

John Donne (1572-1631)



*“the first poet of the world in **some things**.”*

—Ben Jonson

Metaphysical poetry(玄学诗)

- Metaphysical poetry is commonly used to name the work of the 17th century writers who wrote under the influence of John Donne. With a rebellious spirit, the metaphysical poets try to break away from the conventional fashion of the Elizabethan love poetry.
- They are characterized by mysticism in content and fantasticality in form.
- John Donne is the leading figure of the "metaphysical school."

Cavalier Poets (P147)

Another school of poetry prevailing in the 17th century was Cavalier Poetry. Cavalier poets are, more often than not, knights and squires, who side with the king against the parliament and the puritans in the English revolution. They mostly deal in short songs on the flitting joys of the day, but underneath their lightheartedness lies some foreboding of impending doom.

The representative cavalier poets include John Suckling, Richard Lovelace, Thomas Carew and Robert Herrick.

John Donne



- Born into a prosperous merchant's family. Roman Catholic family, but quitted his religious belief later. In 1615, he entered the Anglican Church (英国国教) and took orders. In 1621, he was appointed the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and kept the post to his death.
- Well-educated in both Cambridge and Oxford universities but took no degree at either university because he would not take the Oath of Supremacy required at graduation.
- Expeditions in France and Italy.
- Donne became the private secretary to Egerton, the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. He ruined his own prospect by secretly marrying the Lord Keeper's niece, Anne More.

A Letter to his father-in-law about their secret marriage

"Sir, I acknowledge my fault to be so great as I dare scarce offer any other prayer to you in mine own behalf than this, to believe that I neither had dishonest end nor means. But for her whom I tender much more than my fortunes or life (else I would, I might neither joy in this life nor enjoy the next) I humbly beg of you that she may not, to her danger, feel the terror of your sudden anger."

Final Reconciliation

- Sir George had Donne thrown in Fleet prison for some weeks. Donne was dismissed from his post, and for the next decade had to struggle near poverty to support his growing family. Donne later summed up the experience: "John Donne, Anne Donne, Undone." It was not until 1609 that a reconciliation was effected between Donne and his father-in-law, and Sir George More was finally induced to pay his daughter's dowry.

Artistic Features

- **Conceit (奇喻):** to construct a reasonable relation between two completely incompatible things. (love and flea, love and compasses etc.)
Metaphysical poetry uses conceits to express ideas.

e.g. He looks like a pig. (normal)


他胖得象头猪。

He looks like a gas container. (abnormal)

他一副标准的煤气罐身材。

- John Donne, the leading poet of the metaphysical school, frequently applies **conceits**, i.e. extended metaphors involving dramatic contrasts.





With him love is a spider which ,dropped into the wine
of life, turns it to poison; or it is a canon-ball; By him, as
by chain'd shot, whole ranks to die; or it is a devouring
fish: He is the tyrant pike, our hearts the fry.

Love and flea

It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be;
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;

Love and Compasses

- *If they be two, they are two so*
- *As stiff twin compasses are two;*
- *Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show*
- *To move, but doth, if th' other do.*
- *...*
- *Thy firmness makes my circle just,*
- *And makes me end where I begun.*



Interpreting "Song"

Song is from his "Songs and Sonnets". In "Songs and Sonnets", Donne often holds more negative attitudes towards love and woman. It is the same with "Song". (Donne was influenced by his mother and his wife's early death, aged 33, after giving the birth to their twelfth baby)

Lead-in Questions

- Please examine the poetic form, is it regular or irregular?
- What images are involved in this poem? Are they related to each other?
- Do you think that you can find a true and fair lady in your life?
- What is the speaker's attitude towards love and woman?
- What is the tone and theme?

SONG



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- Go and catch a falling star,
- Get with child a mandrake root,
- Tell me where all past years are,
- Or who cleft the devil's foot,
- Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
- Or to keep off envy's stinging,
- And find
- What wind
- Serves to advance an honest mind.


