LOVE AFFAIRS AS POWER STRUGGLES IN ENGLISH COURT LIFE: JOHN DONNE'S "THE APPARITION," "THE EXTASIE," AND "THE CANONIZATION"

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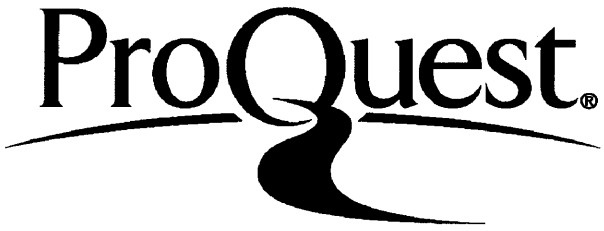

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ABSTRACT

I have selected three of John Donne's Songs and Sonets, which satirize how court members, entangled in love affairs, use poetic expressions of admiration and concern for their loved ones to improve their stature in court society. "The Apparition," "The Extasie," and "The Canonization" dramatize, respectively, one man's accusation against his mistress, another's lecture on love, and still another's claim that his affair will lead to his immortality. In none of these love poems does the speaker profess any genuine affection or admiration for his mistress. Instead, through paradoxical arguments and narcissistic glances at their reputations, these speakers betray an agenda for gaining power in court life. They use love affairs to promote their reputations as witty seducers; they engage in sophisticated discursive tactics, such as conceits, Italianate image patterns, and paradoxical arguments, either to persuade a woman to submit to them, to bolster their reputations at court, or both.

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John Donne's "The Apparition," "The Extasie," and "The Canonization" dramatize, respectively, one man's accusation against his mistress, another's lecture on love, and still another's claim that his affair will lead to immortality. In none of these love poems does the speaker profess any genuine affection or admiration for his mistress. Instead, through paradoxical arguments and narcissistic glances at their reputations, these speakers betray an agenda for gaining power in court life.

In Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare, Stephen Greenblatt observes that power-struggles for preferment in the Tudor court infiltrated intimate relations. Young men and women, so accustomed to struggling for favor in the court, unwittingly turned their personal affairs into psychological battles with their loved ones. The poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt, a member of the Tudor court and a predecessor of John Donne, best illustrates the theme of lovers allowing, however unintentionally, their upward mobility to corrupt their affairs. On the episodic level of Wyatt's poetry, a man seeks to dominate a woman: "The speaker's relations with women are charged with that will to power, that dialectic of dominance and submission" (151). At the same time, the speaker's social discourse atones for his losing power over a woman. "The audience," Greenblatt writes, "is not being manipulated but invited to experience the movement of the poet's mind through assurance, doubt, dread, and longing. This painstaking rendering of the inner life seems to surpass any social game, though

the poems remain clearly embedded in such a game" of personal domination and social acceptance (156).

Greenblatt does not trace the development of this theme from Wyatt to Donne or any other poets. However, in "Donne and the Love Poetry of the Seventeenth Century," C. S. Lewis finds similarities between the styles of Wyatt's and Donne's poetry. According to Lewis, Donne's Songs and Sonets echo Wyatt's "abrupt, familiar, and consciously 'manly' style" (106). Lewis does not, however, suggest that this similarity in style signifies a similarity in theme -- the masculine desire to dominate a woman and gain respect among his contemporaries. Both Wyatt and Donne observe that social-climbing and self-promotion encroach upon affairs where, ideally, two people should have genuine affection, admiration, and concern for the welfare of each other.

The chief difference between Wyatt's and Donne's poetry stems from each poet's position in his respective court milieu. Each poet's office influenced his point of view regarding the role of sexual affairs as outward manifestations of social or political power. Firmly established as an ambassador in the Tudor court, Wyatt was responsible for maintaining favorable relations between Henry VIII and the courts of Europe. He understood both the connection between effective language and political power and the prevailing custom of Renaissance diplomacy, marriages as outward signs of international alliances: "the prince's sexual acts were affairs of the state" (Greenblatt, 140). These conventions linking sexuality with political power influenced the behavior of subjects whose careers supported the power of the autocrat. Acquiring a mistress or a wife of high station became a courtier's means of affirming a degree of power and respect among his peers; a

sexual affair, involving persuasion and seduction, demonstrated a man's discursive and physical prowess.

Wyatt's love lyrics, however, rarely express persuasion, seduction, or conquest. The recurrent themes and tones in his love poetry convey loss, resignation, isolation, and penitence. According to Greenblatt, biographers attribute these tones to Wyatt's withdrawing his affections from Anne Boleyn, whom Henry VIII had earmarked for marriage (146). Wyatt suffered defeat not only in attempting to gain a mistress, but also in being imprisoned by order of the King, who succeeded in gaining the desired mistress. As Greenblatt remarks, these biographical reductions of Wyatt's poems to their coterie significance over-simplify our understanding of their sophistication. Reading Wyatt's lyrics simply as a lover's personal complaint or apology neglects the poet's individual variations on Petrarchan conventions, his subtle protests against the woman's duplicity, his own naivete, and the social corruption that prevailed in the Tudor court (116). Cheated as he may have felt in the wake of his defeat, Wyatt had to muster all of his diplomatic skill to avoid further punishment, gain a pardon, and maintain his still-powerful and secure position in the Tudor hierarchy. His need to survive socially might account for the singular tone of resignation in his poetry. Reductionist as the biographical reading of Wyatt's poetry might be, it affords a framework within which we may understand the consistently submissive tone of his love poetry. Furthermore, it gives us a useful contrast with multi-faceted tones and emotional expressions that arise from John Donne's Songs and Sonets. If Wyatt feels any of the anger that Donne expresses in some of The Songs and Sonets, then Wyatt carefully suppresses it,

soberly treating his misfortune as a lesson gained from experience.

Wyatt's poetry vividly represents corrupt affairs as he sees them, with little if any outward indication that humans can treat each other better. Donne, by contrast, affects the voices of different lovers who would allow their drive for preferment to taint their affairs, and he satirizes them. One reason for the plurality of Donne's narrative voices -- as opposed to the steady resignation of Wyatt's -- and for the outward, unabashed passions they express, appears when we examine his changing position in the late-Elizabethan and early-Jacobean courts. From about 1589 to 1601, Donne's life followed an upward course, beginning with several expeditions abroad, followed by a study of law at Lincoln's Inn, employment as a secretary for Sir Thomas Egerton, and membership in Parliament in 1601. Donne's political ascent seemed boundless until early in 1602, when he publicized his secret marriage to Anne More, Egerton's niece. Egerton disapproved of the marriage and expelled Donne from his office; Donne's political mobility ground to a halt. Poverty and destitution soon caught up with the suspended upstart; for the next fifteen years of his life, he was forced to apply much of his poetic genius to the flattery of aristocrats.

The milieux in which Donne worked during his rise, fall, and recovery provided him with episodes of duplicity and infidelity that could not escape his satirical eye. Before his fall from Egerton's favor, and during his struggle to regain social respectability, he found himself in a collective scramble for preferment in the court. Since he encountered more competitors for preferment than an established office-holder such as Wyatt would have encountered, Donne

might have found more targets for satirical poetry. In any case, Donne and his contemporaries kept a close watch on each other's sexual affairs and intrigue, linking success in the amorous realm with social, political, and economic success.

Arthur Marotti, in John Donne: Coterie Poet, identifies this "Inns-of-Court sensibility" as a vast and treacherous game of rhetorical, careerist, and seductive one-upmanship. The contestants -- generally students of law -- armed themselves with wit, conceits, betrayal, logically-constructed (though rarely reasonable) arguments. No types of human interaction, and certainly not amorous or sexual affairs, were exempt from the self-serving tactics of material or political gain. Marotti states that "the literature of erotic fulfillment [expressed] the desire for worldly satisfaction" in the political and social sense (88). Under the scrutiny of masculine ambition, a woman becomes an image of prestige and triumph; polygamy, an image of sexual and persuasive expertise; and betrayal, the penalty for being true to one lover.

