

The Canonization

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Author : **John Donne**

Born: 1572, in London

His mother was a direct descendant of Sir Thomas More's sister and the youngest daughter of John Heywood

He sailed with Sir Walter Raleigh and Essex in the near-disastrous Islands expedition, hunting for Spanish treasure ships in the Azores.

Donne became secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, lord keeper of the great seal.

Donne's contemporary, Richard Baker, wrote of him at this time as "not dissolute [i.e., careless], but very neat; a great visitor of Ladies, a great frequenter of Plays, a great writer of conceited Verses."

Donne met and fell in love with Anne More, niece of Egerton's second wife and the daughter of Sir George More and the two married secretly in December 1601. So **he was imprisoned in fleet prison**. The obvious controversy of this marriage is evident in "The Canonization."

Donne's letters show his love and concern for his wife during these years: "Because I have transplanted [her] into a wretched fortune, I must labour to disguise that from her by all such honest devices, as giving her my company, and discourse."

About himself Donne recorded only despair: "To be part of no body is as nothing; and so I am. ... I am rather a sickness or a disease of the world than any part of it and therefore neither love it nor life."

None of Donne's [poetry](#) was published during his lifetime. **H.J.C. Grierson edited and published the *Poems of John Donne* 2 volumes.**

His poems rely heavily on the use of the **conceit**—i.e., an extended metaphor that draws an ingenious parallel between apparently dissimilar situations or objects.

Donne transformed the conceit into a vehicle for transmitting multiple, sometimes even contradictory, feelings and ideas.

He **drew his imagery from the fields as alchemy, astronomy, medicine, politics, global exploration, and philosophical disputation.**

The presence of a listener is another of Donne's modifications of **the Renaissance love lyric**, in which the lovers lament, hope, and dissect their feelings without facing their ladies.

Donne speaks directly to the lady or some other listener.

These features of his poetry provided an impetus for the works of **Robert Browning, W.B Yeats, and T.S. Eliot.**

Donne's love lyrics denounce **love as a fiction and women as objects—food, birds of prey, mummies**—to platonic lovers who celebrate both the magnificence of their ladies and their own miraculous abstention from consummating their love.

Alexander Pope, admired **Donne's intellectual virtuosity and used some of Donne's lines** in his own poetry.

Robert Browning credited Donne with providing the germ for his own dramatic monologues.

Donne is often considered the greatest love poet in the English language. He is also noted for his **religious verse and treatises and for his sermons.**

Poetry by John Donne

Works

Poems

1. **Of the Progress of the Soul -1601:** Donne expressed his dissatisfaction with the world around him. The couplet form of this book adopted by Dryden and then by Pope.
2. **Songs and Sonnets -1633:** This collection of love poems published posthumously. It is in the form of address. His best known poems '**Aire and Angels**', '**A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning**', '**The Extasie**' and '**A Valediction: Of Weeping**' are published in Songs and Sonnets -1633.

Donne's first elegy is **for sir Robert Drury's daughter**

Poetry by John Donne

1. As Due By Many Titles
2. Batter my heart, three-person'd God
3. The Canonization
4. Death Be Not Proud
5. The Dream
6. Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed
7. The Flea
8. The Good-Morrow
9. Holy Sonnets
10. The Holy Sonnets of John Donne

11. A Hymn to God the Father
12. The Sun Rising
13. A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

Prose works by John Donne

1. Biathanatos
2. Ignatius His Conclave
3. The Pseudi-Martyr -1610
4. Ignatius His Conclave -1611: This work was a satire upon Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits.
5. Devotions -1614: Donne exposed his spiritual struggles during a serious illness. Sermons: It contained about 160. The Death's Duell was the finest sermons.

T.S. Eliot writes "**A thought to him was an experience**"

About the work

Published in the collection "songs and sonnets" in 1633

About: Personal experience

Theme: Passionate love

It functions as **the canonization of pair of lovers**

Idea: Conceit

Metre used: **iambic trimeter to Pentameter**

His poem is **in the form of address between friends about the complexities of romantic love.**

Form and structure: The poem consists of **5 stanzas, each of 9 lines, with a Rhyme scheme of 'ABBACCAA.'**

The poem is viewed as exemplifying **Donne's wit and irony.**

The poem **features images typical of the Petrarchan sonnet**

A major **conceit in the poem is love.**

The poem's title gives two meanings.

