

**"Contraryes Meete In One":
A Psychobiography of John Donne**

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John Donne and his poetry have long been a tremendous source of interest for readers and scholars alike. Once more, with the development of psychoanalytic theory and its application to works of art and literature, John Donne's life and poetry have become, not surprisingly, a subject for analysis. One reason for psychoanalytic critics to be concerned with Donne is the complex nature of his poems, reflecting a struggle between dichotomous emotions influenced by the forces of sex and death.

One example of Donne's poetry that displays this complex quality and illustrates the potential inherent in a psychoanalytic reading is Holy Sonnet XVII:

Since she whome I lov'd, hath payd her last debt
 To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead
 And her Soule early into heaven ravished,
 Wholy in heavenly things my mind in sett.
 Here the admyring her my mind did whett
 To seeke thee God; so streames do shew the head,
 But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
 A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yett.
 But why should I begg more Love, when as thou
 Dost woe my soul, for hers offring all thine:
 And dost not only feare least I allow
 My Love to Saints and Angels, things divine,
 But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
 Least the World, fleshe, yea Devill put thee out.

(Shawcross 349) A thorough analysis of this poem reveals the major themes that pervade both Donne's early, more secular works, the *Songs and Sonnets*, as well as his later, more religious creations, the *Holy Sonnets*.

In the first two lines of this poem, Donne tells the reader a great deal about his life. His wife, Ann More, has recently died, "pay[ing] her last debt to Nature." Nature is personified by Donne as a usurer that collected its due from this woman, the woman "whome [Donne] lov'd." The effect of Nature's work is not only the death of his wife, but also Donne's "good is dead." She who for Donne was all "good," ideal and just, was extinguished by Nature, a force condemned as deadly and corrupt by Donne.

The image created by Donne's poetry of Ann's soul being "early into heaven ravished" embodies many issues pertinent in considering Donne's psychological condition. The word "early" clearly expresses Donne's belief that his wife's death was premature and unexpected. The assertion that her soul is thus prematurely stolen "into heaven" implies an unfair and uncaring heaven, unconcerned with the feelings of human beings. Moreover, the way in which Donne describes heaven's act as that of "ravish[ing]" appears to equate heaven to a rival suitor. However, this suitor is no gentleman but forces its will upon both Ann and John, adulterating both of their lives. In other words, for Donne, it appears that heaven behaves as a murdering rapist.

Strangely, Donne proclaims that his mind is now focused "wholy in heavenly things," a claim that he later contradicts when he admits to allowing his love to "Saints and Angels, things divine" as well as "World, fleshe, yea Devill." This desire to "seeke thee God" is kindled from "the admyring [of Ann's] mind." "So streames do shew the head": Ann is an earthly replica of God and is, therefore, god to Donne. This choice of imagery is meant to justify Ann's idealization in Donne's mind. Ironically, though, Donne devotes himself totally to the very perpetrator of his wife's death, heaven, perhaps because he feels guilt and condemnation for provoking God

to such an extreme measure of getting Donne's attention by taking the life of his wife.

However, unlike Ann, heaven and its God "ravished" Donne's life and murdered his "good." Donne cannot feel secure in a God that took away his happiness and this insecurity comes to the surface of the poem when Donne writes, "But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,/ A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yett." Donne oscillates between stating that God "hast fed" his thirst, a clearly oral image that compares God to a care-giver such as a father or a mother, and explaining that a "holy thirsty dropsy" continues to plague him. What God offers Donne is sufficient for a short while but soon Donne finds himself in need again. Donne feels he must "begg more Love" of God because his need is too great and his confidence in God's willingness, possibly even God's ability, to provide is in doubt.

Once again Donne introduces the image of the suitor to describe the actions of heaven. God attempts to "woe" Donne's soul, like a lover woos his lady's affections. In exchange for taking the love and life of Donne's wife, God is "offring all [His]." God demands all of Donne's love in return, though. Donne makes the accusation that God "feares" he will give his love not only to "Saint and Angels, things divine," but also to "the World, fleshe, yea Devill" instead of God himself.

Yet, even though God, the "jealos" and omnipotent suitor, has the power to destroy Donne's "good" while Donne stands impotent, Donne retains control of whom he "allow[s]" his love. Donne is able to "putt [God] out" if he chooses, ultimately possessing the omnipotence. Even if Donne "allow[s]" his love to God, there is nothing of value left in Donne for God to have now that his "good is dead." God, corrupted by His "jealousy" and

"doubt" into "ravish[ing]" Ann's life prematurely, vainly seeks to gain Donne's love because all of Donne's "good," including his love, is "dead."

