that echo the smaller droplets from the fountain, hang like stalactites suspended from the top of the composition.

In this image June Wayne has presented us with a cave. It is not a lush welcoming garden, but a cold, claustrophobic and somewhat forbidding place, with sharp forms dangling above a vaguely anthropomorphic fountain, a compressed image of time frozen in place as though sandwiched between panes of glass. By making her work distinctly lithographic, with effects difficult to produce by any other means, Wayne has utilized a range of materials to exploit the character of *peau-de-crapaud* washes enhancing the frosty cave-like atmosphere of her picture. She has confined rendering to the figure, the fountain and the leaf forms, carefully defining edges with brush, pen and razor or by isolating forms in black fields. The most modeled area is in the face where she has used crayons to create graduated tones and the illusion of volume.

There are multiple spatial contradictions within the picture imbuing it with a primitive quality common to many of the images in the portfolio. The figure appears compressed with its head oddly positioned on a body that has been flattened by random lighting and a reticent crude drawing style. The fountain's base is clearly positioned in the background, but its top, pushed forward by the darkness above, seems to enter the foreground on the same plane as the figure. The background appears flat, like a textured wall, until it reaches the picture's ceiling where the layered leaf-like shapes suddenly create the impression of deeper space. But the individual leaves themselves are flat silhouettes rendered in pulsating values that call our attention back to the surface. This, and the way Wayne uses negative space to isolate and define bodies within the image, creates a collage-like effect that places it clearly within the realm of modernist aesthetic concerns.

Wayne wrestles with the problem of developing a conventional narrative within her pictures while using expressionistic techniques. There is a palpable battle between her divided attentions and a reticence that makes the pictures compelling if somewhat contradictory. It is as though she is being pulled in three directions at once: towards Donne,

literal narrative and illusionist conventions of representation—towards expressionism and abstraction—and towards (for her) the new technique of lithography, its mysterious surfaces, deep blacks and richness of tonality. Where she is the most emphatically and undeniably committed, however, is in her embrace of lithography. Many artists, when approaching a new medium, attempt (at least at first) to make it comply with their own previously explored modes of picture making. In this image and the others in this portfolio, Wayne has enthusiastically given over to the process.

But what has she done with Donne? There is this strangely sexless figure (the genitals obscured in darkness) benignly brandishing a staff that certainly represents the snake in Donne's poem. But the "snake" just sort of hangs there, vague and unthreatening. June Wayne has essentially neutered her male protagonist with his left hand nonchalantly clasped around this flaccid symbol of his manhood otherwise represented by a black hole between his legs. (One wonders whether Wayne was acquainted with the Elizabethan pun on "nothing/no-thing" here.) The garden, hardly a garden now, has become a dark cave with a caricature of a fountain pasted into it, hovering, spatially ambiguous, almost comically asserting itself as a presence, even a personage, although it is not interacting at all with the figure to its right. Perhaps in its very blankness Wayne has struck an appropriate metaphor for Donne's fountain, its *stoniness* illustrated by the rigidity of the striped patterns and its stylized flatness.

Wayne has cleverly echoed the tear-shaped drops of the fountain in the leaves above. With their sharply pointed forms, their numbers, mass and weight, they are a threatening, noisy presence in the picture. But it is the icy coolness of the surface and the frozen textures of the washes that are the most impressive. Here Wayne has certainly created an ambiance equivalent to Donne's "grave frost." Everything in her picture seems suspended. It is a world in limbo, as fragile as it is rigid—impotent and forlorn.

The eyes of her figure are absent, and its mask-like face and blank stare add to the general quality of flaccidity and surrender. It is interesting though that Wayne avoided the image of the mandrake, which is by far the most surrealistic image of the poem. Like the stone fountain, it is perhaps the moment when the protagonist most asserts his desire—his wish to remain forever poisoned by love. Instead she chooses

to work with the more easily associative metaphor. Would that fantastical form have been in itself too abstract for her purposes? Is it evidence that she was determined to maintain the tension between word and image, mimicking the duality she appears to read into Donne's poems?