1. The speaker argues that **his love will canonise him into a kind of sainthood** and
2. The poem **itself functions as a canonisation of the pair of lovers.**

The word 'Canonization' means the act or **process of changing an ordinary religious person into a saint in Catholic Christian religion.** This title suggests

that the poet and his beloved **will become 'saints of love' in the future**: and they will be regarded as saints of true love in the whole world in the future.

Symbolism and Meaning in “The Canonization”

The opening line also establishes the dialectic of God - the conventions of religion and social decorousness in contrast to love -more specifically a love affair, with some sexual aspect. The tension between these two powers is discussed throughout the poem. This line is followed by a listing of reasons against the overt love of the persona. These are almost given in **the manner of an inverted blazon**, with the listing of **physical defects of the persona**, “...palsie...gout...gray haire...”.

Poem

The Canonization

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,

Or chide my palsy, or my gout,

My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,

With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,

Take you a course, get you a place,

Observe his honor, or his grace,

Or the king's real, or his stampèd face

Contemplate; what you will, approve,

So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who's injured by my love?

What merchant's ships have my sighs drowned?

Who says my tears have overflowed his ground?

When did my colds a forward spring remove?

When did the heats which my veins fill

Add one more to the plaguy bill?

Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still

Litigious men, which quarrels move,

Though she and I do love.

Call us what you will, we are made such by love;

Call her one, me another fly,

We're tapers too, and at our own cost die,

And we in us find the eagle and the dove.

The phoenix riddle hath more wit

By us; we two being one, are it.

So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit.

**We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.**

We can die by it, if not live by love,

And if unfit for tombs and hearse

Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;

And if no piece of chronicle we prove,

We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;

As well a well-wrought urn becomes

The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,

And by these hymns, all shall approve

Us canonized for Love.

And thus invoke us: "You, whom **reverend love**

Made one another's hermitage;

You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;

Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove

Into the glasses of your eyes

(So made such mirrors, and such spies,

That they did all to you epitomize)

Countries, towns, courts: beg from above

A pattern of your love!"

Donne **demonstrates the purity and power of his love for another. Each stanza begins and ends with the word "love."** It unifies the poem around a **central theme, love.**

The title of the Poem leads the reader to expect a poem concerned with saints and holy practices, but the very first lines sound more like a line delivered on stage. **“For God’s sake hold your tongue”**. It sounds more like a lion delivered on stage is nearly blasphemous when following the sacred title. At the end of the poem it is clear that **“canonization”** refers to the way that **the poet’s love will enter the canon of true love, becoming the pattern by which others judge their own love**. This hyperbole leads the reader to find a spiritual or metaphysical meaning in the poem, and also lead us to see that Donne sets out the **perfection of divine love as the only realistic model for all others**.

Donne asks, no more important work to do than criticize others’ love? He could just easily attack **Donne’s “gout” or “palsy” or even his “five gray hairs”**, but he should **get a job or go to school or enter a profession, but leaves the poet alone**. The king’s **“stamped face”** most likely refers to coinage with the **king’s likeness**. The things of the world can be left to the critic and the world, so long as the critic **“will let me love**.

He asks, **“Who’s injured by my love? The lovers are not making war, fighting lawsuits, interfering with commerce or spreading disease**. They **respect other’s property; his tears do not trespass**. They take their own chances together in their **fleeting lives**; They are **tiny flies or candles that will burn together in peace**. They may **destroy themselves in the act of burning with passion for one another**.

First he compares himself and his beloved to the eagle and dove, a reference to **the Renaissance idea** in which **the eagle flies in the sky above the earth while the dove transcends the skies to reach heaven**.

Then he **shifts to the image of the Phoenix, a death-by-fire symbol, is a bird that repeatedly burns in fire and comes back to life out of the ashes, suggesting that even though their flames of passion will consume them, the poet and his beloved will be reborn from the ashes of their love**.