Holy Sonnet XVII is a wonderful example of the dichotomous psychological conflicts manifest throughout the *Songs and Sonnets* and the *Holy Sonnets*. Specifically, analysis reveals the conflict between sufficiency and need, justification and corruption, and omnipotence and impotence. These struggles are influenced by the forces of sex and death in an attempt to find balance and resolution. Yet, instead of reaching any resolution, Donne merely oscillates between extremes, as a ship tossed by waves across a stormy sea. From what events in Donne's life did these conflicts arise and how they are manifested in Donne's poetry? These are the questions this thesis seeks to address in the hope of offering the reader a better understanding of a man who never understood himself.

However, before psychoanalytic theory and techniques are applied to Donne's poetry as a means of gaining greater understanding, the validity of such an endeavor must first be addressed. Are works of art, like dreams, a legitimate subject for psychoanalysis? Both Paul Ricoeur, in his book *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, and Norman O. Brown, in his work *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History*, attempt to answer this question through evidence found in Freud's writings.

Ricoeur writes that dreams and poetry are alike in that they "both are manifestations of the same fate, the fate of unhappy, unsatisfied men: 'the motive force of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality'" (166). In addition, he believes that works of art correspond to dreams because "the broadest aim of a work of art is to enable us to enjoy our own fantasies without self-reproach or shame" (166). Therefore, like dreams, works of art

represent unconscious, unfulfilled instinctual drives that are transmuted into acceptable forms for the purpose of relieving tension among the id, the ego, and the superego.

Freud described this tension as a struggle between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. Both Ricoeur and Brown believe that art is basically a play activity, returning the artist to the pleasure principle, as well as his childhood (Brown 66). "It takes only the reflection that metaphor, which is the building block of all poetry, is nothing but a playing with words, to see how readily Freud's analysis of wit invites extension to the whole domain of art," declares Brown (61).

However, art differs from dreams in two very distinct ways. Brown explains that "[Freud] distinguishes art from dreams by insisting that art has a social reference and an element of conscious control" (61). According to this author, "[art's] contradiction of the reality principle is its social function, as a constant reinforcement of the struggle for instinctual liberation" (Brown 58). Both Brown and Ricoeur also agree that:

the artist, like the neurotic, is a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction that reality demands, and who transposes his erotic and ambitious desires to the plane of fantasy of play. By means of his special gifts, however, he finds a way back to reality from this world of fantasy: he creates a new reality, the work of art, in which he himself becomes the hero, the King, the creator he desired to be, without having to follow the roundabout path of making real alterations in the external world. In this new reality other men feel at home because they "feel the same dissatisfaction as he does with the renunciation

demanding by reality, and because that satisfaction, which results from the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle, is itself part of reality." (Ricoeur 333-4)

Therefore, the artist and the lover of his work are psychologically kin, "suffering from the same repressions which the creative artist has overcome by finding a way of expressing the repressed unconscious" (Brown 61-2).

Besides its social value, art differs from dreams in that it is a conscious creation on the part of the artist. Brown explains the difference between art and dreams when he writes "while psychoanalysis tries to reach the unconscious by extending the conscious, art represents an irruption from the unconscious into the conscious" (62). It is often true that the artist is aware of some psychological battle taking place within him. However, the artist is like a blind soldier. Aware of the fact that he is in a battle but not knowing who or where the enemy is, the artist through his work makes an attempt to strike out at his invisible opponent. Ricoeur expands this idea, stating:

works of art are not only socially valuable; ... they are also creations which, as such, are not simply projections of the artist's conflicts, but the sketch of their solution. Dreams look backward, toward infancy, the past; the work of art goes ahead of the artist, it is a prospective symbol of his personal synthesis and of man's future, rather than a regressive symbol of his unresolved conflicts. (175).

Yet, even though it is the artist's intention to resolve his psychological conflicts through his art, the enemy often remains hidden and unknown in the dark recesses of the artist's unconscious. Consequently, as a result of its similarities and differences to dreams, "the work of art is thus both symptom and cure" (Ricoeur 174).

Hence, can works of art like John Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* and *Holy Sonnets* be considered a valid subject for psychoanalysis? Ricoeur and Brown, speaking on behalf of Freud, answer yes. "Art as pleasure, art as play, art as recovery of childhood, art as making conscious the unconscious, art as a mode of instinctual liberation, art as the fellowship of men struggling for instinctual liberation - these ideas plainly fit into the system of psychoanalysis" (Brown 65-6).