Perhaps Wayne has answered these questions for us within the visual dialectic that she maintains throughout the portfolio. Each image contrasts dramatic gestural washes with tight literal figuration. Wayne's wholehearted embrace of surface texture led her to develop a methodology that included controlled use of accident similar to earlier Surrealist experiments. But, though it subjectively appears that her affinities might lean more toward gestural abstraction, she nevertheless anchors herself to narrative. Although apparently working entirely from her own interpretations of the poems, we as *readers* of her images can find comfort in her clear references to Donne. Yet here too she once again restrains herself and renders her figures in a non-committal anonymous style that borders on the primitive. The nearly ubiquitous androgyny of her figures prevalent throughout her entire oeuvre is a study in itself, but it is interesting for us to consider it here as a metaphor for the struggle she is waging with the male intellectual Donne, with the written word and with the visual problem of representation.

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In "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (see Gallery, fig. 10, p. 191), there are two standing nude figures, one (presumably male) leaning towards and supported by the other (female).[12] The figures thus create a not-quite right triangle that occupies the center of the page and two thirds of the entire composition. They are heading away from us, and we see them from the back, as they appear to move into and merge with an amorphous ground that is painted freely in loose expressionistic tusche washes. Wayne laid down light gray washes over the whole plate and then dark washes on top of them. The light washes create the foreground, as well as the literal floor of the image, and give the faintest illusion of volume to the figures. Autographic ink and a quill pen add

[12]The complete text of Donne's "A Valediction forbidding mourning" appears above, pp. 190, 192.

hints of definition to the fingers and the edges of the limbs. The granular texture of the washes would suggest that this image is mostly composed in tusche and water washes although there are some areas that have a more globular structure where solvents may have been applied and the washes manipulated mechanically. The image has no bright white areas giving it a somber tone, and the darkness towards which the figures are moving has a somewhat ominous character. This is reinforced by the vulnerable posture of the male figure who appears wounded, ill or fatigued, and yet is somewhat contradicted by the amount of space the figures occupy in the picture plane (a larger field would appear more threatening), and also the upright posture of the female figure who bears the weight of the male with apparent ease. The awkward, semi-primitive rendering of the figures also lightens the overall mood of the image as it does throughout the whole portfolio. Once again, it is interesting to note the confidence expressed in the painterly washes as it contrasts with the reticence in the figuration.

The poem addresses a tension between the spiritual and material worlds: the expansive worlds of the spirit and the heart and the limited world of the body. The figures in Wayne's image are physically located on the ground and exhibit signs of gravity and weight. Yet they appear to be dissolving into the dark field ahead of them. The space is turbulent and textured, but the figures are calm, even submissive and seemingly resigned to their fate.

Donne's protagonist is leaving his lover behind and attempts in the poem to transcend the physical bond of temporal love and console her with the thought that they are one, and that each possesses the other within themselves. Wayne's picture has a strong central access and though they both peer into the void Wayne has given the female figure the assertive role. She is certainly meant to console and comfort the male who in the poem is moving towards the unknown. Her erect confident posture affirms that she will be his anchor now in the *known* world. The triangle that the two figures form creates the visual metaphor of a compass, the right foot of the female figure bearing the weight of both figures and it is the central access of a potential circle were the male figure to pivot around her.

Donne's poem, however, functions on several levels simultaneously. There is as mentioned the romantic narrative, but the relation between the male and female is less benign than it appears at first reading. Donne

seems to be speaking to the existential issue of life and death and expresses a disdain for this cycle, as it is commonly understood. Entertaining as he does the idea of mortal love as limited, and placing the female character squarely in the world of the living, he alludes to a hierarchy of being—the spiritual world as superior to the physical. However, he is neither impressed with high moral codes nor religious superstitions, choosing instead to stand apart, unfettered in his appreciation of the potential of the spirit. Wayne does not appear to address this idea at all in her lithograph, which she locates entirely in the interplay between the two lovers as they prepare to accept the inevitable.

But Donne does not denigrate the body in his argument for transcendence. He clearly believes that the body and the mind are linked. He alludes to an understanding of a greater possibility for man to abide in both locations simultaneously, although he declares that that experience cannot be directly articulated in words. He archly uses romantic love as a device to encounter the primary problem of existence, it is a kind of glue that energizes and holds our attention. But he is also acutely aware of how easily we are distracted by it, and he simultaneously makes fun of human frailty and superficiality. His title speaks to our fear of tangible loss of life and of a loved one and also to our feeble understanding of the true nature of existence.

Wayne, in making the female figure the anchor does not imply that she won't face the same fate as her lover, but she does seem to suggest (and this is true throughout the portfolio) that her connection to the earth offers her a greater strength. She is clearly moved by Donne's speaker but not convinced. There is an apathetic aspect to the male figure that dominates the images, which doesn't coincide with Donne's strong male voice, his wit, irony and intellectual brilliance. Wayne begins to create an equivalent perhaps in her bold handling of light, the strong texture of her surfaces and the poetic restraint she maintains as she reenters the image with pen and scalpel—refining an edge or creating a highlight in a black field. This is where it viscerally feels that one force is meeting another, not as much in her interpretation of the poems as in her physical encounter with them.