Their **relationship has become a paradox**. The key paradox of love is that **two individuals become one**. They **“prove Mysterious by this love”**. The new union is unsexed even though it incorporates both sexes: **“to one neutral thing both sexes fit,”** Their love will endure in legend; the language of **“verse”** and **“chronicle”** suggests canonization at nearly the level of Scripture, which is counted by verses and has books called Chronicles. Even if their love is not

quite at that level, **songs will be sung and sonnets composed commemorating their romance.**

On the one hand, **their love is self-contained and perfect. The ashes in this urn are meant to spread, in this case covering half an acre but symbolic of spreading the tale of perfect love throughout the world.**

The poet expects **that the rest of the world will “invoke” himself and his beloved, similar to the way Catholics invoke saints in their prayers.** In this vision of the future, the lovers' legend has grown, and **they have reached a kind of sainthood.** They are **role models for the entire world, because “Countries, towns, courts beg from above/A pattern of your love”.** From the lovers' perspective, the whole world is present as they look into each other's eyes; this sets the pattern of love that the world can follow.

Poetry is **a unique way of expressing one's feelings.**

Though the story is that of Donne's true feelings, he uses several poetic devices and techniques throughout the poem.

New Critic Cleanth Brooks used the poem, along with Alexander Pope's "An Essay on Man" and William Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802", to illustrate his argument for paradox as central to poetry.

The poem features images typical of the [Petrarchan sonnet](#). The critic **Clay Hunt's says, the entire poem gives "a new twist to one of the most worn conventions of Elizabethan love poetry"** by expanding "the lover–saint conceit to full and precise definition", a comparison that is "seriously meant". In the third stanza, the speaker likens himself and **his lover to candles, an eagle and dove, a phoenix, saints, and the dead.** A reference to the Renaissance idea in which the eagle flies in the sky above the earth while the dove transcends the skies to reach heaven. Cleanth Brooks argues that the phoenix, which means rebirth, is a particularly apt analogy. It combines the imagery of birds and of burning candles, and adequately expresses the power of love to preserve, though passion consumes.

Brooks writes in his essay *The Well Wrought Urn* that a poet "must work by contradiction and qualification," and that paradox "is an extension of the normal language of poetry, not a perversion of it".

"The Canonization" serves as a monument, a "well-wrought urn" to the lovers, just as the speaker describes his canonisation through love: the lovers' "legend will gain them canonization".

Renaissance idea is that the eagle flies in the sky above the earth while the dove transcends the skies to reach heaven.

He used metaphors to explain the intensity and uniqueness of his love.

He says that he and his lover are like moths drawn to a candle then that they are like the candle itself.

They embody the elements of the eagle -strong and masculine and the dove - peaceful and feminine bound up in the image of the phoenix, dying and rising by love. He explores his and his lover's roles as the saints of love, to whom generations of future lovers will appeal for help.

Donne demonstrates the purity and power of his love for another. Each stanza begins and ends with the word "love."

The key paradox of love is that two individuals become one. By uniting in this way, they "prove/Mysterious by this love".

Clay Hunt views, the entire poem gives "a new twist to one of the most worn conventions of Elizabethan love poetry" by expanding "the lover–saint conceit to full and precise definition.

In the third stanza, the speaker likens himself and his lover to candles, an eagle and dove, a phoenix, saints, and the dead.

All of the imagery employed strengthens the speaker's claim that love unites him and his lover, as well as giving the lovers a kind of immortality.

The conceit involving saints and the pair of lovers serves to emphasise the spirituality of the lovers' relationship.

Symbolism and Meaning

- The opening line also establishes the dialectic of God in contrast to love.
- The first stanza deals with the reaction of society to the persona's love.
- The second stanza presents the case of the persona's argument
- The third stanza focuses on the essence of the love itself.
- The fourth stanza begins with the proposition that love is intrinsic to life. We can dye by it, if not live by love.
- He gives a listing of reasons against the overt love of the persona. These are almost given in the manner of an inverted blazon, with the listing of physical

defects of the persona like "...palsie...gout...gray haire...".

Love is established as an alternative religion to Orthodox understandings of Christianity.

- The remembrance is alluded to as a creation of Heaven, as "...pretty roomes..." may refer to Christ's 'many rooms in my father's house'.
- The fifth stanza relies heavily on the Neoplatonic understanding that quintessence of the world can be found wholly within the two lovers. They are "...one anothers hermitage..."