However, when Ricoeur and Brown use the term psychoanalysis, they are speaking strictly of the ideas and techniques developed by Freud. Although Freud's work forms the essential foundation for psychoanalytic theory, the field of psychology branches off in many different directions by the early part of the Twentieth Century. Therefore, if one can agree that applying psychoanalysis to works of art is a valid pursuit, the question of which branch of psychoanalytic theory to use comes into focus. Among the many elaborations, variations, and revisions of Freud's original psychoanalytic theory, Erik Erikson's psychosocial model of personality development, the Life Cycle, has been used by himself and others to explore the lives of major historical figures, such as Martin Luther and Frederick the Great. Christopher Monte in his text, *Beneath the Mask: An Introduction to Theories of Personality*, explains that Erikson's theory makes an effort to expand the scope of psychoanalysis beyond Freud's psychosexual model by "interpret[ing] human behavior as the product of an interaction between the ego-id-superego apparatus and the external, social world" (269).

It is precisely this aspect of Erikson's theory that makes it so useful in the study of a historical figure like Donne. Erikson emphasizes the importance of the external world in shaping the inner structure of the psyche. Therefore, because it is impossible to know with absolute certainty the

conflicts that existed in Donne's psyche, Erikson's model points the researcher toward certain external areas in which clues might be found to help explain internal conflicts. Additionally, Erikson's theory not only elucidates what the outcome of healthy and successful conflict resolution should be but also the possible problems that may arise if the crisis resolution for a certain stage is unsuccessful.

The Life Cycle theory is a developmental theory that elaborates eight distinct phases in each individual's ego development. Monte claims that "each of the first five stages in Erikson's scheme builds on Freud's psychosexual stages, treating them as prerequisite and fundamental determinants of personality" (277-8). Erikson's understanding of the life cycle centers on a fixed sequence of ego crises, starting in infancy and proceeding throughout life to old age. To progress to the next stage of ego development, the "successful resolution of each phase-specific crisis is necessary" (Monte 278).

Consequently, Erikson's Life Cycle theory can be viewed as eight distinctive crisis periods. Each crisis period in Erikson's psychosocial model possesses both positive and negative aspects. Erikson believed "each crisis is favorably resolved when the ratio of positive to negative elements incorporated into the person's identity leans toward the positive" (Monte 278). The result of each successful crisis resolution, according to Erikson, leads to a different virtue, the "capacity of the ego for strength, restraint, and courage" (Monte 281). For each stage there is also a pair of ritualizations and ritualisms. "A ritualization," Monte explains, "is an orienting or socializing mechanism formally prescribed by the culture in which the child matures" (Monte 278). On the other hand, ritualism is defined as a "form of

estrangement from self and from one's community" (Monte 279). These are the components that are present in each of Erikson's eight distinct life stages.

When one considers the conflicts previously identified in Donne's poetry, sufficiency versus need, justification versus condemnation, and omnipotence versus impotence, one finds that these conflicts correspond almost exactly to conflicts that arise out of the first three stages of Erikson's Life Cycle theory: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, and initiative versus guilt. Issues and themes related to later stages do make appearances throughout Donne's work but their prominence and force are minimal in comparison to the frequency and power conveyed by issues related to the first three stages. As a result, the focus on Erikson's theory in this thesis will reside strictly in these first three stages. To understand more completely each of these conflicts requires a review of the general components Erikson considers important to each of these developmental stages.

Erikson's first stage, basic trust versus mistrust, corresponds to Freud's psychosexual oral stage. At this point, the infant is wholly dependent on its caregivers for the supplying of its physical needs. It is important for the "mother's attentions [to be] given willingly, lovingly, and reliably, and in quick response to the infants' cries" for the development in the infant of an attitude of basic trust (Monte 280). However, of even greater importance is the "quality of maternal relationship," declared Erikson in his work *Childhood and Society* (221). "Let it be said here that the amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love but rather in the quality of the maternal relationship" (Erikson 221). In *Erik Erikson: An Introduction*, Richard Stevens maintains that it is during this first, critical stage that "the

foundations are laid either for an optimistic orientation to the world in which needs are satisfied, or a pessimism which comes to expect the worst" (43). It is in this respect that the conflicts of sufficiency versus need identified to pervade Donne's poetry are similar to Erikson's concepts of basic trust versus mistrust.

As evidence of the development of this basic trust is the child's willingness to allow the mother to leave its sight without becoming angry or nervous. Erikson believes:

such consistency, continuity, and sameness of experience provide a rudimentary sense of ego identity which depends, I think, on the recognition that there is an inner population of remembered and anticipated sensations and images which are firmly correlated with the outer population of familiar and predictable things and people. (219)

Moreover, there is the implication "that one may trust oneself and the capacity of one's own organs to cope with urges" (Erikson 220).