- If thou be'st born to strange sights,
- Things invisible to see,
- Ride ten thousand days and nights,
- Till age snow white hairs on thee,

Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me,
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And swear
No where
Lives a woman true, and fair.

If thou find'st one, let me know,
Such a pilgrimage were sweet;
Yet do not, I would not go,
Though at next door we might meet;
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three.


Detailed Analysis

- Form: It is written in iambic tetrameter (except the 7th and 8th lines) irregularity among the regularity. **ababccddd**
ababbbccc ababccddd(P 143)
- Imagery: a falling star, a mandrake root (曼德拉草根), the devil's foot, mermaids singing
- The above images, from different perspectives, all have something to do with extreme impossibilities.

- 
- **Stars** are often symbolic of **Angels and heaven**, so a falling star is a thing of great destruction, symbolizing the duplicity of women. It is of no possibility to catch a falling star.
 - **"mandrake"** in superstition is said to scream when it is pulled from the ground, according to whether the roots are twofold or threefold, representing female form or male form. While a female form can help to be pregnant. However, when it does, it is always male rather than female, meaning it is impossible to be pregnant.

- The following juxtaposed image is the **devil's foot**. It is said to be cleft, which may be traced to Pan, the God of Shepherds. He has the hindquarters, legs, and horns of a goat. But still it's of no possibility to cleave the devil's foot.
- envies' stinging was supposed to be impossible to avoid, which accompanies one's whole life. Envy exists like a scorpion, and once a scorpion has you in its vice, as envy does, it is impossible to escape.

- **Mermaids** (女妖塞壬 siren), are mythological Greek creatures who with their singing lured sailors to their death. The image of mermaid appears to be women above the waist but is not beneath, and this could suggest that women are deceptive creatures. The utter frustration is that mermaids are not for visual beauty but leading to one's death. It was said that as soon as the singing of a siren was heard, the listener was bound to fall dead. The only one who can escape this fate was Odysseus. Mermaid is a symbol of deception and destruction as well.

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- Tone: **ironic** and **satiric**
 - Theme: Inconstancy is woman's nature;
true love is unattainable

歌

- 去吧，跑去抓一颗流星，
- 去叫何首乌肚子里也有喜，
- 告诉我哪儿追流年的踪影，
- 是谁开豁了魔鬼的双蹄，
- 教我听得见美人鱼唱歌，
- 压得住酷海，不叫它兴波，
- 寻寻看
- 哪一番
- 好风会顺水把真心推向前。

- 如果你生来有异察，看得见
- 人家不能看见的花样，
- 你就骑马一万夜一万天，
- 直跑到满头顶盖雪披霜，

你回来会滔滔不绝地讲述
你所遭遇的奇怪事物，
到最后
都赌咒
说美人而忠心，世界上可没有。
你万一找到了，通知我一句
向这位千里进香也心甘；
可是算了吧，我决不会去，
哪怕到隔壁就可以见面；
尽管你见她当时还可靠，
到你写信了还可以担保，
她不等
我到门
准已经对不起两三个男人。

（卞之琳译）

《歌》赏析

- 多恩的爱情诗分三类。一类歌颂爱情的专一，一类以调侃的口吻劝人及时行乐，一类讽刺女性水性扬花。《歌》这首诗属于第三类，诗人感叹世界之大，却找不到一个既美且信的女子。开首第一诗节诗人连举七种不可能的事物（抓住飞逝的流星、让曼德拉草根怀孕、追踪逝去的岁月、劈开魔鬼的蹄子、听海妖的歌唱而不死、教人不知嫉妒为何物、让风言风语不再伤人）作为铺垫；第二节讲述一个天赋异禀的人为爱跋涉万里，却发誓找不到一个既美貌又忠诚的女人；第三节诗人继续表达第二节反映的思想，把拜会一位坚贞美女的过程比作朝圣，有明显的调侃意味，诗的最后说“我”满以为遇到了一位坚贞的美女，可正在给她写信，想要成为她的情人，她却已经骗了另外两三个像“我”这样的人。诗的主张虽嫌偏颇，但全诗想象瑰丽，气势辉宏，而且节奏轻快活泼，曾谱了曲，可供吟唱，所以广为传颂。

Appreciating "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"

Background: In 1611, John Donne wrote "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" to his wife, Anne More, weak and pregnant when he was about to set off France conducting government business. Donne intended to prevent his wife from the sadness of their departure. Valediction is derived from a Latin word, meaning to say farewell. The title says, in essence, "When we part, we must not mourn."

