

Transitivity and the Construction of Skepticism in Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star by John Donne



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Abstract: *The study analyzes transitivity choices in John Donne's poem "Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star" to show how grammatical structure is utilized in building the poem's theme of skepticism and disillusionment. While the poem is generally interpreted in terms of its witty imagery and sarcastic tone, this research discusses how the different sense is created at the clause level through the distribution of process types, participants, and circumstances. Based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) system of transitivity and adopting a qualitative approach, this research uncovers how language choices contribute to meaning in literature. The analysis reveals that material processes are salient in the initial stanzas with connotations of purposeful action but are ironically paired with impossible tasks, thereby eliminating the possibility of meaningful achievement. In contrast to this, the final stanza resorts to relational processes, which give existence judgments, such as the non-existence of faithful women. Verbal and mental processes similarly signal the failure of the speaker to understand or communicate truth. The participants are rather abstract and generic which ensures the universality of the speaker's disillusionment. Circumstances exaggerate time, space, and extent for the purpose of heightening futility. The study shows that Donne's skeptical view of the universe is expressed not only thematically but also lexically, highlighting the role of a transitivity in literary works.*

Keywords: Metaphysical Poetry, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Transitivity Analysis, Process Types, Skepticism in Literature, Literary Linguistics

Introduction

Poetry is one of the most expressive forms of language, allowing authors to convey emotions, ideas, and philosophical perspectives. Poetic language tends to be condensed, employs figurative devices, and involves deliberate choices in linguistic structure to construct meaning. As a result, the analysis of poetry not only involves consideration of topic and image but also the language choices that authors make to encode meaning. Contemporary linguistic scholarship, such as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), offers helpful ways to analyze the role of grammar as a resource for constructing meaning in literature.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language developed by Halliday (1978). It views language as a social semiotic system, where speakers and writers have the choice of performing social roles, representing experiences and organizing discourse. One part of SFL is the system of transitivity (encoding of events, actions, thoughts, states and relations in clauses). Transitivity, in the form of process types, participants and circumstances, shows the ideology and worldview of the writer. Transitivity analysis has become increasingly popular in the analysis of literature because it can reveal meanings, structures that might not be apparent with other techniques.

John Donne (1572-1631) was a prominent figure in the metaphysical poetry movement, who was noted for the complexity, paradoxes, irony and absurd images he employed. Donne was very emotional and argumentative, making his work ideal for linguistic analysis. Donne offers the reader argumentative, paradoxical and unexpected analogies, which use metaphor, syntax and grammar to convey meaning. Donne

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was a key figure in the metaphysical movement of poetry and his work frequently explored themes of love, religion, death, doubt and despair.

One of his most renowned works, *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star*, presents a pessimistic view of human relationships, especially faithfulness and truth. The poem starts with a string of impossible tasks, like "Goe, and catche a falling starre," and proceeds to the speaker's assertion of the impossibility of finding a faithful woman. The poem has been analysed as ironic, misogynistic, satirical or playful hyperbole. But it is less clear how the poem builds its cynical view through its grammatical structures. The frequent use of commands, unreal actions, abstract referents and evaluative comments suggests that the poem's meaning is very much rooted in its clause structure. Material processes may be derived from unsuccessful efforts to do something, and relational processes may express absolute evaluations. Mental and verbal processes might also symbolise doubt, failed knowledge, or deception. Consequently, a transitivity analysis of this poem can provide a better understanding of how the theme of skepticism is not only presented but also verbalised.

While transitivity analysis has been applied to a range of poetic works, few have been applied to John Donne's poetry, and fewer still have been applied to *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star*. This leaves a gap in literary-linguistic research. Thus, the current study explores how different transitivity choices in the poem may build the meanings of skepticism, futility and disenchantment. It also highlights the value of SFL for literary analysis and provides an alternative interpretation of Donne's poem from a grammatical perspective.

While much research has been undertaken on John Donne's inventive use of imagery and tone, little has been done in terms of careful linguistic-functional analysis of his shorter works. Even less has focused on transitivity patterns - the ways in which language represents processes such as action, state and experience - in poems like *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star*. This research seeks to redress this by drawing on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2013) model of transitivity to show how Donne's linguistic choices serve the larger themes of the poem. Specifically, it proposes that Donne's selection of process types (material, verbal, relational, etc.) is in line with the speaker's worldview: that human endeavors are futile, belief is unreliable and idealism is fatal.