The infant who has not experienced this "consistency, continuity, and sameness" or the "sensitive care of the baby's individual needs" by the mother is overwhelmed with a sense of basic mistrust (Erikson 219, 221).

"The opposing outcome is a depressive state involving excessive caution and withdrawal in relations with the world" (Stevens 44). The optimal outcome, therefore, is one in which the infant's sense of basic trust outweighs the sense of mistrust.

The result of a successful resolution to the crisis between basic trust and mistrust is hope. This means, "the infant trusts that failures, frustrations, losses not to be overwhelming: he or she hopes" (Monte 281). The ritualization associated with this stage "centre[s] on habits and practices of care

and ways in which parent and child give attention to each other," labeled the numinous (Stevens 44). Idolism, as Erikson has termed it, is the ritualism that has the potential to develop at this first stage. Monte illustrates this concept in depth, stating:

[idolism is] a distortion of the numinous reverence into adulation. An illusory image of perfection is created between the mother and child that binds the idolizing infant to the mother; conversely, compulsive adoration of mother leads eventually to narcissistic idealization of self. Instead of the mutability of affirmation and recognition, idolism results in reciprocal dependence and rigid, unthinking adulation of impossibly unreal human perfection. (282)

The next stage in Erikson's Life Cycle involves the crisis between autonomy and shame and doubt. Like the first stage, basic trust versus mistrust, this second stage also corresponds to the second stage of Freud's psychosexual model, the anal stage. Erikson believes that "anal-muscular maturation sets the stage for experimentation with two simultaneous sets of social modalities: holding on and letting go" (222). In Monte's opinion, "depending on the way parents handle [toilet training], the child either learns that holding on and letting go are powerful weapons to be employed against overly demanding parents, or that elimination is a 'relaxed "to let pass" and "to let be"' (282). Parents must be insistent, yet careful, to preserve the sense of trust acquired formerly. "As his environment encourages him to 'stand on his own two feet,' it must protect him against meaningless and arbitrary experiences of shame and of early doubt" (Erikson 223). The crisis at this point in ego development hinges on the need of the child to attain a feeling of "independence or willful autonomy" in the manipulation of its body

(Monte 283). Denied this opportunity for willful autonomy, Erikson thinks that a child will "overmanipulate himself, he will develop a precocious conscience" (222).

The danger that can arise in this stage is a sense of shame and doubt. Erikson feels that "shame supposes that one is completely exposed and conscious of being looked at: in one word, self-conscious" (223). Consequently, warns Stevens, "shame can engender a corrosive self-doubt which can undermine the possibility of action and in extreme adult form lead to feelings of persecution because of the 'shamefulness' of one's ways" (46). Furthermore, the result of even harsher demands by a child's parent for self-control leads to doubt (Monte 283). For Erikson, "doubt ... has much to do with a consciousness of having a front and a back - and especially a 'behind.' For this reverse area of the body, with its aggressive and libidinal focus in the sphincters and in the buttocks, cannot be seen by the child, and yet it can be dominated by the will of others" (224). As a result, "the child is made to feel that it is compelled by the will of others rather than by its own burgeoning sense of independence" (Monte 283).

The virtue that results from the successful resolution in this stage of ego development is the virtue of will, "a capacity for 'free will,' for 'good will,' and for willful self-control" (Monte 283). The ritualization of this stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt is defined by Erikson as the judicious ritualization. Stevens elucidates that "the ritualizations of this stage constitute the boundaries which children learn between the things they can do and those they must not do" (46). However, this ritualization can later have exactly the opposite effect, leading children to become the very things they have been cautioned against. Legalism is the ritualism that can result, leading to individuals who are interested in adhering to the letter of the law

over its spirit. On the other hand, Monte explains that "the legalistic individual learns to exploit the letter of the law to justify self-excess" (284). Thus, in its extreme form, the conflict of autonomy versus shame and doubt can be seen as a conflict of justification versus condemnation, especially when applied to one's self.

The conflict between initiative versus guilt presents a crisis in the third stage of Erikson's Life Cycle. Once again, Erikson's third stage correlates with Freud's third psychosexual stage, the pre-genital stage. It is during the pre-genital stage that the male child is forced to come to terms with his Oedipal complex. According to Stevens, this stage "is concerned with how far children can learn to have faith in their actions - in what they can become" (46).

Oedipal strivings play a major role in ego development during this stage. As Monte illustrates, "for the male child, exclusive domination of the mother's attention comes to a climax when he realizes that father is the stronger, more powerful competitor" (285). Hence, in order for the male child to escape the castration anxiety he feels coming from his father, he "internalizes those prohibitions he imagines his father might enforce," thus forming the basis for the child's superego.