Rhyme Scheme and Meter

Compared to many of Donne's poems, the nine stanzas of this Valediction are quite simple. Here, each four-line stanza is quite unadorned, with an ABAB rhyme scheme and an iambic tetrameter. The meter is iambic tetrameter with eight syllables (four feet) per line. Each foot, or pair of syllables, consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

So **let** /us **melt**/, and **makes**/ no **noise**,
No **tear**/-floods, **nor**/ sigh **tem**/pests **move**,

A Valediction: forbidding Mourning

- As virtuous men pass mildly away,
- And whisper to their souls to go,
- Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
■ "The breath goes now, " and some say, "No, "
- So let us melt, and make no noise,
- No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
- 'Twere profanation of our joys
■ To tell the laity our love.



Textual Analysis

Stanza 1 and 2 (Find out the simile)

Tenor (本体): their separation

Vehicle (喻体): virtuous men pass away mildly (death), a man's soul from his body

"Parting" to "death" is a common comparison in literary works. Here, "Virtuous" refers to not in moralities, but those people who can meet their death without complaints, saying it is time for their souls to move on to eternity.

- **profanation** -- the act of showing contempt for God or holy things. "debasing or cheapening (of religious)
- **laity** -- common people (of religious) church members who are not ordained clergymen; laymen
- **Hyperbole**: tear-floods, sigh tempests
- "melt" means the physical bond that unites us. we must not cry storms of tears, and move tempests of sigh. To declare our love publicly will debase and cheapen our love, which is love of the ordinary people. This shows the speaker's emotional aristocrats.

Stanza 3,4,5

- Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears;
 - Men reckon what it did, and meant;
 - But trepidation of the spheres,
 - Though greater far, is innocent.
-
- Dull sublunary lovers' love
 - —Whose soul is sense—cannot admit
 - Of absence, 'cause it doth remove
 - The thing which elemented it.
-
- But we by a love so much refined,
 - That ourselves know not what it is,
 - Inter-assurèd of the mind,
 - Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss.

Stanza 3, 4 and 5

- **trepidation - movement**
- **sublunary love—below the moon, worldly love**


The field of astronomy (天文学): earthquake and the movements of the sun and other

Moving of the earth: earthquake, harmful and causing fear

Trepidation of the spheres: heavenly bodies, natural and harmless, actually with more greater motions and unknown.

Question: Which one bears resemblance with the speaker's love?

(like the heavenly bodies; our movements-our temporary separations- should cause no excitement.)

- 
- Moving of the earth → the dull sublunary love → sensual and physical bond
 - Trepidation of the spheres → the speaker's love → spiritual attachment
 - By contrast, our love is so refined, so **otherworldly**, that it can still survive without the closeness of eyes, lips, and hands.

Stanza 6,7,8,9

- Our two souls therefore, which are one,
 - Though I must go, endure not yet
 - A breach, but an expansion,
 - Like gold to aery thinness beat.
-
- If they be two, they are two so
 - As stiff twin compasses are two;
 - Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
 - To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just
And makes me end where I begun.

Stanza 6, 7, 8 and 9 (two similes)

Our souls are one, like a gold beaten to airy thinness. (alchemy)

A gold -- when it is beaten with a hammer, widens and lengthens; when we depart, the spiritual bond that unites us actually expands rather than causes a break and rift.