Significance of the Research

John Donne's poetry has been extensively analyzed from literary (Šmejdo \check{v} á, 2013), theological and philosophical viewpoints, but the application of Systemic Functional Linguistics is a new approach. This research will make a contribution to the study of Donne and other literary linguistics studies by providing a linguistic, clause-level analysis to supplement thematic analysis, providing a model for transitivity analysis that could be applied to other texts and showing how form reflects and supports philosophical or psychological perspectives in the poem. Moreover, this study will exemplify the relationship between linguistics and literature and demonstrate how focusing on very small-scale features of language can explain dramatic revelations of themes.

Research Questions

1. How does John Donne use transitivity structures in *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star* to encode actions, perceptions, and states of being?
2. What kinds of patterns of process types, participants, and circumstances can be discerned through a transitivity analysis of the poem, and how do these enhance its thematic meaning?

Literature Review

John Donne, the father of the metaphysical poetry, significantly contributed to the English literature. The features of his poetry include intellectualism, paradox, wit, theatricality and extensive metaphors that relate unrelated things. According to Yasmeeen (n.d.), this is the creative and innovative language used by Donne that makes him one of the best metaphysical poets. Donne elevated poetry to a philosophical debate by fusing emotion and reason and spirituality.

Vaishnav (2024) suggests that Donne should not be regarded as an obscure decoration, but the expression of profound philosophical reflection on the love, life and death, religion and scepticism. What is ethically significant about Donne, in composition, is that he has the ability to connect abstractions and life into a web of imagery and argument. The point of view is applicable to the present study in that *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star*, too, displays scepticism not only as a theme but also as a way of arguing.

The metaphorical style of Donne is the conceits. Du (2021) examines the typical poems of Donne and talks about the conceit as a way of thinking that does not allow the traditional interpretation. Comparing love with unforeseen things or occurrences, Donne engages the reader into a reasoning process. The impossible tasks in the first stanza of *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star* may also be regarded as an example of metaphysical conceit, the impossible actions are employed to make statements of cynicism.

Another fact highlighted by Ahmed (2013) is that Donne is characterized by his paradoxes, the brevity and the argument of his epigrams are epigrammatic. Such characteristics make his poetry open to the study of linguistics since the meaning is frequently hidden in, not by, imagery. In this way, the work of Donne offers a possibility to discuss the encoding of philosophical arguments in grammatical and discourse forms. The article is part of this tradition in the sense that it takes into account the contribution of the transitivity patterns in the encoding of scepticism in one of the best-known lyrical pieces by Donne.

Donne has received diverse receptions. Although his style was viewed as too challenging or uneven by critics in early years, his reputation was re-established by the 20th-century poets and critics. This reevaluation viewed Donne as a contemporary poet who prefigures future events in his fragmented thinking and his passionate subjectivity.

The modern literature also highlights the themes of love, religion, death and gender that Donne expressed in his works. Interpretations of *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star* tend to focus on irony, misogyny, or humour. However, less attention has been given to how they are grammatically constructed at the clause level. The present study contributes to the body of research on John Donne by examining transitivity as a grammatical resource in the construction of skepticism.

Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday (1978) is a leading model in contemporary linguistics, used to explain how language operates to construct meaning in social situations. Compared to formal descriptions of language, which have more to do with syntax, SFL is more interested in the notion of language as a resource of meaning-making and the connection between language, context and purpose. Matthiessen, Wang, Ma and Mwinlaaru (2022) claim SFL is a functional theory of language, which expands upon previous linguistic theories, including Saussure, Hjelmslev, Whorf and Firth. It describes language as a body of choices speakers and writers make to describe experience, social relationships and discourse.

According to Matthiessen and Teruya (2023), language that is structured around a network of interconnected systems of greater complexity. They indicate how SFL is flexible in areas of education, discourse studies, literary studies and translation studies. Equally, Yu, Chang, Wang and Ma (2025) give an overview of the theory and explain how students and researchers can use SFL to their research to analyse texts. It demonstrates that SFL remains quite applicable to the modern research because it connects grammar with social and ideological meaning. Existing studies indicate that SFL strategies deal with poetry. In his research on lyrical poetry, Pascua (2024) reveals that SFL analysis can be used to illustrate how songs and poems can create emotional and experiential meaning. The study substantiates the assertion that, even in the small and figurative poetic wording, grammatical options are intentional and are open to analysis.