Many of these corruptions in human affairs stem from the economic gain that young men believed they could acquire by marrying wealth. Marotti explains that the gentlemen of the Inns perceived the rich city woman as holding the key to their prosperity behind a wall of social standards designed to keep out the insufficient suitors. The object of a young man's lust for financial and sexual satisfaction, an upper class woman represented a seductive threat to masculinity. As an adjunct to his drive for power, the late-Elizabethan courtier aired fantasies of sexual conquest or vengeance in privately-circulated coterie poems (52).

In his "Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed," Donne affects the voice of the common courtier whose sexual arousal stems more from the woman's wealth than from her person. John Carey, in John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art, writes that in this elegy, "The sex exudes a strongly economic flavor. Emphasis is placed on the richness of the woman's clothes. She wears a 'glistering' girdle; her stomacher ('brest-plate') is 'spangled' with precious stones . . . . The luxurious accessories of [the speaker's] fantasy seem as important to him as the strip-tease itself." Carey continues to note that the speaker sees in his mistress not a person whom he can genuinely love, but an opportunity to exercise domination. As we shall see in "The Extasie," this speaker's desire to dominate only begins with his desire to mate a female; he views it as a conquest that elevates his stature among other men as well (106).

Both Carey (63) and Marotti (35) observe that Donne struggled with himself over his participation in such a warped system of human relations. Composing satirical verse, he coped with many of his inner conflicts while demonstrating his superior talents of rhetoric. In Satyre IV, lines 187 to 191, he boldly states his contempt for the encroachment of self-serving tactics of deceit and materialism upon the ideal of spiritual and physical love, potentially a source of tranquility in an otherwise troublesome world:

> Now
> The Ladies come; as Pirats, which doe know
> That there came weak ships fraught with Cutchannel,
> The men board them; and praise, as they think, well,
> Their beauties; they the mens wits; Both are bought.

I have selected three of Donne's Songs and Sonets -- "The Apparition,"

"The Extasie," and "The Canonization" -- which satirize how court members, entangled in love affairs, use poetic expressions of admiration and concern for their loved ones to improve their stature in court society.

I. Fear and Hatred: Tactics for Regaining A Lost Love in "The Apparition"

At the outset of "The Apparition," a rejected lover resigns from life and promises to haunt his beloved. Forecasting his haunting, the lover delivers an invective against the woman who will, he imagines, be seduced by a lesser man. The monologue closes with a warning of impending but unspecified doom, designed to keep the woman in suspense. Paradoxically, the speaker uses hatred and fear to get her to reconsider her rejection, even though he claims his love is spent.

N. J. C. Andreasen and Donald Guss, citing the Petrarchan influences on Donne's Songs and Sonets, identify the speaker in "The Apparition" as a man who once had idolized his beloved. Like all idolators, he believes that the woman has the power to bestow or take away his life. The woman, uncomfortable with her role as a demigodess, rejects his excessive proposals of love. Feeling that life without a companion is worthless, the rejected speaker willingly concedes his life and welcomes the afterlife. Overstating his emotional anguish, he accuses the woman of murdering him when she rejects his amorous solicitation. Nevertheless, the Petrarchan lover-as-martyr submits to the woman's will and anticipates an afterlife of eternal service to the woman (Guss, 17-20; Andreasen, 135).

In the opening line, Donne's rejected speaker adopts the

Petrarchan conceit; which equates rejection to murder: "When by thy scorne, O murdresse, I am dead." As Andreasen remarks, Donne begins with this Petrarchan tradition, the submissive lover, then forsakes the expected martyr's argument. He develops instead a variation: the hateful victim bent on revenge (18-19; 140). In Donne's variation, a man has lost his social power and will retreat into an imaginary after-life. From this position, he can speculate, instigating fear tactics to recover what he has lost. Adopting a figurative resignation from life, the Donnean speaker "masks a more potent agression," which he unleashes throughout the remainder of the poem (Greenblatt, 153).

Donne's speaker in "The Apparition" would accept death because his spirit would gain omniscience in the afterlife. According to John Carey, in Life, Mind, and Art, the speaker figuratively surrenders his physical life to gain the power of a purely spiritual existence (201-03). This spectral power will allow him to penetrate the woman's future bedchamber, which was off-limits to his living body. In the afterlife, the speaker expects to find the truth of the woman's infidelity. Speculating on the woman's future, he unveils an unnerving vision of what the woman may expect when "free" from his solicitation.

The speaker neither accepts the woman's rejection as a divine order nor professes to worship her in the afterlife. After his opening resignation of life, the speaker implicitly alleges that the woman's promiscuity, and not her chastity, motivates her rejecting him.

> [When] thou thinkst thee free
> From all solicitation from mee,
> Then shall my ghost come to thy bed
> And thee, fain'd vestall, in worse armes shall see . . . .
> (lines 2-5).

The speaker feels that the woman wants to resist commitment and accept other men's advances. Her decision to accept other suitors infuriates him because he had chosen the woman as a symbol of his status as a successful seducer.

Hovering at bedside, the speaker's ghost will find that the woman has become a "fain'd vestall in worse armes" (line five). As Lawrence Perrine explains, Donne intends a double meaning for the word "fain'd." The spelling, especially for Renaissance readers, indicates "hoped," yet the usage lay more closely to the homophone "feigned," or false (23). Both meanings, paired with "vestall," signify that the woman's apparent reason for rejecting the man -- to preserve her chastity -- will have vanished into mere wishfulness and, more precisely, imposture.

Donne uses "vestall" to sharpen his attack on the woman's pose as a virgin. Alluding to the mythical attendants of Venus, Donne mocks the heights the woman pretends to maintain and gloats over the depths to which she will fall. The unchaste woman, imitating the vestal virgins who kept watch over sacred torches, tends to the weak flame of a candle ("taper," line six). As a candle is a mere and tiny imitation of a virgin priestess.

Guss indentifies the candle image as a Petrarchan conceit that aligns love with fire (17). "Sicke tape," then, foreshadows the spiritual and physical decay that the speaker sees in the woman's future. The flame consumes the taper as love has consumed the speaker's life; the woman's next affair will consume her as well. Falling for the lesser man, she will compromise her virtu

From lines seven through ten, the speaker derides the general inferiority of the woman's next lover:

> And he, whose thou art then, being tyr'd before,
> Will, if thou stirre, or pinch to wake him, thinke
> Thou callst for more,
> And in false sleep will from thee shrinke.

The speaker predicts that the next lover will be worthless to the woman. In this scene he is "tyr'd," having been exhausted after an earlier lovemaking session. As the woman tries to rouse him to her defense against the ghost, he will not rise to the challenge. He would rather rest than fight for the woman's safety. When she needs her man to be gallant, the mortal shrinks away from her: he feigns sleep as surely as the woman feigned chastity when she rejected the speaker.

Thoroughly insulting the false morals and diseased bodies of these bedfellows, the speaker also satirizes their unbalanced sexual drives. Line nine, "Thou call'st for more," reads as a thought from the exhausted man. In its truncated meter, the line suggests that the man's thinking has been dulled to match his weak body. It also implies that the woman's midnight cravings for sex will have become routine, and that "false sleep" will be the mortal's only defense against her ravenous apetite. This pathetic love debacle within the poem implies that even if the ghost were not present, the weak male would frustrate the woman's lust.

Paradoxically, the invisible speaker commands the more powerful presence in the woman's future life, even though she had tried to expel him earlier on. From his position as a spirit, he can see the falseness of the woman's professed chastity and the weakness of the next lover, who is powerless to stop the ghost from frightening the woman.