In her *planche refusée* for this image we find several clues to June Wayne's thinking. This earlier version has a foreground, middle ground, and background. Here the distinctly feminine—though faceless figure—*looks* out at us. She is positioned in the front left center of the

composition while the male walks away towards the horizon in the back center right. The female is enclosed in a tear-shaped, leaf-like aura; her generalized nude form is much more articulated than in the later image. She is the focal point, and the leaf shape contains her and gives her an oddly virginal quality, like a young bride or nun who has just taken her vows. The compass is less overt in this version though present (in its retracted form) in the contours of the leaf and in the position of her feet that form a small "V." The upright gangly male facing away from us and walking with his right leg raised is one fifth of her size, and his position in the distance gives the image a pictorial depth absent in the rest of the portfolio. Wayne makes an allusion to Donne's verse not acknowledged in the accepted version by including a sun or moon surrounded with its own more amorphous halo. It doesn't call particular attention to itself but hangs there limpidly as in a child's rendering. To its right, amidst a jumbled mass of swirling washes, a gigantic and yet barely perceptible head with huge sensual lips appears to be emerging obscurely over the horizon. Perhaps here Wayne was attempting to suggest a more ominous threat from the "trepidation of the spheares."

The techniques used in this picture do not vary from those in the accepted version. There are the same expressive washes layered on top of one another and the restrained use of sharp black and white line work at the edges of the figures, but it is more controlled. Rough parallel bands stretch back to the horizon, decreasing in width and adding to the illusion of depth. She continues with this device in the sky, but the bands, which here depict curved rays of light emanating from the small planetary orb at the top center, quickly dissolve into swirling clouds that help define an imaginary atmosphere The earth in this picture is a cold, harshly textured and barren place, and the light emanating from above does not provide any sense of warmth. The lonely female figure enclosed in her leaf like womb and frigidly illuminated, seems vulnerable and destitute, while the male casually strolls towards the picture's one bit of optimism—the unknown destination beyond the visible horizon. In this version Wayne has left her female protagonist powerless, at best a lonely seed within its seedpod, stranded in an unfertile landscape. Though she is the subject, it is the male figure that has the power—the power and confidence to leave.

In rejecting this image from the finished book/portfolio, and yet including it at the end, Wayne makes clear that she wants a role for her

female protagonist that is different from the one she thinks that Donne has allocated. This resistance to her own interpretation of Donne's narrative at once reveals both her intellectual sociopolitical stance, and positions the visual artist as an equal to the poet. Also and perhaps more importantly for our purposes, in choosing a more ambiguous, physically expressive image over the more literal one (as does Donne), she has taken an adamant stance for art over illustration. Wayne is in this portfolio, staking a claim for herself as an artist, for abstraction over representation, and for art over illustration.[13]

The fact that she has chosen as her subject to address the poetry of John Donne and, as Ann Hurley states, chosen a medium that is equally suited to support the production of written material, makes this a fascinating study in the continuing rivalry between the sister arts. Wayne is at once honoring the work of the great poet and taking a stance—art over poetry, body over mind, female over male, earth over heaven. It is interesting, however, that Donne doesn't necessarily take a position one way or another. Ultimately he seems to be above such concerns, embracing as he does the body and the mind at once, or equally rejecting both in favor of a third indescribable possibility. Wayne's comparative lack of facility and her unwillingness to give both her characters equal power positions her argument but ultimately leaves Donne strolling effortlessly towards a horizon that she herself can't reach. In making herself the pivot point of the compass, she enables form, but doesn't yet embody it, at least not with the transformative power of Donne's poetry.