The ideational metafunction - human experience - of SFL is connected with the system of transitivity. Transitivity refers to the presentation of clauses as processes, perceptions, states, speech acts and being in terms of the type of processes, who, and what. Action, perception, evaluation or description, and therefore attitude and point of view are the attributes that authors prefer to emphasize.

Haidar, Iqbal, and Tariq (2025) in their transitivity analysis of the short story, claim that transitivity is necessary in the assessment of the text as it displays the grammar of experience. Process choice can reveal the intention of the character, focus of attention and the development of the themes. Likewise, Ahmad (2019) in the discussion of the Oscar Wilde story *The Happy Prince*, illustrates that the representation of individuality, emotions and social values in literary works can be revealed, through transitivity patterns. Likewise, Shahid, Anwar and Fatima analysed the transitivity patterns in academic writing of English native and non-native students.

Recent studies actually point the significance of transitivity analysis in literary works (Anwar, Kayani & Ramiz, 2024). A PhD thesis on the work of the Ghanaian poet, Atukwei Okai by Gyasi (2025) foreground that transitivity plays a major role in the way we read poetry in ideological, style, and representation of human experience. The study further underscores the limited application of transitivity analysis in particular literary contexts and emphasizes the need for more extensive research in this area.

Similarly, in their work on *The Voice* by Gabriel Okara, Boukari and Koussouhon (2018) demonstrate how transitivity can be used to study the literary prose discourse to reflect the experiential meaning and social relationships. The study demonstrates that language is not neutral but is shaped by underlying cultural and ideological forces. Their work demonstrates the usefulness of transitivity in the analysis of literary discourse.

Afrianto and Seomantri (2014) analyze the Shakespeare sonnets to show that the most desirable forms of processes reflect the themes and the views of speakers. Similarly, in their research on Romantic poems, Wulansari and Waluyo (2014) find that the use of transitivity patterns helps readers to find meaning in poetry. This paper advocates the application of transitivity in canonical poetry.

A study similar to the present one was conducted by Zuhud (2014), which compares mental and relational processes in the works of John Donne and William Blake. He illustrates that mental, perceptual and existential processes are represented by way of transitivity. But it is more general research, and not specific to *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star*, or on the topic of skepticism.

Previous research has discussed Donne's metaphysical style, conceits, philosophical themes and critical reception. Likewise, earlier SFL research has demonstrated that transitivity is a valuable approach to the analysis of poetry. Yet, there is a lack of discussion about how Donne's sceptical stance is realized through transitivity in *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star*. Literary analyses tend to focus on imagery, irony, or gender, and rarely on how it is grammatically expressed. As such, the current study fills this gap by examining the interaction of process types, participants and circumstances in the construction of skepticism and futility in the poem. It thus not only adds to the body of research on Donne, but also to the research on the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics in literary analysis.

Methodology

The research uses a qualitative design with textual analysis. As opposed to quantitative studies based on figures, qualitative research involves understanding patterns, structures, and meaning in language use. In particular, this research uses Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as the framework of analysis, specifically transitivity analysis under the ideational metafunction. The aim is to explore how Donne's linguistic options — most notably, the selection of processes, participants, and circumstances are enlisted toward the poem's larger thematic construction of futility, skepticism, and disillusionment. The study is interpretive, seeking to provide an in-depth understanding instead of abstract conclusions that may be applied across all poetry.

Theoretical Framework: Systemic Functional Linguistics and Transitivity

Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) understands language as a resource to make meaning instead of just being a collection of grammatical rules. Language also serves three metafunctions at the same time:

Ideational: Symbolizing experience and logical connections

Interpersonal: Performing social relationships and signaling attitudes

Textual: Making text coherent

The ideational metafunction is the focus of this study, and more precisely, the transitivity system. In SFL, transitivity is understood as the grammatical system that encodes various types of experiences in the world.

Transitivity Components

In transitivity analysis, every clause is decomposed into:

Process: The core action, event, state, or perception (expressed by the verb group)

Participants: The entities that take part in the process (Actor, Goal, Senser, Phenomenon, Carrier, etc.)

Circumstances: Giving more information on how, when, where, why, or by what means the process takes place.