The problem, as Erikson sees it, inherent at this stage is that of guilt. "Jealousy and rivalry, those often embittered and yet essentially futile attempts at demarcating a sphere of unquestioned privilege, now come to a climax in a final contest for a favored position with the mother, the inevitable failure leads to resignation, guilt, and anxiety" (Erikson 225). If taken to an extreme, the guilt that can be created by an unsuccessful resolution can take one of two different paths:

the conflict over initiative is expressed either in hysterical denial, which causes repression of the wish or the abrogation of its executive organ by paralysis or impotence; or in overcompensating, showing off, in which the scared individual, so eager to "duck," instead "sticks his neck out." (Erikson 226).

In other words, guilt lead to feelings of either impotence or omnipotence, two extremes that are found to traverse Donne's body of works.

However, "with the adoption of external standards as its own moral and ethical guidelines, the child may be said to have its own purpose," the virtue of this third stage. The ritualization accompanying this stage is identified as a sense of authenticity. Through the control exerted in the child's fantasy world of toys, inner and outer conflicts can be acted out, enabling the child to replay, fix, change, and readjust past events and to prepare for events to come. Monte stresses that "from play there emerges a sense of congenial roles, comfortable situations, satisfactory coping strategies that combine, eventually into authenticity, that is, into a feeling of what I really want to be and can realistically be" (285). Impersonation is the ritualism of this stage. "[The child] can appear as anyone, because it is no one" (Monte 285).

The biological ages during which children progress through the first three stages of Erikson's Life Cycle correspond to the ages elaborated by Freud for development from the oral to the pre-genital stages of his psychosexual model, from birth to approximately age five. Of this time in John Donne's life, relatively little is known. However, what is known to have happened during these years is suggestive.

John Donne was born in 1573 in London, England. His mother, Anne, gave birth to at least six children. As Edmund Gosse in *The Life and Letters of*

John Donne relates, "of his sisters, three died in infancy; and there survived besides himself, a younger brother, Henry, and a sister, Anne, who was probably the eldest of the family" (12). The effects of these deaths on Donne and his mother can only be theorized. If Anne Donne was a very affectionate and attentive mother, the deaths of these three daughters reasonably could have resulted in great anguish and depression, limiting her ability to give the kind of quality care required for optimal crisis resolution by her surviving children. If, on the other hand, Anne fatalistically accepted the fact of such a high rate of infant mortality, one might infer that she did not invest herself emotionally in her children until they grew older. In either case, Anne's ability to provide the quality of care needed for optimal crisis resolution would be in question.

Donne's father, also named John, was a very successful business man. It is unlikely that he devoted much of his time to helping raise the children. Not long after the poet's birth, John Donne senior was promoted to "Warden of the Company of Ironmongers" in 1574 (Gosse 11). Moreover, in the winter of 1575, John Donne senior was unexpectedly taken ill and died early the next year. "The poet was therefore left fatherless in his third year" (Gosse 12).

The death of Donne's father, occurring during the beginning of his Oedipal period, is the most suggestive clue available for understanding the way in which Donne was shaped psychologically as a child. From a psychoanalytic point of view, Donne believed that he killed his father by the wishing it so, making him feel tremendously powerful and tremendously guilty at the same time. Although he had defeated his father for his mother's sole affections, in doing so, Donne had also made his mother very unhappy. His victory was short lived, however, as his mother remarried only six short months later, to a man whom Donne could not kill merely by wishing it so.

All of these deaths that occurred in the Donne family must have made an impact on Donne emotionally and psychologically. Erikson stressed that the role of the parent in the early stages of his Life Cycle theory is to facilitate successful resolution to the crises confronted by the child. The effect of so much death and despair on Donne and his family, especially his mother, may help to explain why the future poet was tormented throughout his life by the most basic and fundamental of conflicts identified by Erikson.

When one compares the few but crucial facts that are known about John Donne's childhood to Erikson's definition of what is necessary for healthy development and successful crisis resolution, it is reasonable to hypothesize that certain conflicts arose out of these circumstances. Erikson identifies a number of different problems that might result if the events in a child's first five years do not facilitate successful crisis resolution. Not surprisingly, many of the conflicts Erikson believes might appear do surface in an analysis of Donne's poetry. Among these, three sets of dichotomous emotions seem to manifest themselves most frequently throughout both the *Songs and Sonnets* as well as the *Holy Sonnets*: sufficiency versus need, justification versus condemnation, and omnipotence versus impotence.