- **Our souls are two**, like the feet of twin compasses. (geometry)
- The wife's soul the fixed foot
- The husband's soul the outer foot

- The fixed foot (wife's soul) makes no show to move, but does if the outer foot (husband's soul) moves. When the outer foot(husband's soul) travels far, the fixed foot(wife's soul) should follow it and grows straight until the outer foot (husband's soul) comes back. **Wife's attachment to husband**
- Your position there helps me complete my circle so that I end up where I began. The image of a circle (perfection) **Husband's attachment to wife**

The main thread of this poem develops

- farewell as mild as the uncomplaining deaths of virtuous men → to weep would be "profanation of our joys." → harmful
"Moving of the earth" to innocent "trepidation of the spheres," → dull
sublunary lovers "love" and their love
"Inter-assured of the mind" → the unity of two souls expands rather than breaks → the feet of twin compasses

A Comparison between the Common Love of the Everyday World and the Uncommon Love of the Speaker

the common love of the everyday world	the uncommon love of the speaker
	like virtuous men pass away
many complaints	
	as the trepidation of the spheres
no absence of the body	
	more of spiritual love

别离辞：节哀

- 正如德高人逝世很安然，
对灵魂轻轻的说一声走，
悲伤的朋友们聚在旁边，
有的说断气了，有的说没有。
- 让我们化了，一声也不作，
泪浪也不翻，叹风也不兴；
那是亵渎我们的欢乐——
要是你对俗人讲我们的爱情。
- 地动会带来灾害和惊恐，
人们估计它干什么，要怎样
可是那些天体的震动，
虽然大得多，什么也不伤。
- 世俗的男女彼此的相好，
（他们的灵魂是官能）就最忌
别离，因为那就会取消
组成爱恋的那一套东西。
- 我们被爱情提炼得纯净，
自己都不知道存什么念头
互相在心灵上得到了保证，
再不愁碰不到眼睛、嘴和手。

两个灵魂打成了一片，
虽说我得走，却并不变成
破裂，而只是向外伸延，
像金子打到薄薄的一层。

就还算两个吧，两个却这样
和一副两脚规情况相同；
你的灵魂是定脚。并不像
移动。另一脚一移，它也动。

虽然它一直是坐在中心，
可是另一个去天涯海角，
它就侧了身。倾听八垠；
那一个一回家，它马上挺腰。

你对我就会这样子，我一生
像另外那一脚，得侧身打转；
你坚定，我的圆圈才会准，
我才会终结在开始的地点。

离别辞：节哀

- 如德高之人安然归天，
- 悄悄对灵魂说一声走，
- 伤心的朋友们守在身边，
- 有的说已断气，有的说还没有。

- 让我们也融化，一声沉默，
- 别掀起泪浪，或悲叹的风暴，
- 那将会亵渎我们的欢乐，
- 若将这爱情对俗人相告。

- 当地震带来灾难和恐惧，
- 人们就忙于预测和计算。
- 而当天体发出了的颤栗，
- 虽然大行多，却处之泰然。

世俗男女们卿卿我我，
（官能是其实质）难忍分离，
因为别离对他们意味着，
将失去构成爱情的东西。

而我们已在爱中升华，
连自己也对它捉摸不透，
我们心心相印，不怕，
暂不见眼睛、嘴唇和双手。

两颗心灵已合而为一，
虽说我走了，却没有破裂，
而是延伸，就像把金子
打成一片薄薄的金页。

- 若仍是两个，就应该如同
- 一付圆规也有两只脚，
- 你的心是定脚，似乎不移动，
- 另一个一动，它才向外倒。
- 虽然它自己坐镇在中心，
- 但当另一个在远处奔波，
- 它也侧身向它倾听，
- 等它回到家，才重新端坐。
- 你对我就是这样，我难免
- 像那圆周脚，四处奔忙，
- 你坚定，我才能画得圆，
- 才能结束在我开始的地方。
-



（顾子欣 译）




Theme

Real, complete love unites not only the bodies of a husband and wife but also their souls. Such spiritual love is transcendent, metaphysical, keeping the lovers together intellectually and spiritually even though the circumstances of everyday life may separate their bodies.