Table 1

Process Types

Process Type	Description	Example
Material	Action or event	She built a house.
Mental	Sensing: thinking, feeling, perceiving	He believes in miracles.
Relational	Being, having, becoming	The sky is blue.
Verbal	Saying	They whispered secrets.
Behavioral	Physiological or psychological behavior	She laughed.
Existential	Expressing existence	There is a storm.

By utilizing this structure, the study consistently examines how Donne's selection among process types, participants, and circumstances maps on to the poem's overall thematic issues.

Data Selection

The central data for the research is the whole text of John Donne's "Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star." The poem contains three stanzas consisting of 27 lines. Text from widely adopted versions of Donne's poetry was taken to establish text reliability.

The poem has been selected as because the following reasons:

- It provides an overall sketch of fundamental traits of Donne's Metaphysical style: wit, paradox, and doubt.
- It is quite short, and hence it can be analyzed clause by clause in detail.
- Its thematic density renders it an ideal example of how grammatical structure is used to substantiate philosophical viewpoint.

There are no alterations from the original writing. Archaic spellings are modernized where necessary in order to ensure grammatical transparency in analysis (e.g., "thou" and "thee" are preserved but interpreted contextually).

Analytical Procedures

The transitivity analysis takes a systematic five-step approach:

Step 1: Clause Segmentation

The poem is broken down into separate clauses. A clause is defined as any grammatical structure that revolves around a finite verb. Poetry tends to mess around with syntax, so clauses are segmented with care based on grammatical dependency and not just line breaks.

Step 2: Identifying Process Types

Every clause is broken down to find the Process — the verb type — and identified as one of the six process types (Material, Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioral, Existential). For example, "Go and catch a falling star" → Material process ("go," "catch")

Step 3: Finding Participants

For every process, the participants are found who go with that process. According to the type of process, the participants are assigned the relevant label (e.g., Actor, Goal, Carrier, Senser, Receiver, Sayer). For example,

Actor: Who does the action (You)

Goal: Who or what is acted upon (a star falling)

Step 4: Circumstances

Any Circumstances giving more information about the process are found, e.g., time, place, manner, cause, accompaniment, or extent. For example,

"Ride ten thousand days and nights" → Circumstance of time (duration)

Step 5: Pattern and Interpretation

Once all clauses are examined in isolation, overall patterns are determined.

- Which process types are most common?
- How are participants treated?
- What is the role of circumstances?
- How do grammatical patterns relate to thematic concerns?

Interpretations are made connecting transitivity patterns to the poem's overall themes: unattainability, doubt, disillusionment.

Analytical Tools

The analysis employs simple coding tables to structure findings. Each clause is mapped out with columns for: Clause\Process Type\Participants\Circumstances\Interpretation

This provides a neat visual overview of the data prior to venturing into wider thematic discussion. No specialist linguistic software is employed; analysis is done manually to maintain sensitivity to poetic subtlety, which automatic parsing tools could overlook.

Data Analysis

Line no. 1

"Go and catch a falling star"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Go, Catch)	Falling star (Goal)	None

The line begins with forceful imperative material processes ("go", "catch") that compel action, instructing the reader to undertake physically impossible tasks. Catching a falling star is an illusion, implying that the task is by nature futile. In doing so, Donne sets at once a tone of skepticism towards attaining idealistic objectives.

Line no. 2

"Get with child a mandrake root"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Get)	Mandrake root (Goal)	with child

Another impossible task by means of material action ("get"). "Mandrake roots" were said to look like human figures and had magical connections. Impregnating a plant emphasizes the unnaturalness and inhumanity of the speaker's requests, developing the theme of humanly unattainable ambitions.

Line no. 3

"Tell me where all past years are"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Verbal (Tell)	Me (Receiver); Past years (Verbiage)	Temporal (Where = location in time)

Here Donne turns to a verbal process, and one of communication. To ask where the "past years" are — something intangible and gone — carries the notion of looking for the unattainable, with words rather than action, but with equal impossibility.

Line no. 4

"Who cleft the Devil's foot"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Cleft)	Who (Actor); Devil's foot (Goal)	None

An interrogative clause dedicated to material action ("cleft"). Through mention of the Devil and a bodily wound, Donne combines the supernatural with a bodily action, heightening the fantastical, mythological flavor of the quests.