With the word "shrinke" at the end of line ten, the speaker completes his attack on the next lover, who promptly disappears from the narrative.

In lines eleven through thirteen, the speaker completes his invective against the woman: "And then, poore Aspen wretch, neglected thou / Bath'd in cold quicksilver sweat wilt lye / A veryer ghost than I." "Aspen" -- like the figures "fain'd vestall" and "sicke taper" -- explodes into several meanings that suggest the woman's protracted decline. peter Fiore identifies three colloquial uses of "aspen," all of which deepen the poem's invective cut. The aspen is first a tree which, when tossing in the wind, resembles the woman's shaking from fear of the ghost. Its white bark resembles the pallor of her clammy skin. "Aspen" also likens the woman to an asp, suggesting her reptilian and venomous nature. Finally, "aspen" was for Donne's generation a term for a gossipy woman (3-4). While the insult regarding the woman as a gossip does not link directly to other attacks on her inconstancy, it does signify her weak character, her love of superficiality.

Donne's speaker also intends a double attack using the figure of quicksilver, or mercury, in line twelve. As C. W. Miller and Dan S. Norton note, quicksilver, or mercury, was prescribed for sufferers of syphilis (24). According to Carey, Donne studied medicine and alchemy and was familiar with contemporary applications of mercury against syphilis (138). Quicksilver, then, suggests that the next lover the woman takes will fatally infect her: she will have to apply quick-silver baths.

But in line twelve, the quicksilver, applied for healing, also

seeps through the woman's pores as sweat. Carey states that the alchemists whom Donne studied attempted to produce mercury by burying metals in waste matter. Since the woman sweats mercury, she has become something less than human, a bodily vessel in which alchemical transformations may occur (138; 158-59). The macabre impression of "cold, quicksilver sweat" signifies the woman's disease, earthliness, and decay. The speaker believes he will find the woman to be cold, sick, pallid, and immobilized by fear and infidelity. Committing his prediction to verse, he hopes that his audience will view the woman in the same light.

The invective ends paradoxically, as the speaker sees the woman become "A veryer ghost" than he. She rejected the speaker hoping to free herself from his solicitation; instead, she becomes a prisoner of her own bodily matter and desires. Even though she will be physically alive and he will be physically dead -- a disembodied apparition -- she will be the one to lose her life.

Donne's paradox thickens as the poem closes with a final, undisclosed threat. Having looked ahead to his own afterlife and to the affair he thinks the woman will have, the speaker returns to the present in lines fourteen through seventeen:

> What I will say I will not tell thee now,
> Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent
> I had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
> Then by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

This nebulous closing hints that the ghost's words will be even more frightening than the scene already foretold. On the surface, he witholds his curse to keep the woman in suspense. Perrine observes that the speaker taunts the woman with that which humans fear the most:

the unknown (22). An advance warning, he implies, would allow the woman to brace her nerves for the haunting. He aims, however, to inflict anxiety and uncertainty as revenge against the pain he suffers from unrequited love.

Andreasen, referring to Petrarch's Laura in The Canzoniere as Donne's source for the "scornful" mistress, believes that the addressee must be sensible to have rejected such a shrill and self-pitying suitor (135). This woman could easily difuse the speaker's bombast by taking him at his word when he says, "my love is spent," ignoring his idle threats, and entertaining the courtship of someone who perceives love as a co-mingling of souls rather than a battle for gratification. To Andreasen, the speaker's using invective to regain this woman's affection are likely to fail. She interprets the phrase "my love is spent" literally and believes that the speaker's love has soured (140-41).

Helen Gardner, Carey, Guss and Perrine see beneath the speaker's zest for vengeance. An advance warning of what the ghost will utter is unnecessary. Predicting an ugly future and privately circulating this prediction in a poem read by other members of the court can damage her self-esteem and reputation. The speaker's ghastly and insulting vision of the woman's future immediately threatens her present reputation. The present invective supercedes the imaginary threat of being haunted. Beneath the surface of his spite and accusation, the speaker suggests that the woman can avoid both the foreseen debacle and the smear to her reputation by not "murdering" or rejecting him. He still wants the woman to be his; he uses fear and threats because his loving admonitions have failed (Perrine, 22-23).

Figurative submission to death, hatred, and accusation, as rhetorical tactics, express the opposite of the speaker's hidden intention to regain the woman's love. His lines of attack invite a response from the woman, which is precisely what he wants. Intimidating the woman with visions of hauntings, diseased sexual partners, and worse, he hopes to vex the woman with anxiety so that she may return, if only to refute his claims. He assumes, then, that the woman still cares enough about his opinions to perceive the language of hatred as a challenge to continue the relationship.

Rhetorically, "The Apparition" stands as an ingenious though deranged attempt to regain a lost possession, an outward symbol of his social success. This abrupt reversal from worship to blasphemy typifies the possessive attitude that this speaker has toward love: he can appreciate the woman only if she belongs to him, satisfies his passion, and generates envy among his peers. He had solicited a bogus love from her; he had misappropriated to her acceptance the powers over life and death. These advances were never more than strategies of acquisition designed for self-glorification. Andreasen is correct in reading the poem as a salvo of insults projected from a sore loser on his way out of the woman's life. However, she misses or ignores the paradox that these insults are designed to redirect the woman's attention back to the speaker.

Gardner, Carey, Guss, and Perrine focus so sharply on this paradox that the actual language of hatred gets blurred in their reading: they see that the speaker wants the woman back in his life, but they misinterpret this as a desire to regain love. The speaker wants the woman back as his acquisition, to be taken out as a symbol of his

success as a seducer. The hatred sustained throughout the poem indicates that he has little regard for the woman's contentment or advancement in life: even if his desire is not spent, that desire is not love. Reading "The Apparition" as an attempt to regain a possession -- not a love affair -- synthesizes Andreasen's and Gardner's readings. Intimidating through fear and guilt, the speaker tries to win the woman back so that he can possess, not love, her.

II. "The Extasie" -- "Step Aside, Platonic and Carnal Lovers"

Compared to the vitriolic tone of "The Apparition," "The Extasie" unfolds with a cool, impassionate tone. The speaker in "The Extasie" regards his partner with calm fondness, not with the hatred that grips the speaker in "The Apparition." However, the man in "The Extasie" has a narcissistic concern for his reputation related to that which fed the outburst of the man in "The Apparition."

Following a day-long ecstatic trance, during which the souls of the speaker and his mistress marry above their bodies, the speaker in "The Extasie" admonishes himself and his beloved to re-animate their bodies so that "Weake men on love reveal'd may looke" (line 70). The speaker's egotistical concern to exemplify for "weake men" the epiphany of love actually calls attention to his amorous success. Self-glorification undermines his apparently-pious celebration of a co-mingling of souls.

Unlike the "murderess" in "The Apparition," the woman in "The Extasie" has consented to the man's courtship. The recurring pronoun "we" indicates that the speaker regards her as part of his essence. He

designs his rhetoric not to assert sexual domination over his mistress, but to describe how his spiritual harmony with her sanctifies their lovemaking. His active role as spokesman for the couple -- with his mistress standing by in mute, passive aggreement -- implies that he has already achieved power over her (Greenblatt, 145). Yet by the end of the poem, he hopes that others will regard his love as some great achievement to be emulated. The speaker in "The Extasie" hopes to demonstrate that his love affair iis greater than those of the Platonic stoics or the carnal sensualists of the court.

A survey of the overall structure of the poem will better highlight two references to outside observers of the affair. These references -- dramatic asides -- hold the clues to uncovering the speaker's desire for self-glorification, which lurks behind his pose as a selfless lover.