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The lithograph for "The Extasie" (see Gallery, fig. 11, p. 195) is a color print that extends across a double page, that is, one full sheet, of the book is distinguished from the other lithographs not only by its color but also because it is signed, titled and numbered in pencil at the lower

[13]It is a bold stance for Wayne to take, squaring herself against the master poet. Michael Mazur, whose more recent monotype visualizations for Robert Pinsky's translation of Dante's *Inferno,* for example, faithfully follow the text in a full blown expressionistic style, but a deep "reading" of Wayne's images would suggest that she intentionally offered alternative narratives to those expressed by Donne.

right and embossed with Wayne's mushroom chop.[14] Its title is taken from the first line from the eighteenth stanza of Donne's poem—"To'our bodies turne wee then. . . ."—and the image was composed of three zinc plates in light gray-blue, gray-green, and sanguine inks. The title and text of the poem are on a second folded sheet embedded (as always) within the sheet with the lithograph. Given the larger size of this image, Wayne's use of bleed printing is particularly effective here in creating an effect of expansion. The two figures, which comprise the image, have thus a sense of floating in a deliberately undefined space, untethered by the usual coordinates of height, width or depth. Moreover, the text of the poem, one of Donne's longest in his *Songs and Sonets*, of nineteen four-line stanzas, covering as it does most of its sheet, is thus graphically compatible with the lithograph in echoing its spatial resonance.

The surface of this lithograph seems to be deliberately evocative of its stony origins, in dramatic contrast to the ethereal image of the two bodies floating on it, a contrast that is thus nicely evocative of the "carnal apotheosis" (Jebah Baum's phrase above) accomplished by the ecstatic experience of the male/female union in Donne's poem. Wayne thus illustrates for us what she meant when she remarked that what drew her to Donne's poetry was his combination of the "courtly and the vernacular."[15] Her softly restrained palette, a combination of a gray-green-blue varied background surrounding the two bodies lightly tinged with an earthy red, also suggests the paradoxical union of earth and spirit, body and soul, that is central to the poem.[16]

The two bodies, reclining horizontally with limbs both tenderly and suggestively intertwined, are positioned facing each other with a faintly suggested nimbus of slightly lighter gray surrounding them that, though incomplete, provides a hint of a shielding presence. That shield is lightly

[14]The complete text of Donne's "The Extasie" appears above, pp. 193–196.

[15]*Catalogue Raisonné*, p. 119.

[16]Here too Wayne successfully converted what began as a limitation into an advantage as her printer, Durassier, was reluctant to depart from the conventionally restricted French palette of inks. "Although she managed to persuade Durassier to use several shades at once, he kept them as far apart on his roller as possible. . . . For Wayne, however, the device not only lent a timelessness to narrative, but perfectly evoked vast distances, luminescent gases and the shifting weightlessness of space" (Pat Gilmour, "A Love Affair with Lithography: The Prints of June Wayne," *Print Quarterly* 9 [1992]: 157).

attached to the figures and emanates from the body of the lower, female, figure and also from the extended feet of the male leaning gently over her. (The effect is intensified but its eroticism is less subtle in a black impression, "Lava Bed," that Wayne also made from the key plate of "The Extasie" but did not select for the book.) Not surprisingly, given their source in Donne's poems, the positioning of the bodies was a perennial project for Wayne, and she did several studies for this and others of his verses. The studies she rejected, as evidenced by the *catalogue raisonné*, either gave the bodies too explicit a sexual overtone or placed their limbs awkwardly apart, in either uncomfortable or less intimate positions. In this, the print she selected for inclusion, the extended legs and crossed arms successfully center the print for the viewer, while allowing it a pleasing horizontality. The male figure's left hand cradles his partner's vaginal area while her right hand rests softly over his. The fingers of her left hand, somewhat oddly positioned, and those of his left are accentuated with sharp pencil but most other linear depiction is softly modulated, and the male's right hand cupped around her head, is, like her own right hand, textured like the surrounding nimbus and fades into it. What might otherwise be visually monotonous in such muted handling of lineation is pleasingly contrasted by the slight vertical strokes depicting the woman's hair. The whole is a successfully subtle blending of tonality and lineation which, despite Wayne's repeated commentary that the drawings of her lithographs were done hastily in her Paris hotel room the night before their use in the lithographic process, nonetheless implies a practiced sensitivity and an awareness of the graphic implications of the choices she was making.