Blazon is a literary **blazon** catalogues **the physical attributes of a subject, usually female**. The device was made popular **by Petrarch** and used extensively by **Elizabethan poets**.

Opening lines	
<p>For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love, Or chide my palsy, or my gout, My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,</p>	
Closing lines	
<p>Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove Into the glasses of your eyes (So made such mirrors, and such spies, That they did all to you epitomize) Countries, towns, courts: beg from above A pattern of your love!"</p>	
Important lines	
<p>"For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love." The Phoenix riddle hath more wit By us, we two being one, are it. So to one neutral thing both sexes fit, We die and rise the same, and prove Mysterious by this love. As well a well-wrought urn becomes The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs."</p>	
Literary Devices	
Literary devices	Examples

<p>Rhyming scheme</p>	<p>The lines rhyme in the pattern of abbaccdd, he uses iambic pentameter. This means that the lines are divided into five sets of two lines. The first of these is unstressed and the second stressed.</p>
<p>Metre used</p>	<p>iambic foot pentameter, ten syllables per line in the first, third, fourth, and seventh lines trimester, six syllables in the last line of each stanza. The remaining lines are in tetrameter, eight syllable closing off the first and ninth lines with the word “love,”</p>
<p>Alliteration: Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line</p>	<p>“fortune flout.”</p>
<p>Assonance: Assonance is a repetition of the vowel sounds in the same line</p>	<p>“gout” and “flout.”</p>
<p>Blazon: A literary blazon catalogues the physical attributes of a subject, usually female. The device was made popular by Petrarch and used extensively by Elizabethan poets.</p>	<p>the listing of physical defects of the persona, “...palsie...gout...gray haire...”.</p>
<p>Metaphor- A metaphor makes a comparison between two unlike things. A metaphor creates implicit comparisons without the express use of “like” or “as.”</p>	<p>‘a metaphor comparing himself and his lover to a phoenix. “death” can refer to a climax in a sexual relationship. funeral urn is as suitable for famous personages as “half-acre tombs” like the pyramids.</p>

<p><i>The Canonization</i>' is the use of an extended metaphor, known as conceit.</p>	
<p>Imagery- images</p>	<p>The moth drawn to a deadly candle eagle representing physical power, often that of the male the dove, representing peace or spirituality. The phoenix</p>
<p>Paradox: a statement that may seem contradictory but can be true, or at least makes sense.</p>	<p>the lover's "colds" -chills and "heats" fevers</p>
<p>Fantasy</p>	<p>heaven, they are able to look down on earth. They hear prayers for and from everyone.</p>
<p>Antithesis- person or thing that is the direct opposite of someone or something else.</p>	<p>"my palsy" is balanced with "my gout"</p>

SELF TEST QUESTIONS

Donne: Canonization

1. Can it be said that Dr. Johnson's attitude in "The Lives of the English Poets" is judicial in evaluating the poets
A) No B) Yes C) Cannot be ascertained D) Prejudice
2. The Age of Sensibility is a description of
A) the early Nineteenth Century B) The Victorian age
C) The Late Eighteenth Century D) The 1890's
3. The circulating libraries were popular during
A) the Eighteenth Century B) the Seventeenth Century
C) the Nineteenth Century D) the Sixteenth century
4. Who first used the term 'metaphysical'?
A) Johnson B) Dryden C) Addison D) None of them
5. The main subject of Donne's poetry is
A) Patriotism B) Pastoral Life
C) Allegory D) Passionate love and Mediation
6. About which school of poets did Johnson make the following remark? "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together".
A) The Elizabethans B) The Classicists C) The Romantics
D) The metaphysicals
7. Canonization is
A) a love poem B) A poem on divine mind
C) fear of death D) a poem on hero worship
8. "Conceit" is associated with
A) Romantic school B) Epic poem
C) Metaphysical school D) Classical poetry.
9. Find the writer who employed the term "Metaphysical Poetry"
A) T.S. Eliot B) Lionel Trilling
C) Dr. Johnson D) Dryden
10. Who are canonized in Donne's "Canonization" ?
A) Lovers B) Martyrs
C) Ascetics D) Poets