Gardner analyzes the narrative form of "The Extasie" in three parts. In the first seven quatrains, Donne sets the scene, describes the lovers' souls as they leave the bodies, and introduces the first hypothetical observer. In the next five quatrains, he narrates the two souls merging into one; here, the souls resolve doubts that the lovers had before they reached their state of ecstacy. In the last seven quatrains, the narrator beckons the souls to return to their bodies, which will sustain the spiritual union they have achieved. In the final aside, the speaker hopes to demonstrate this union to the observant court society (261).

Charles Mitchell, like Gardner, divides "The Extasie" into three sections. Unlike Gardner, however, he more clearly designates the references to outsiders, which serve both the structure and the content

of the poem. Concentrating on two dramatic asides in the speaker's narrative, we can hear him arguing that his love affair exalts him to a position of social superiority. According to Mitchell (93), Donne places the first of these asides at stanzas six and seven:

> If any, so by love refined,
> That he soules language understood,
> And by good love was grown all minde,
> Within convenient distance stood,
>
> He (though he knew not which soule spake,
> Because both meant, both spake the same)
> Might thence a new concoction take,
> And part farre purer then he came.

In this aside, the observer represents the strict Platonic lover who, "grown all minde," renounces physical passion as corrupt. The speaker states that the Platonic observer will be able to understand the spiritual concert about to transpire in stanzas eight through 12. From stanza 13 to stanza 17, the speaker proves to the Platonic observer that an inclusion of the body makes for more complete love between people. He also implies that spiritual ecstacy elevates his affair far above those based solely on physical attraction.

The second of the dramatic asides closes the poem at stanzas eighteen and nineteen:

> To'our bodies turne wee then, that so
> Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
> Love's mysteries in soules doe grow,
> But yet the body is his booke.
>
> And if some lover, such as wee,
> Have heard this dialogue of one,
> Let him still marke us, he shall see
> Small change, when we'are to bodies gone.

In this aside, the speaker concludes a narrative in which the spirits

of the lovers sanctify their sensual attraction. Without some sensual attraction, the speaker and his mistress could never fall in love, and the ecstacy, the lovers would never grow beyond the comatose and perplexed state afflicting them at the outset of the affair. The speaker feels that his spiritual and physical experiences in love elevate him and his mistress among couples. They have achieved a spiritually and sexually holistic affair, and he wants others, whom he regards as "weake," to look upon his affair as an example of what they might be missing. The speaker, in his asides, betrays his concern for the outward appearance of his affair, which occupies his attention more than the woman's qualities as an individual.

In spite of referring to himself and his beloved as "we," which suggests equality and intimacy in the relationship, the speaker never refers to the woman as an autonomous being. Instead of introducing us to the woman who has so awakened his spirit, he invites us to watch and admire as he seduces her. A current of self-glorification runs beneath his nearly-religious language, which celebrates the affair, not the woman. In his ecstatic state he has managed to acquire a willing mistress that another man does not have. Referring to outsiders, the speaker puts a paradoxical and satirical twist on two serious religious concepts: love as selfless caring for another person, and ecstacy as a solemn communion between worshipper and Creator.

The speaker, in the three principal sections of the poem, draws upon botany, alchemy, and the behavior of angels to describe the perfect and holistic affair he has been able to achieve.

The opening quatrain of "The Extasie" describes a bucolic setting that Gardner says would induce two people to make love:

> Where like a pillow on a bed,
> A Pregnant banke swel'd up to rest
> The violets reclining head,
> Sat wee two, one another's best.

However, as Carey (138) and Stampfer (132) observe, Donne's words of sensuality -- "pillow," "bed," "pregnant," "swel'd," "reclining," and "one another's best" -- occur with images of discomfort, doubt, and conflict in the quatrains that follow.

> Our hands were firmely cimented
> With a fast balme, which thence did spring,
> Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred
> Our eyes upon one double string.

Circumstantially, these two lovers are holding hands and gazing into each other's eyes. Looking beneath the surface, we find the pain couched within this apparantly benign scene. Carey reads the images of bodies "cimented" together, their eyes threaded like beads, as evidence for physical discomfort. Furthermore, discomfort is a symptom of the spiritual uncertainty that afflicts these lovers before they reach ecstacy (138). The passion between the two people has sucked their souls away, leaving them closer to death than life (178). Since the lovers in this poem soon go into ecstacy -- their souls do flow out of their bodies -- this semi-dead physical state is part of the process of reaching ecstacy.

Concluding the first section, images of embattled armies and sepulchral statues -- chaos and death -- strengthen the impression of conflict and discomfort. In the fourth quatrain, lines 13 through 16, we are told that the souls have left the bodies; other than the title, this is the first mention of ecstacy in the poem:

> As 'twixt two equall armies, Fate
> suspends uncertaine victorie,
> Our soules, (which to advance their state
> Were gone out), hung 'twixt her and mee.

Warfare, not love, is the force drawing souls out of bodies.

Austin Warren, in "Donne's 'Extasie,'" cannot conclude whether one partner will dominate the other or both partners' spirits will negotiate a truce between the two (476). He shares this confusion with others, like Andreasen, who puzzle over Donne's choosing a metaphor of warfare in a poem celebrating the spiritual union of lovers. The speaker wants not only to dominate the woman, but also to show others that his seduction is the finest and most complete. He realizes, however, that a physical ploy for the woman's affection might net the same result that frustrates the speaker in "The Apparition" -- outright rejection. Allowing his passions to go numb, the speaker diverts his seduction to the spiritual realm, where he can deploy rhetorical tactics -- analogies and conceits -- to prove that his affection for the mistress is pure.

Also, in choosing warfare as the conceit to describe the love affair, Donne creates a dramatic problem -- lovers irresistibly attracted yet in conflict -- to be resolved. Warfare, read in concert with twisted eyebeams, threaded eyeballs, and cemented hands, furthers the impression that in its pre-ecstatic state, the couple had merely a passionate engagement, shared by combatants as well as lovers. Using his own affair as an example, the speaker implies the shortcomings of an affair based strictly on passion: a man becomes an invader, forcing the woman to defend her chastity; conversely, a woman becomes an emasculating tyrant, forcing a man to fight for his independence.

Perceiving that war knows no victors, only casualties, the spirits evacuate the bodies, freezing the combatants against further advances. From their ecstatic position, the spirits may negotiate a peaceful resolution, in which each partner remains undamaged by the affair.

Their pre-ecstatic discomfort reaches its fruition in the fifth quatrain, where the speaker compares himself and his partner to "sepulchrall statues," or effigies that adorn tombs. As the spirits of the lovers ascend to define the sanctity of their affection, they borrow the life-giving forces of the bodies, leaving the bodies still and mute.

The second section, lines 29 to 48, follows the first aside, which introduces the Platonic observer. Since the disclosure in this section occurs between spirits, with no spoken communication, only a Platonic lover could understand what will transpire. The speaker wants to demonstrate his mastery of the spiritual doctrines, but he also wants the Platonic observer to note that he can enjoy sensuality as well. Observing the speaker and his mistress, and noting both the spiritual and sensual facets of their affair, the Platonic will be enlightened to a love "farre purer," because the speaker's affair is more completely human.

The two lovers in "The Extasie" can feel an attraction, yet they do not understand the forces behind it until they attain the ecstacy dramatized from lines 29 through 48 (Gardner, 186). In these lines, the spirits of the lovers correct the uncertainties that led to physical discomfort, coldness, and anxiety in the first section of the poem. The love affair originated through visible and tactile contact between a man and a woman, and from this contact the souls ascend to

intermingle and strengthen each person. The souls, rising from the troubled bodies and combining into one, quickly discover the cause of bodily discomfort narrated in the first section:

> This Extasie doth unperplex
> (Wee said) and tell us what we love,
> Wee see by this it was not sexe,
> Wee see, we saw not what did move
> (lines 29 - 32).