The conflict between sufficiency and need is a direct reflection of an unresolved crisis between the issues defined in Erikson's very first stage of his Life Cycle theory, basic trust versus mistrust. As stated earlier, this stage lays the groundwork for developing either a trusting attitude that the world will provide for one's needs or a fearful attitude that one will be left in want. Erratic or unpredictable care as an infant can leave the child always unsure whether its needs will be met in the future. The same fear is felt by Donne. At times, Donne has faith in the world and God to sufficiently supply what he

requires; at other times, he cries out like a baby in the anxiety of having his needs met.

Feelings of justification versus condemnation result from a failure to resolve the issues of autonomy versus shame and doubt. Erikson explicitly states that the ritualism of this stage, legalism, can create exactly the type of conflict apparent in John Donne's poetry. The legalistic individual, like the Pharisees described in the Bible, uses the letter of the law to condemn others, as well as himself. However, this individual may also manipulate the law to justify doing whatever he desires. Therefore, legalism becomes a two-edged sword dividing justification and condemnation.

Furthermore, the struggle between omnipotence and impotence comes directly out of a male child's struggle with his Oedipal complex during Erikson's third stage, initiative versus guilt. As it was explained formerly, Erikson believes that unsuccessful resolution of this complex can take two different directions: impotence or omnipotence. With Donne, one finds that his unresolved conflicts do not choose only one path, but skip back and forth between the two.

These three sets of conflicts which result from unresolved crises in the first three stages of Erikson's Life Cycle theory, sufficiency versus need, justification versus condemnation, and omnipotence versus impotence, manifest themselves throughout Donne's body of writings. As it has been stated earlier, other problems identified by Erikson also surface in the course of analyzing Donne's poetry, but not with great frequency. The reason that later conflicts elaborated by Erikson's theory do not appear as often is that the life cycle theory is developmental. Erikson does not think it is possible for an individual to progress to later stages if resolution in earlier stages is never achieved, as Donne apparently never does.

Now it is time to return to Donne's poetry in an attempt to determine the extent to which these conflicts permeate Donne's psyche as evidenced by their appearance in Donne's writings. One reason for choosing to analyze poems from both the *Songs and Sonnets* and the *Holy Sonnets* is to dispel any notions that the older, Calvinist preacher who wrote the later works was in any way fundamentally different from the rogue who wrote the earlier pieces. The images and themes that emerge across Donne's poetry are continuous. As John Carey in *John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art* maintains, "it [is] often assumed that early and late Donne, poet and preacher, were different people. Donne, as he grew older, wanted to believe this, and talked as if he did, which is how the illusion got about" (10). However, an examination of Donne's writings led Carey to conclude that "[Donne's] grasp of the world did not basically change, so his master-images had to be adapted to met the new subject matter which his career threw in the way" (11-12).

In the conflict between sufficiency and need, Donne's ego often tries to assert its complete and total sufficiency. This conflict is the same as the crucial conflict of Erikson's first stage, basic trust versus mistrust, with different names. In the *Songs and Sonnets*, sufficiency results from receiving the love of a woman. Donne gives the impression that the love existing between himself and some unnamed woman is more than he could ever desire. In "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," the speaker boasts "but we by'a love, so much refined,/ That our selves know not what it is,/ Inter-assured of the mind,/ Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to misse" (Shawcross 88). The love shared between these two transcends mere sexual desires by supplying all of their emotional and psychological needs. Similarly, in "The good-morrow," the male lover believes that he and his mistress "possess one world, each hath one, and is one" (Shawcross 89). Each lover is as sufficient

and resourceful as a whole world in meeting the needs of the other. The choice of the word "possess" implies the satisfaction of not only emotional and psychological needs, but also sexual needs as well.

For Donne, sexual satisfaction can serve as a symbol for emotional and psychological satisfaction. The male in Donne's poem "The Dreame" equates the realization of sexual fantasies with the fulfillment of emotional needs. "My Dreame thou brok'st not, but continued'st it,/ Thou are so truth, and thoughts of thee suffice/ To make dreames truths; and fables histories;/ Enter these armes, for since thou thoughtst it best,/ Not to dreame all my dreame, let's act the rest" (Shawcross 124). Clearly, the speaker is interested in consummating his sexual lusts, but there is more than just physical pleasure at stake. The speaker's description of his lover's power to make "dreames truths" and "fables histories" implies that she also fulfills his dreams of being loved and cared for. Likewise, in "The Dissolution," through the mingling of bodily fluids resulting from sex, the speaker proclaims, "My body then doth hers involve,/ And those things whereof I consist, hereby/ In me abundant grow" (Shawcross 144). The sexual union between this speaker and his mistress feeds not only his physical hunger but also his hunger for love.