Line no. 5

"Teach me to hear mermaids singing"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Verbal (Teach), Mental (Hear)	Me (Receiver); Mermaids singing (Phenomenon)	None

This line stacks processes: verbal ("teach") retreats a mental ("hear") process. Hearing mermaids, legendary beings whose singing entices sailors to their doom, is another impossible perception, suggesting that human experience and knowledge have boundaries.

Line no. 6

"Or to keep off envy's stinging"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Keep off)	Envy's stinging (Goal)	None

Steering clear of "envy's stinging" means protecting oneself from human emotions — again, a very hard (but not supernatural) thing to do. It anchors the fantasy in human psychology, that avoiding harmful feelings is as impossible as catching falling stars.

Line no. 7

"And find what wind serves to advance an honest mind"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Find); Embedded Relational (Serves)	Wind (Goal); Honest mind (Beneficiary)	Purpose (Advancement)

The material process ("find") emphasizes looking for good circumstances ("what wind") for the accomplishment of virtue ("honest mind"). The embedded relational process ("serves") suggests how extrinsic forces (chance, destiny) regulate moral success, reiterating the impossibility theme and the helplessness of humans.

Line no. 9

"Ride ten thousand days and nights"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Ride)	You (Implicit)	Ten thousand days and nights

This exaggerative material activity ("ride") across a tremendous span of time dramatizes the scope of the impossible undertaking. Time itself is a constraint to human action.

Line no. 10

"Till age snow white hairs on thee"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Snow = metaphorical action)	Age (Actor); White hairs (Goal); Thee (Affected)	Temporal (Till)

The material process ("snow") symbolizes aging as an action metaphorically. In this case, age is like an agent bringing about physical change, highlighting the imminence of deterioration before one achieves impossible objectives.

Line no. 11

"When thou return'st"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Return)	Thou (Actor)	When

The easy process of material (the "return") introduces the concept of a circular trip. After great efforts, the speaker pictures the traveler returning disillusioned and old, in vain.

Line no. 12

"Wilts tell me all strange wonders that befell thee"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Verbal (Tell); Embedded Material (Befell)	Thou (Sayer); Me (Receiver); Strange wonders (Verbiage)	None

The verbal process ("tell") carries the implication of expectation that only unusual, untrustworthy things will happen. "Befell" (material process) accentuates the passive occurrence of things, uncontrolled by human volition.

Line no. 13

"And swear nowhere lives a woman true and fair"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Verbal (Swear), Relational (Lives)	Woman	Negative location ("no where")

Swearing is one of commitment to truth. "Lives" (relational) negates existence, and hence reaffirming Donne's cynical world which holds that reliable women just don't exist.

Line no. 15

"Such a pilgrimage were sweet"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Relational (were)	Pilgrimage (Carrier); Sweet (Attribute)	None

Relational process ("were sweet") metaphorically portrays the search as a pilgrimage. "Sweet" (adjective) ironically contradicts the speaker's evident incredulity.

Line no. 17

"Though at next door we might meet"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Material (Meet)	We (Actors)	Locatin (Next door)

Even closeness ("next door") does not guarantee successful cohabitation. Material process "meet" focuses on physical convergence as simple yet emotional reality as unattainable.

Line no. 18

18. "Though she were true when you met her"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Relational(Were), Material (Met)	She (Carrier); True (Attribute); You (Actor); Her (Goal)	When

Blending material and relational processes, Donne conjures up a world where even temporary fidelity exists — but immediately undercuts it.

Line no. 20

"Yet she will be false ere I come"

Process	Participant	Circumstance
Relational (will be)	She (Carrier); False (Attribute)	Before = ere

The relational process "will be" demonstrates falseness as inevitable. The material process "come" exhibits the speaker's arrival, and "ere" emphasizes that the act of betrayal occurs before his arrival, again highlighting Donne's skepticism regarding fidelity.

Findings and Discussion

Transitivity analysis of John Donne's Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star indicates a purposefully achieved linguistic pattern that reflects and reinforces the themes of disillusionment, scepticism, and the impossibility of human ideals in the poem. The findings reveal that the poetic grammar of Donne is not coincidental but central to the meaning of the poem. Under the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) model — the transitivity system — this chapter describes how Donne constructs a worldview in which human effort is futile and truth is impossible.