Liberated from bodies, the souls discover that they simply did not know whether genuine love or simple lust inspired their attraction. The souls in ecstacy understand that sex was not the principle motive of their affair. Now that the lovers have reached ecstacy, they see love as an entity greater than themselves, which first brought them together, then drew their souls out of their bodies. In the ecstatic position, they can alleviate any doubts about the sanctity of their relationship, and the speaker can feel his spiritual strength increase through love. Love forges a stronger spirit, which inspires the speaker's feelings of superiority over others struggling in loneliness, trapped inside of unmindful passion, or afraid of the mutability of the body.

From lines 33 to 48, Donne articulates the role of love in strengthening himself and his mistress:

> But as all severall soules containe
> Mixture of things, they know not what,
> Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
> And makes both one, each this and that.

According to Gardner, Leone Ebreo's writing about the soul and its ability to traverse physical and intellectual spheres of being informs Donne's calling the soul a "Mixture of things" -- a mixture of

spiritual knowledge and physical sensations. The lovers "know not what" their personal souls consist in, yet they faithfully accept that love recombines each mixture into the other's. Joined in ecstacy, the man and the woman acquire elements of each other's souls (185).

According to T. Katharine Thomason, in "Plotinian Metaphysics and Donne's 'The Extasie,'" Donne narrates the Renaissance belief that love, as a force, can extract souls and blend them into a stronger one. Renaissance poets and philosophers considered the soul an enigma, physical yet invisible, superior to bodies and containing the essence of all virtues. To the Renaissance mind, virtues are not distributed equally throughout an individual soul. A single person's soul is an uneven mix of virtues; love moves one soul toward another so that virtues may be mixed more evenly in an individual. Every soul thirsts for this fulfillment. For example, a soul with a deficiency in patience will flow naturally toward a soul with an abundance of patience. Ideally, the soul with abundant patience -- or any other cardinal virtue -- will naturally accept the one seeking patience. And the soul seeking a renewal in a particular virtue ideally has an abundance of another virtue -- justice, for example -- that the sought-after soul has in low volume (101).

The speaker and his mistress discover that their shared love, which mixes their souls, can strengthen their spirits. However, the speaker never mentions his mistress's virtues, which he lacked until she came into his life. He merely asserts that he and his mistress have merged into a fortified soul. While the image of violets in the tenth quatrain -- based on the Petrarchan technique of drawing images from nature -- vividly illustrates the behavior of souls, it tells us

nothing about their attraction toward each other except that it strengthens them.

In the tenth quatrain, lines 37 through 40, the speaker draws an analogy between the couple's combined soul and violets, which represent the mixing and re-mixing of souls described in the preceding quatrain. The violets represent the beneficial changes that the couple experiences in ecstatic love:

> A single violet transplant
> The strength, the color, and the size,
> (All which before was poore, and scant,)
> Redoubles still, and multiplies.

The stronger violets in the tenth quatrain contrast with the violets that set the scene for the lovers in the first quatrain. The transplanted violets have a vitality that never existed in the single violets, which lay "poore, and scant" during the lovers' pre-ecstatic discomfort. To achieve robust color and strength, the single plant must multiply in transplantation (Gardner, 186; Mitchell, 93).

The eleventh quatrain describes how ecstatic love strengthens souls the way a botanist might strengthen violets through transplantation. To overcome its "defects of lonelinesse" (line 44) -- the unbalanced mixture of virtue in the single soul -- the human soul must be "interinanimated," or transplanted by ecstacy, into the soul of the beloved (lines 41 - 42). Interinanimated in love, the soul becomes "abler" than a single person's soul, just as two stronger and more colorful violets will grow from one transplanted stem.

The twelfth quatrain (lines 45 - 48) summarizes the spiritual activity that has occurred during the lovers' ecstacy:

> Wee then, who are this new soule, know,
> Of what we are compos'd, and made,
> For, th'Atomies of which we grow,
> Are soules, whom no change can invade.

The souls of the lovers have risen and blended according to their relative abundances or deficiencies of different virtues. "Atomies" in line 47 stands for the indivisible body of energetic and vital matter their souls have become. Since the souls have achieved greater strength in love, the bodies no longer feel like combatants struggling for power over one another, as they felt in the first section. Instead, they have become balanced and strengthened in spirit.

In the second section of "The Extasie," the speaker betrays his fascination with love affairs as ethereal abstractions or processes. His fascination eclipses any admiration he may have for his mate. Asserting that his love affair -- and not the woman he loves -- has spiritually strengthened him, he prepares the way for his final declaration: absolutely spiritual or absolutely physical bachelors -- "weake men" -- will look to his affair as the scriptural example of a perfect relationship.

In the third section, quatrains 13 through 19, the speaker describes the mixture of spirit and body, which creates the perfect affair. He admonishes himself and his mate to flesh out the ideal they had reached during their ecstacy. Having already proven that his love is not mere lust, he finally proves that sanctified passion is superior to sterile Platonic love. The speaker has gained the power of his mistress's soul, and in the final quatrains he considers how this affair might command the respect of others.

In the last seven quatrains, the speaker addresses the sensuality

necessary for a good affair, but not the sensuality of his mistress. Andreasen finds any mention of sensuality shocking following the "lofty ethereality" of the second section. She interprets the speaker's respect for senses as a sly attempt to lead the woman into carnal knowledge (174). But Gardner's explication reveals no hard evidence to suggest that a seduction or entrapment is taking place. We would be naive to doubt that this couple will soon consummate their love, yet this inevitable consummation will occur with each lover's consent: there is no evidence of an aggressor trying to coerce a reluctant mistress (260). Unlike love in "The Apparition," in which a man laments losing his power over a woman, love in "The Extasie" is a sharing of power between a man and a woman. The speaker, however, hopes to use this power to exalt himself and his mistress over others in the court society.

At the thirteenth quatrain the souls are still in ecstacy. They realize that they have left their bodies, which should not be forsaken as they lie numbly beneath the souls:

> But O alas, so long, so farre,
> Our bodies why doe wee forebeare?
> They'are ours, though they're not wee, Wee are
> Th'intelligences, they the sphere.

The lovers' bodies, no longer funerary statues cemented together, become the natural means by which ideal purity may be felt and seen in the world. As the third section unfolds, the speaker suggests that a body, by itself, is less than the combination of body and soul. Temporal, the body belongs to the soul and is subject to the pain dramatized in the first section. At the same time, a disembodied spirit, dramatized in the second section, needs an organic body if its

ideals are ever to be realized.

In the fourteenth quatrain, the speaker draws a conceit from alchemy to illustrate the interplay between sensuality and spirituality. Contact through sight, touch, sound, or any combination of the senses -- the "forces" in line 55 -- must ignite the ecstacy that sanctifies an amorous union (Gardner, 186). The ecstatic epiphany promotes bodies from "drosse," the heaps of waste material in which alchemical reactions occur, to "allay," the rarefied metal extracted inn the alchemical magic. This recalls the reference to "concoction" (line 27) another alchemical term for "purification:" through ecstacy and the consequent intermingling of souls, the bodies have been rarefied beyond a base existence of drosse. Love between humans brings forth a purification of souls, which naturally return to purify the bodies into something more valuable.

In the fifteenth quatrain, Donne continues his sequence of conceits comparing human love to a purification process. He follows his allusion to alchemy with an allusion to angels and the Divine Incarnation:

> On man heavens influence workes not so,
> But that it first imprints the ayre,
> Soe soule into soule may flow,
> Though it ot body first repaire.