Through total captivation of a woman's mind, soul, and body, the speakers in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* are empowered to create their own universe, their own existence. In the "Canonization," Donne advises those in search of perfect love to pray to the lovers of this poem "who did the whole worlds soule extract, and drove/ Into the glasses of [their] eyes/ so made such mirrors, and such spies,/ that they did all to [them] epitomize,/ Countries, Townes, Courts" (Shawcross 98). The love that exists between these two is the source that gives them strength to "extract" the "worlds soule" and "[drive]" that soul, in a very sexual sense, into each other's eyes.

The result is the birth of a whole new world for the lovers, complete with "Countries, Townes, [and] Courts" for their love to rule over. In the same manner, the speaker in "The Sunne Rising" challenges the sun to "Aske for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,/ and thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay./ She's all States, and all Princes, I,/ Nothing else is" (Shawcross 93-4). Through the sexual possession of his lover in his "bed," the speaker is able to claim ownership of "All." The speaker is allowed to claim the title of all "Kings" and "Princes" only because the woman in his bed is "all States."

Donne's conviction that he has "all" he needs is inextricably tied to this idea of "possessing" the love of another. In the *Songs and Sonnets*, the love that is desired is sought from a woman. Once that love is gained and Donne's psychological need for assurance is sufficiently met, he can proclaim as the speaker in "The Sunne Rising" that "Nothing else is." Echoing this sentiment, the speaker of "Loves infiniteness" assures his lady that "wee will have a way more liberall,/ Then changing hearts, to joyne them, so we shall/ Be one, and one another All" (Shawcross 100). Once again, it is imperative to "joyne" with his lover, body as well as heart, in order to get "All" he needs. In the *Holy Sonnets*, though, God's love is the love that Donne so desperately seeks. Worrying about Christ's willingness to forgive him of his sin, Donne persuades himself at the conclusion of Holy Sonnet IX, "This beauteous forme [of Christ's body on the cross] assures a pitious minde" (Shawcross 344). In Holy Sonnet II, Donne worries about Christ's ability to forgive him but is heartened by the thought, "Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke" (Shawcross 339).

However, Donne does feel that he "lackes" the love he so urgently needs, both from women and from God. Carey suggests "that the love poems display, in their obsession with woman's inconstancy, a profound anxiety

about [Donne's] own ability to attract or merit stable affection. His fear of damnation and of exclusion from God's love in the *Holy Sonnets* reflect the same anxiety, transposed to the religious sphere" (38).

In analyzing Donne's poetry, this need for love from women is an issue that reappears in many of the *Songs and Sonnets*. Many obstacles stand in the way of reaching a woman's love. In the "Canonization," the speaker pleads with other men to busy themselves with anything so long as "[they] will let [him] love" (Shawcross 97). The speaker in "Loves exchange" accuses Love itself of standing in his way, stating that "any devill else but you,/ Would for a given Soule give something too," but the speaker despairs that "Onely I have nothing which gave more,/ But am, alas, by being lowly, lower" (Shawcross 121). This man gave all he had in exchange for unrequited love. The speaker of another poem, "Farewell to love," finds himself in a similar predicament, admitting:

Whilst yet to prove,
I thought there was some Deitie in love
So did I reverence, and gave
Worship, as Atheists at their dying houre
Call, what they cannot name, an unknowne power,
As ignorantly did I crave. (Shawcross 150)

All of these speakers seem to crave for a love that forever seems insufficient.

More poignant is the intensity and frequency with which this need for love plagues Donne in his *Holy Sonnets*. If the love of women is difficult to procure and possess, God, Calvin's God of predestination, is virtually impossible for Donne to reach. "Why should I begg more Love" asks Donne in the very first poem that was examined. The answer is because God's love,

in the form of protection and forgiveness, eludes Donne throughout his life and his sonnets.

In Holy Sonnet I, Donne is completely unable to resist the power of Satan. He needs God to intervene, pleading "Except thou rise and for thine owne worke fight,/ Oh I shall soon despaire" (Shawcross 339). It is interesting, however, that the sexual imagery of "rising" to the occasion is still present in this religious context. Similarly, in Holy Sonnet XIII, Donne must again recruit the aid of God to resist the temptations of the Devil. "Our old subtle foe so tempteth me,/ That not one houre I can my selfe, sustaine" (Shawcross 346). The worldly temptations which Donne used to enjoy continue to haunt him in his old age. Apparently, Satan has not been told that Donne is now a preacher.