The first thing that captivates analysis is the fact that in stanzas one and two, material processes prevail. Activity verbs like go, catch, get and ride are usually associated with voluntary action. But in the application of Donne, they are coupled with unattainable or fantastic purposes, of catching a falling star, of pollinating a mandrake root, or of listening to the singing of mermaids. This contrast generates a grammatical irony: though the structure of the clauses presupposes that the actions could take place, the semantic meaning underlines the absurdity of the actions. Thus, Donne employs the action grammar to emphasise the impossibility of human endeavour, with a speaker performing an action, but an outcome that is passive.

The relational action of the poem, which is more noticeable in the third stanza, is a thematic change in quest to conclusion - in trying to get to stating failure. Sayings like nowhere lives a woman true and fair and she will be false ere I come are about being and not doing. These structures lend the disillusionment of the speaker the air of ontological certitude, a certitude as though not probable, but certain. These relational

clauses contain the CarrierAttribute pattern, which in the terms of SFL is applied to give judgement in terms of truths, and which is appropriate to the authority of the cynical worldview of the speaker.

Verbal performances like tell, swear and teach also enter the scene, which means that there is a desire to know and communicate. These messages, though, are characterized by disintegration or irony. The speaker requests to be instructed where years gone by are or taught to hear mermaids - both requests required impossible. This makes the spoken processes, usually used to convey information, ineffective in the world of the speaker in SFL. Even mental acts, such as here, are externalized - indicating the reliance of the speaker on others to provide information and hence his lack of agency with respect to epistemology.

The actors in the poem are mostly abstract and generic. The constant use of pronouns such as "thou," "she," and "I" avoids specificity and encourages generalization. "A woman true and fair" is not an actual person but an ideal — one which the speaker finally asserts does not exist. This depersonalization enables Donne to turn personal disappointment into a universal truth. The situation of time and scope — "ten thousand days," "till you write your letter," and "to two or three" — are either overstatement of effort or quick deterioration of morals, affirming the feelings of absurdity and betrayal.

By their transitivity selections, therefore, Donne's lines are ideologically meaningful. Transitivity makes possible the poem's conversion from protest to rhetoric to grammatical depiction of disillusion. Action is denied by impossibility, communication dissolves rather than overcomes differences, and identification disintegrates into a vacuum. In this coding of these motifs into experience-grammar, the poetic form coordinates with the philosophy.

Conclusion

In this research, it has been discussed how John Donne's *Song: Goe, and Catche a Falling Star* builds its world of skepticism and disillusionment grammatically, most notably through its transitivity features. Employing the theoretical SFL framework, the study analyzed the poem clause-by-clause, determining what kinds of processes, participants, and circumstances are employed considering their contribution towards meaning-making. The research establishes that Donne's language functions at the level of poetic imagery or rhetorical embellishment, but indeed also at the level of grammar to express depth of philosophy.

The poem begins with a chain of material processes that imply purpose and action—verbs such as "go," "catch," "get," and "ride"—but these are coupled with impossible or dreamlike tasks, like catching a falling star or hearing the singing of mermaids. This grammatical coupling of action and impossibility creates irony and highlights the pointlessness of human endeavor in the search for perfection or permanence. The speaker, in these forms, engages active language in presenting passive resignation, inducing tension between form and content.

As the poem progresses, there is a shift from material to relational processes. Arguments such as "nowhere lives a woman true and fair" and "she will be false ere I come" move away from describing unsuccessful actions to forming existential truths. These relational clauses express the loss of faith on the part of the speaker in idealized virtues, specifically female constancy. The goal-oriented tone of relational processes imbues these remarks with a tone of factual correctness, so that the disappointment of the speaker does not merely appear personal but correct for all.

Verbal and intellectual processes also make evident the fragmentation of knowledge and communication. The speaker wants to be informed or instructed about something that is in itself unknowable, pointing out the limits of language and perception. The poem's actors are vague and generalized—"a woman," "an honest mind," "thou"—enabling the speaker to make particular complaints into general facts. At the same time, the conditions used throughout the poem—extending duration, constricting space, and swelling extent—augment the tone of bitter irony in the poem.

Finally, the study reveals that Donne's grammar is ideologically charged. The selection of process types and structures is not arbitrary, but they are employed to dramatize the poem's overall message: that human ideals are unattainable, and the pursuit of truth or constancy is doomed from the beginning. Through the use of transitivity analysis of the poem, this study illustrates how the use of language itself becomes the vehicle through which skepticism is performed, reaffirming the worth of linguistic methods in literary studies.

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