Donne writes an entire poem, "Aire and Angels," in which the conceit of angels moving through the physical element of air represents the kind of pure love that the speaker hopes his mistress will bestow upon him. According to Wiggins, in "'Aire and Angels:' Incarnations of Love," the appearance of angels in the Old Testament prefigures God's assumption of a human form. Therefore, the body need not be a corrupt

storehouse of passions, as the Platonics would have us believe (95).

In the fifteenth quatrain of "The Extasie," the speaker explains the cyclical interplay between Divinity, human souls, and human bodies with the following analogy: as heaven must "imprint" a less pure element, "ayre," to manifest angels, so must souls return to bodies, so that humans may realize virtue in action, not just contemplation. Angels remind humanity of the Divine Incarnation, which expresses the love Creator for creature, as the spirit-enriched lovers reveal virtues of the soul to each other (Wiggins, 94). Souls, conduits for virtues, "repaire" to bodies, whose senses receive the beauty and harmony manifested in one's mate. Striving for stronger souls, senses and passions move one individual toward another who can correct imbalances of virtue.

In the sixteenth quatrain, Donne summons principles of anatomy to further illustrate the interplay between bodies and souls. The figures of "blood" and "fingers" restore the actual flesh of the lovers into the poetry. No longer alchemical or religious abstractions, the lovers become biological entities. "Blood" in line 61 refers both to the red plasma that fills our bodies and to the warm and passionate disposition that these lovers share.

Figuratively, blood becomes the "fingers" which "knit" the ethereal spirit into the earth-bound body. Without such unity, an individual would be something less than human, either a fleshy block of drosse with only inevitable decay and death to signify its existence, or a disembodied spirit, an abstraction, unable to enjoy the beauty of nature.

To summarize quatrains 14, 15, and 16, note that the speaker uses

alchemical, religious, and anatomical conceits and analogies to describe the unbreakable bond between himself and his mistress. This bond has purified and strengthened each partner. Ironically, while he describes the sanctity of senses and passions, his tone remains impassionate and analytical, suggesting emotional security, but no personal admiration for the woman. Again, he keeps his mistress shrouded in metaphors and suggestive generalizations: "Allay," "heavens influence," "soule," "body," "blood," "spirits," "subtile knot." She practically ceases to exist, except as an agent who has brought new vitality into his life. Having achieved a re-vitalized and purified state, he hopes that she will help him appear superior to others who may observe them.

In the seventeenth quatrain, the speaker concludes his argument that pure love is not an affair of the spirit only. The union of lovers' souls with bodies is inevitable. Consequently, the union of lovers' bodies with each other is not only desirable but also necessary for ideals to be sustained in reality:

> So must pure lovers soules descend,
> T'affections and to faculties,
> That sense may reach and apprehend,
> Else a great Prince in prison lies.

According to Elizabeth Howe, in "Donne and the Spanish Mystics on Ecstacy," the speaker's conceit of a disembodied spirit as "a great prince in prison" conclusively refutes Platonism (37). Strict Platonists believed that the soul, as governor of the passions, remains stifled within bodily desires; the soul must free itself from the body and deny any sensual enjoyment of life. The speaker argues that the Platonic soul -- suspended from the body -- would be the real prisoner,

powerless to affect or apprehend virtues through human sensuality. The word "Prince," a figure of power, also implies the leading roles that he and his mistress expect to play in court society.

After the speaker reverses Platonic orthodoxy, he departs from Christian orthodoxy regarding the secrecy and reverence surrounding ecstacy. In the final pair of quatrains, he assumes that outsiders, "weake men" and "some lover," will observe him and his mistress. He wants others to see that he and his mistress have incarnated "loves mysteries in soules." Their bodies will have become "loves booke," or authoritative scripture: they will have approximated Christ's Incarnation of divine love, foretold in the Word (Wiggins, 95). Howe notes, however, that while the speaker summons Christian concepts, his vanity contradicts the spirituality implied in the title of the poem (34).

Donne's two references to outside observers betray his self-congratulation, the weakness in his apparent devotion to his mistress. He directs the first aside, quatrains six and seven, exclusively toward Platonists, who can understand the flight of souls. He then proceeds to prove that sensual love is purer than Platonic love. His closing aside, quatrains 18-19, applies to anyone who cares to watch as he and his mistress share affection. Calling these observers "weake men," he implies that they suffer from defects of passion, defects of spirituality, or defects of loneliness. "Let him still marke us," the speaker implores, "he shall see / Small change, when we'are to bodies gone" (line 75-76). This closing statement suggests that the speaker regards his affair as practically immutable because he and his mistress have achieved the perfect affair. It suggests further that the faculty

observer has much to gain. He ignores the fact that he fashioned this affair after no such role model, yet he affirms that others will fashion theirs after his. No one except his mistress revealed the ecstacy of love to him; however, in the text, the mistress comes off as a mere accessory to his reaching ecstacy.

In "The Extasie," we hear a "dialogue of one" which appears to be a celebration of two lovers. The speaker celebrates his affair and glorifies the "one" superior entity that he and his mistress have become through ecstacy. We hear a boastful proclamation that the speaker has achieved a loving concert involving sensuality and spirituality. He has not only conquered a woman's affection, he has also merged her soul into his. Paradoxically, he pays less attention to his mistress than he does to outsiders who can observe and envy his success in acquiring a lover.

In "The Extasie," self-assured discourse contrasts with the vitriolic tone of jealousy in "The Apparition." Yet this calmer voice paradoxically disguises a pride in himself as a love for a woman. At the core of each poem lies egotism, which reappears in "The Canonization" as the speaker believes that future generations will pray to him and his mistress.

III. "The Canonization:" Immortality Trumps Material Power

In "The Canonization," the zeal of youthful love in "The Extasie" has developed into an aging rake's delusions of sainthood. In contrast to the speaker in "The Extasie," who felt that he and his mistress would be a living model for lovers, the speaker in "The Canonization"

believes that, from the position of being a saint, he and his mistress will guide mortal lovers in the future. He predicts that mortal lovers will pray -- "beg from above" -- to him and his mistress, hoping to find the love that eludes them.

The speaker in "The Canonization" has been chastised by others in society who feel he has wasted his life in pursuit of sensual love. He makes no denial or apology for falling into poverty and alienation. Instead, he sees this sacrifice as similar to that of the saints and martyrs, who sacrificed material comfort for their devotion to God. Yet there is a tremendous difference between saintly asceticism and the speaker's anti-social, anti-material commitment to his own sensuality.

According to Cleanth Brooks, the speaker tries to persuade an audience that his profane love is pious: he has forsaken material and social gain for a higher ideal. The affair, however, is anything but saintly. Neither the speaker nor his partner has forsaken the temptations of the flesh. True, they have accepted poverty, but not for a love of God (11). The speaker's poverty arises from rejecting a career that might separate him from his mistress. As Andreasen summarizes, the speaker has not renounced earthly pursuits, he has merely concentrated on a single pursuit: sensual delight in the form of his mistress (165).

Sensual love is, for the speaker, an uncontested affirmation of power. In his affair, he dominates a woman. To achieve this power, he has forsaken the opportunity to seek or hold a court office; he has surrendered the chance to build wealth. In the eyes of other men, he is powerless. Yet the speaker contends that their materialistic power is superficial -- to achieve it, they had to surrender their desires to

the rules of the court. Satisfying their physical desires, the lovers have maintained their collective selfhood. He believes that future generations will look favorably upon his sacrificing wealth for love; they will pray to him for guidance in their affairs of the heart.

John Clair reads "The Canonization" within an ecclesiastical framework, and he finds satire. From 1588 to 1625, the Roman Catholic Church had adopted a five-part examination, carried out by a panel of priests, to discern whether or not a deceased believer could qualify to intercede between humanity and God. Donne was openly critical of the idea that Church officials could determine a man's fate in the afterlife. Through his defensive speaker in "The Canonization," he satirizes Church doctrine, as he portrays a man determining his own exaltation in the afterlife. The speaker in "The Canonization" usurps the Church's power over eschatological matters (300).