《离别辞：节哀》

- 根据艾莎克·沃尔登所写的传记，这首诗作于1611年，是送给临产妻子的离别诗。当时多恩正准备随Robert Drury出使欧洲大陆，后他的妻子产下一个死胎。据称多恩临别之时已有不祥预感，所以这首诗语气严肃，感情深沉，一改多恩平时艳情诗的浮浪口吻。开篇诗人就将生离与死别联系在一起，用德高望重人士轻松对待死亡的态度喻指真心相爱的恋人也应该不惧短暂的别离，因为距离对于他们来说只会将爱情延伸，心心相映的人们会像圆规的两脚可远可近，但永结同心。该诗关于爱情如黄金和圆规的比喻非常出名。



Homework: Compare Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" with Liu Yong's "Yu Lin Ling" and others to find out the difference.

寒蝉凄切。对长亭晚，骤雨初歇。都门帐饮无绪，留恋处、兰舟催发。执手相看泪眼，竟无语凝噎。念去去、千里烟波，暮霭沉沉楚天阔。

多情自古伤离别，更那堪冷落清秋节！今宵酒醒何处？杨柳岸、晓风残月。此去经年，应是良辰好景虚设。便纵有千种风情，更与何人说？

杜甫《新婚别》

- 兔丝附蓬麻，引蔓故不长。嫁女与征夫，不如弃路旁。
- 结发为妻子，席不暖君床。暮婚晨告别，无乃太匆忙。
- 君行虽不远，守边赴河阳。妾身未分明，何以拜姑嫜。
- 父母养我时，日夜令我藏。生女有所归，鸡狗亦得将。
- 君今往死地，沈痛迫中肠。誓欲随君去，形势反苍黄。
- 勿为新婚念，努力事戎行。妇人在军中，兵气恐不扬。
- 自嗟贫家女，久致罗襦裳。罗襦不复施，对君洗红妆。
- 仰视百鸟飞，大小必双翔。人事多错迕，与君永相望。

《新婚别》是唐代诗人杜甫所写的新题乐府组诗“三别”之一，作于759年（唐肃宗乾元二年）。诗中描写了一对新婚夫妻的离别，塑造了一个深明大义的少年形象。丈夫头一天结婚，第二天就要去九死一生的战场，新娘虽然悲痛得心如刀割，但她同样认识到，丈夫的生死、爱情的存亡，与国家民族的命运，是不可分割地连结在一起的，要实现不幸福的爱情理想，必须作出牺牲。于是，她强忍悲痛鼓励丈夫参军，同时坚定地表达至死不渝的爱情誓言。



比较分析《别离辞·节哀》和《新婚别》

- 1. 要求：小组讨论《别离辞·节哀》和《新婚别》的异同，代表陈述，其它同学提意见，老师点评
- 2. 目标：比较中西离别诗的异同。
- 3. 思政启发：引导学生自觉传承和弘扬中华优秀传统文化，全面提高学生的审美和人文素养，增强文化自信。

再别康桥

- 轻轻的我走了 正如我轻轻的来 我轻轻的招手 作别西天的云彩 那河畔的金柳 是夕阳中的新娘 波光里的滟影 在我心头荡漾 软泥上的青荇 油油的在水底招摇 在康河的柔波里 我甘心做一条水草 那榆荫下的一潭 不是清泉是天上的虹 揉碎在浮藻间 沉淀彩虹似的梦 寻梦撑一支长篙 向青草更青处漫溯 满载一船星辉 在星辉斑斓里放歌 但我不能放歌 悄悄是别离的笙箫 夏虫也为我沉默 沉默是今晚的康桥 悄悄的我走了 正如我悄悄的来 我挥一挥衣袖 不带走一片云彩

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Recommendations

- <http://www.longman.awl.com/kennedy/donne/biography.html>
- 提供邓恩的生平简介，并配有评论。
- <http://www2.wku.edu/~bsnrxrkm/gtsmrd.html>
- 提供邓恩的生平和思想介绍，对邓恩主要诗歌作品的解读评论以及相关链接。
- <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/milton>
- 提供弥尔顿的生平简介，作品原文以及对弥尔顿作品的评论。