What are the implications of this, Wayne's largest print, for one of Donne's best-known poems? Judging by what one can observe from the print, Wayne seems to have given priority to a reading of "The Extasie" as a love poem rather than as a poem of seduction (and setting aside the point that for Donne these are often one and the same categories). While Wayne can be witty in her response to Donne and, as Baum has suggested and as can be seen in some of her prints not considered here, she will often answer his male bravado with her own female intelligence, in this print her response seems to reinforce his emphasis on the mystery of love as the sole human experience of divine ecstasy. In fact, what Wayne has cancelled out from Donne is much of the discomfort of the earlier stanzas of the poem—the "eye-beams twisted" and the

discomforting stasis and hint of mortality in "sepulchral statues." She has also denied us much of the traditional visual vocabulary of religious ecstasy, especially if one thinks of the most famous depiction of that state, Bernini's "The Ecstasy of St. Theresa" with its phallic angel, swirling drapery and swooning female in ecstatic climax. But while Wayne ignores that element, she also makes us aware that Donne too, uncharacteristically, omits such elements in the poem. In place of the more familiar voice of the holy sonnets with its plea of anguished urgency as in the line "Nor ever chaste, except Thou ravish mee," Donne has given us a poem of the intellect, built on scholastic arguments that may "unperplex" but, at least for some readers, may not move. Wayne, however, *was* moved by the poem. (She returned to its lines for several times in other lithographs.) With her earth-toned colors, gently mutual sexuality, flowing lines and limbs, she seeks to unlock Donne's "Great Prince," the soul-animated body, and celebrate it. And, tellingly, she celebrates it just as the poem instructs its readers to do—turning to two bodies that in her abstract expressionistic handling take on one form. For Bernini, light rains down from above on St. Theresa; for Wayne's reading of Donne, its equivalent, that larger light-formed nimbus, emanates out of the single abstracted form, the male/female bodies in one expressive image.

In her handling of "The Extasie," then, Wayne has been neither mildly antagonistic nor complimentary toward Donne's verse. Instead she has been compl*e*mentary, seeing a tenderness—and a power in that tenderness—behind the scholasticism that for some readers detracts from the poem. Wayne thus endorses Donne's scholastic argument that the mystery of sex is that it physically expresses specifically human love but that that human love evolves out of human nature, which is also divine. But she does this not with argument but by evoking the tone of wonder and tenderness that lies beneath, or rather within, the language of the poem.

* * * *

The choices June Wayne has made in selecting and visually commenting on Donne's poems, and on specific lines from those poems, brings out an element in Donne that has heretofore not occasioned much notice. That is, both Wayne and Donne depict thinking about the image

rather than the image itself. Neither artist is pictorial, or romantic; both are instead sensuous and physical. They invite us to consider how we see, touch, handle and physically engage with the material and spiritual worlds as they bring to our attention its light, stones, colors, limbs, hair, and bodies, together with the eyes and minds that process these into art. "The classic task of the artist," June Wayne has said, is "to add what is felt and known to the seeable."[17]

It is the act of seeing, the making, that is involved in creating art, both visual and verbal, that Wayne brings to our attention through her engagement with Donne. As a practicing artist, working with form, space, shape, line, color, stone, washes and print, Jebah Baum has had to engage with words and their slippery temporal nature. As a scholar acquainted with language and its teasing deferral of meaning, Ann Hurley has had to rethink the signifying properties of words and print as their graphic and spatial properties were unlocked. What both scholars have discovered is a renewed emphasis on making as the Wayne/Donne Donne/Wayne *livre d'artiste* has reshaped our viewing.

Though she treads a thin line by referring so specifically to his texts, Wayne has ultimately refused to illustrate Donne. Instead she has responded visually to his verbal skills, calling our attention less to the content of his poetry than to giving visual embodiment to its intensification of her own effort to produce the "seeable."[18] The *livre d'artiste*, produced by poet and artist, in its refusal to re-present a finished product that correlates with some aspect of our world has instead focused on the artistic process in an alchemical fusion of word and image, poem and lithograph, poet and artist. In fact, it is in transcending representation, and in refusing mere mimesis, that fine art is born. It is not strictly in her re-presentation of John Donne's poems that June Wayne most powerfully communicates. It is in her love affair with this supremely physical medium, lithography, that Wayne has experienced

[17]Cited by Gilmour, p. 156.

[18]In her writings and teachings, the artist and one time director of Black Mountain College, M. C. Richards, explored what she called "the *crossing point* between the verbal and the non-verbal." She saw it as the place where the mind and body meet, a location that elicits an unknown response, the "source" of creative expression. June Wayne's collaboration with John Donne points us towards just such a crossing point between literature and visual art.

her own "extasie," thus giving body to thought and achieving emotional resonance. June Wayne the lithographer and John Donne the poet merge within this *livre d'artiste*—to offer us a fascinating insight into the power and challenge of combining words and images into one thoroughly engaging, and fully demanding, experience of the power of art.

Wagner College (Hurley)
Visual Artist, New York City (Baum)