The speaker's combative "For Godsake hold your tongue and let me love" (line 1) counters an antagonist's ridicule or censure. While clearly aware that his life has declined by all physical, financial, and social standards, the obsessive lover acknowledges no real advantage to the materialistic lifestyle. His invective in the first stanza satirizes the materialist view.

In the short span of lines two and three, the speaker catalogues his visible shortcomings. "Palsie," "gout," and "gray haires" betray the onset of old age. According to Clair, these degenerative conditions, palsy and gout, and the speaker's "ruin'd fortune," indicate defects of character which coincide with the speaker's social decline. All of his afflictions stem from idleness -- precisely the opposite of the sanctity that Catholic archbishops would look for in

the life of a candidate for sainthood (301).

The speaker's satire in the first stanza appears to be self-directed, as he admits to the poverty and disease he has shouldered for the sake of love. But his truer target is the group chastising him. Gardner notices that in lines four through ten, Donne mocks the step-by-step conventions that most men follow to achieve stature in the world.

> With wealth your state, your minde with Arts improve,
> Take you a course, get you a place,
> Observe his honour, or his grace,
> And the Kings reall, or his stamped face
> Contemplate; what you will, approve,
> So you will let me love.

The social-climber has the acquisition of wealth and prestige as his only goal. To reach this, he will first seek an education, not out of a love of arts, but to help him buy into a career, or "course." Similarly, his life's work follows no genuine calling, but serves only as a conduit of income. The careerist must also gain a "place," or an official title at the court. But getting a titled occupation and an income is not enough, because he must continue to kowtow to superiors: "Observe his honour, or his grace" (line 6). Whether his position is inside a political, judicial, or religious heirarchy, the careerist must sacrifice his own honor and grace to serve the senior members of court. Finally, the careerist must devote his thoughts to the image of a King, whose control over wealth, which he distributes through favoritism, is as indelibly stamped onto court life as his image is stamped onto money itself (Gardner, 203).

"Reall" and "stamped face" signify the inseparability of royal power and maximum wealth. "Reall" immediately would have indicated "money" to Donne's readers, as it was the popular name for coins

printed with the royal profile. The OED confirms that "reall," as an archaic synonym for "coin," grows from the root word "royal." Donne also intends a pun on the word "real" or "actual." To gain the most profit and prestige, the professional court lackey must devote his service not only to the actual ruler but also to the coins that bear the ruler's likeness. The successful court career amounts to membership in a cult of personality and material wealth. The speaker has rejected this program for his own life, but he tolerates its pursuit by his adversarial addressees, as if to say, "You live your life and I will live mine." Donne's speaker forsakes the power of the careerist for the power he can exert in a love affair, which he believes will propel him and his mistress to even greater power in the afterlife.

In the second stanza, the speaker, having devalued his addressees' image of success, argues that his amorous life has been good simply because it has not been bad: "Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?" (line 10). Unfurling a catalogue of emotional reactions that mark the hopeless Petrarchan lover -- sighs, tears, chills, and fevers -- the speaker again engages in self-parody. He knows that people have been ridiculing his life of excessive passion. However, he challenges these critics to identify any genuine evil in such a life:

> What merchants ships have my sighs drown'd?
> Who saies my teares have overflow'd his ground?
> When did my colds a forward spring remove?
> When did the heats which my veines fill
> Adde one man to the plaguie Bill?

The speaker admits that he has fallen victim to emotions reduced to absurdity through the popularity of Petrarchan-oriented culture, but what of it? As he implies in his rhetorical questions, nature wreaks

far more damage through its storms, floods, winters, and diseases. From the perspective of one who is powerless against almighty nature, his obsession with love does not seem as excessive, pitiful, or comical as his Petrarchan afflictions might indicate. Concluding his chain of afflictions, the speaker acknowledges the fever -- "heats" -- that lovers ascribe to their raging passions. But his emotional fevers have not approached the fatality of the Plague.

In the last three lines of the stanza (lines 16-18), the speaker contrasts the problems of his love with the greater problems of human conflict: wars and lawsuits.

> Soldiers finde warres, and Lawyers finde out still
> Litigious men, which quarrels move,
> Though she and I do love.

As if nature's power were not enough to vanquish humanity, soldiers and lawyers add to the turmoil with their propagation of conflict. His phrase at the end of the stanza, "Though she and I do love," asserts that amidst the chaos of natural and civil strife, he and his mistress have discovered an island of goodwill. Ostensively, this assertion indicates his courage of conviction: the speaker and his mistress dare to love in a world overrun with disasters, plagues, and hatred. As outward discourse, this courage proves his spiritual heroism, which Church officials look for in the life of a prospective saint (Clair, 301). The irony here is that the speaker's "courage to love" masks an inward cowardice to engage in the riskier worlds of commerce or conflict. Knowing inside his mind that there is little valor or courage in his obsessive eroticism, he expounds upon its lack of wide-spread destruction and wraps it words of courage.

In the third stanza, the speaker continues his outward celebration of his and his mistress's courage in love, not indirectly, through contrasting it with evil, but directly through a series of conceits comparing the couple to various winged creatures. Manipulating these conceits, beginning with the lowly "flye," increasing to the eagle and the dove, and culminating in the immortal phoenix, the speaker continues the Petrarchan motif begun in the second stanza. Again, using the hyperbole of the lover in distress, the speaker seems to join in the mockery of his own excessive passion. But he also manipulates the conceits of the winged creatures to portray the unseen value of the love affair, which he believes to exist behind its apparent triviality.

The speaker maintains his defiant stance before society's ridicule: "Call us what you will, wee'are made such by love." In lines 21 and 22, he imagines the insults that people might hurl at him: "Call her one, mee another flye,/We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die." He knows that the gossips at the court call him and his mistress "flye[s]," primarily because of the minute impact their love has on society. The word "flye" would also make fun of the couple's lechery. A. B. Chambers notes that by the sixteenth century, biologists had observed that flies could engage in intercourse until they died from exhaustion. Through biological treatises, the fly had become an emblem of a pathological sex-drive (254). Donne's speaker is well aware that his satyromania appears as deadly as the fly's, yet he is committed to sacrifice his life for his god eros. Using the image "tapers" and the colloquial "die," he further confesses his martyrdom. Developing the conceit of lovers as winged creatures, begun with "flye," the speaker's choice of "tapers" most immediately suggests the

taper-moth, so named because of its irresistible attraction to candle-flames. Taper-moths appear in Petrarchan verse to symbolize the destructive power of love: the moths invariably fly into the flame, which scorches them to death.

Comparing himself and his mistress to "th'Eagle and the Dove," the speaker refutes the court's perception that he is an insect. As images in his argument against court ridicule, the eagle and dove symbolize nobler fliers than insects. Metaphorically, they represent opposing qualities -- activity and passivity -- which complement each other in a love relationship. Ultimately, this image of the couple as a winged creature evolves into the phoenix, a figure of resurrection (line 23).

The phoenix burns and yet rises from its ashes. Perpetuating itself through asexual reproduction, it also represents an ideal wholeness from which mortal man and woman emerged. The phoenix, completing the progressive conceit comparing lovers to winged creatures refutes the popular notion that the lovers are merely addicted to temporal sex. Punctuating his self-portrait with a phoenix, the speaker implies that through love, the couple approximates a mythical, self-perpetuating existence (Guss, 27). While the couple's devotion to each other may hasten their physical death, they will arise from the ruins of their temporal life and reign eternally as divine intercessors in a church of the speaker's invention. Claiming love's power to overcome death, the speaker attempts to prove that he and his mistress can work miracles: the power to rise from the dead. According to Clair, miracle-working was the third facet of the prospective saint's life-under-examination (302).

In the fourth stanza, the speaker describes the legacy that he and

his mistress will leave behind after their death. Short verse instead of long historical chronicles, and a cremation urn instead of grand tombs and hearses will mark the simplicity of their life together. Only the rich and titled classes could afford burial estates and ornamentation. The speaker reminds his audience that, regardless of its burial place, all physical life must return to the ashes from which it was created. Since we all decompose, he implies, a simple urn is as valuable as a palatial tomb: "As well a well-wrought urne becomes / The greatest ashes as half-acre tombes" (lines 33-34). All power that people seek in the material world, which he has renounced, must ultimately crumble beneath the advance of death. The speaker has devoted his life to love so that he can be exalted above his ashes after he dies.

He and his mistress, having sought eternal virtues of love, will rise from their ashes as the phoenix perpetually rises. Their legacy will take the form of their "legend," which according to Gardner translates into a saint's life story (204). Their legend will not ramble on like a Chronicle; it will take the lyrical form of a sonnet or a hymn. These sonnets, a more personal form than the socially-directed, historical Chronicle, will convince surviving and future generations of the totality of the speaker's devotion. Describing both his burial place and the writings he will leave behind, the speaker anticipates the fourth level of examination by the Church. Seeing that the cremation urn and sonnets will symbolize the poverty he embraced for the sake of his mistress, these posthumous judges will "approve" his life as saintly (Clair, 300).

In the fifth stanza, the speaker, commanding his addressees to

invoke him, again overtakes the authority of Catholic elders. Catholic doctrine dictated that if the deceased candidate satisfied the council's investigation into his or her holiness, then the council must compose prayers to venerate the new saint (Clair, 301-302). The speaker composes his own prayer of intercession, which surviving and future generations must recite for guidance in their affairs:

> And thus invoke us; You whom reverend love
> Made one anothers hermitage;
> You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
> Who did the whole worlds soule extract, and drove
> Into the glasses of each others eyes,
> So made such mirrors and such spies,
> That they did all to you epitomize,
> Countries, Townes, Courts: Beg from above
> A patterne for your love!

The speaker predicts that love will disrupt the peace that mortals seek in their lives. They will remember the speaker and his mistress as lovers who found in each other the peace that a religious devotee finds in his or her hermitage. In his own affair, he has endured sighs, tears, sweats, and destitution. He has ordained himself an expert in suffering, and he expects collective humanity -- "Countries, Townes, Courts" -- always to suffer for love as well. He assumes that his listeners do not understand the havoc that love can wreak in life, even though they have watched love wreck his life. But thanks to his sacrificing material comforts in gaining the perfect affair, future generations will have a saint they can pray to when their affairs become rages.

How did the speaker achieve his state of perfect love? In lines 41 through 43, he uses alchemical figures -- "extract," "glasses," "mirrors" -- to describe the spiritual purification that people can

experience through love. In this conceit, love acts as an alchemist which extracts the quintessence of "the whole worlds soule" -- all that is pure. Love then pours this quintessence, in the form of a lover, into the "glasses of your eyes." Thus enchanted, lovers will face each other as "mirrors, and such spies," which both reflect and permit their viewing the epitome of "all." He believes that he has achieved this state of purity, and proclaims that people seeking this state will pray to invoke his pattern of absolute devotion.

Throughout the poem, the speaker anticipates his own canonization while he is still alive, thus flouting the canonization procedure. He not only assumes the power of Church officials, he does so in his own lifetime, as if to prove that he has a lock on sainthood. In spite of his pose as an ascetic martyr, the speaker in "The Canonization" veils a desire for the glorification of himself and his mistress. He eloquently observes that other men's pursuits of material success are futile when all of humanity is headed for the same inevitable death and decomposition, but he does not see death as a Great Equalizer. Under the concept of canonization, all do not die equally; some are exalted, and the speaker believes he and his mistress will be among the exalted: "And by these hymnes, all shall approve / Us Canoniz'd for Love" (lines 35-36). The speaker in "The Canonization" anticipates death as a means to achieve the prestige that has eluded him in the material world. his anticipating death to deal out justice recalls that of the speaker in "The Apparition," who anticipates death as a means to exact revenge on an unresponsive mistress.

Andreasen argues that Donne, detached from his speaker, satirizes two lovers who overindulge themselves (166). She also argues that

Donne lampoons people whose affections have led to human idolatry. Obsessive lovers, like all fanatics, expect others to share their delusion that an affair can satisfy all human needs -- material, social, and religious (160). Carey (42), Stampfer (154), Clay Hunt (88), and Susan Burchmore (201) agree that Donne satirizes a lover enslaved in his own passions. Unlike Andreasen, however, these critics argue that Donne casts himself as the speaker. He uses the poem to lament his own unemployment and disease, which he shouldered after his ill-advised elopment with Anne More in 1601. Donne's first two stanzas in "The Canonization" suggest that his forestalling the affair to maintain a court career would have been shallow and self-effacing. Using images of resurrection and immortality in stanzas three through five, he asserts that his devotion will elevate him above his renowned hardships. The power he gains in his amorous conquest will compensate for any he has relinquished in the material world.

In "The Canonization," the speaker's devotion to eros has led to a material downfall that all of court society has witnessed and judged. Having excessively pursued sexual gratification, he has backed himself into a corner of poverty and ridicule. He fights back. He trivializes the severity of the consequences of his misplaced values as well as the material gains he has forsaken. Finally, through mythological and religious conceits, he proves that the amorous life will pay everlasting spiritual dividends.

The speaker's pride in himself eclipses any veneration he may have for his beloved. As in "The Extasie," the speaker in "The Canonization" treats his mistress with benign indifference. He has thought enough of her to quit the material world in order to make love to her

all the time. However, he has done little to provide for her comfort in daily life. He has succeeded where the speaker in "The Apparition" failed: he has convinced a woman to be his lover. But he has paid so much attention to maintaining his possession, and enjoying her affection, that he has brought material hardship and social ridicule upon himself. He uses the power of rhetoric to refute the court's claim that he is powerless.

Conclusion

Tracing the paradoxes of "The Apparition," "The Extasie," and "The Canonization," we find that the speaker never abandons his hidden agenda of self-glorification in love.

The woman in "The Apparition" refuses to be the speaker's mistress. Since she has initiated his downfall by rejecting him, he hopes to die so that he can exact revenge from the grave. Her abandoning him devalues his life, and he feels that others will ostracize him for his failure in love. He uses the language of hatred to frighten the woman, hoping to regain her attention and its symbolic affirmation of his power as a seducer.

We see the speaker's perspective toward his mistress improve in "The Extasie." The woman not only returns his love, she also leads him to a higher spiritual existence. We might expect to hear praises sung to such an extraordinary woman. Instead, we hear the speaker beckoning others to notice the ability of his soul to leave his body, co-mingle with a woman's soul, and re-animate the bodies. Through his spiritual dynamics, he succeeds in seducing the woman. He directs admiration

toward his spiritual and seductive accomplishments and away from the woman.

In "The Canonization," the speaker has discovered that others have indeed looked on his love affair. But they see not a man living in a state of spiritual enlightenment; they see a man growing old in poverty, with no chances for commercial or social advancement. Undaunted, the speaker believes that these detractors and their descendants will sing hymns and recite prayers in his honor. In his own mind, he represents the ideal that all people seek. He has sacrificed any material power in the present for perpetual power in the afterlife.

In this selection of Donne's Songs and Sonets, the speakers use love affairs to promote their reputations as witty seducers. They use what Greenblatt calls "the subtile engagement of words in the struggle to dominate" (143): they use conceits and rhetoric either to persuade a woman to love them, or to bolster their reputations at court.

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