Donne is acutely aware of his need for God's gift of salvation, as demonstrated in Holy Sonnet VII. "But by my death can not be satisfied/ My sinnes, which passe the Jewes impiety:/ They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I/ Crucifie him daily, being now glorified" (Shawcross 342). Donne's sins are so great and his need for forgiveness so overwhelming that not even his death will satisfy the wrath of the evil he has created. Donne believes that only Christ's death is sufficient retribution for his wrongdoings. Donne requires instruction from God in Holy Sonnet IV, asking God to delay Christ's return so Christ might "teach [Donne] how to repent" (Shawcross 341). However, by Holy Sonnet IX, Donne fears his sin is too great for even Christ to forgive. Fearing the Judgment Day, Donne wonders in terror "can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,/ Which pray'd forgiveness for his foes fierce spight?" (Shawcross 343). These lines imply that Donne believes his own sin to be worse than those who crucified Christ. If this is true, Donne fears that he needs even more forgiveness than Christ can offer.

Donne oscillates between conflicting emotions, and this fact is clear not only when comparing the *Songs and Sonnets* to the *Holy Sonnets* or one poem to another, but also within the same poem as well. Several examples are available that illustrate this struggle between feelings of sufficiency and need within the same poem. Already discussed is the anticipated fulfillment of the speaker's sexual desires by his lover early in the poem "The Dreame." However, by the last stanza, the speaker begins to doubt his lady's identity. "Comming and staying show'd thee, thee,/ But rising makes me doubt, that now,/ Thou art not thou" (Shawcross 125). The woman fails to satisfy the speaker sufficiently, causing him to question if she is really the same woman who makes "dreames truths." Eventually, the speaker resigns himself to a fate caught between the two extremes of sufficiency and need. He consoles himself with the thought that "Perchance as torches which must ready bee,/ Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with mee,/ Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; Then I/ Will dreame that hope againe, but else would die" (Shawcross 125). Again Donne equates physical and emotional need. On the physical level, the speaker is frustrated because he is denied the immediate gratification he desires from sexual intercourse; but, at the same time, he realizes that this frustration also serves to heighten the pleasure he does receive. On the emotional level, the speaker appears to feel that he has no control over the quality of love he receives but, instead, he must accept what he can get. His only recourse is to "dreame that hope againe," to hope for the return of her love, or to "die" without it.

Another poem from the *Holy Sonnets* in which Donne admits being caught in an endless struggle between feelings of sufficiency and need is found in Holy Sonnet II. As it was already mentioned, Donne is confident that God's "grace, if [he] repent, [he] canst not lacke." Nevertheless, in the

very next line he despairs, "But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?" (Shawcross 339). Donne is not so sure that God is willing to give him the grace he needs to begin to repent, even though he may believe God's grace is sufficient.

Out of this fear of not having enough of what he needs, especially love, Donne becomes trapped between feelings of condemnation and justification. This conflict between condemnation and justification is closely related the ritualism of legalism as identified by Erikson in stage two of his Life Cycle theory. Condemnation arises out of Donne's anger over not being provided with what he requires and is directed toward those who he believes are to blame for this negligence. In addition, Donne is compelled to justify the mere existence of his wants as well as his deservingness to have them fulfilled. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in the *Songs and Sonnets*, John Donne and the speakers of his poems, unable to "attract or merit stable affection," direct their anger and condemnation at women, symbolic representatives for the female parent.

For Donne, female lovers are thought of as replacements for his mother. From these women, Donne and his speakers hope finally to obtain the love for which they have so long hungered. Unfortunately, like his mother, Donne finds his female lovers either unwilling or unable to fulfill his needs. The speaker in "When my harte was mine owne" complains to his lover that "Soe after conquest thou doost me neglect" (Shawcross 153). The term "neglect" connotes a dependency on the part of the speaker. He is dependent of the love of his woman just as a child is dependent on its mother. By the end of the poem, the speaker proclaims that he will only be contented with his lover's complete and total devotion. "Doe but yet decline/ All other loves and I will pardon thee, But looke that I have all, for, deare, let

me/ Eyther thine only love or noe love be" (Shawcross 154). Donne's speaker will not share his lady's love as he shared his mother's love with his brother and sister, his father, and Catholicism. The speaker in "The Relique" compares women to graves, claiming that "graves have learn'd that woman-head/ To be to more than one a Bed" (Shawcross 142). Donne obviously feels threatened by the power held over him by women.

In several of the *Songs and Sonnets*, Donne's inability to "attract and merit stable affection" becomes a matter of life or death. His need for love is not merely an emotional desire but a physical necessity for the continuation of his very existence. "When by thy scorne, O murderesse, I am dead," warns the speaker of "The Apparition," the condemnation will fall upon the woman's life" (Shawcross 83). Unlike most Petrarchan lovers who only say they will be killed if the lady they love does not requite them, Donne's speaker actually dies and returns to haunt and condemn his mistress. Likewise, in "Twickenham Garden," the speaker of Donne's poem condemns all women because the woman he wants will not requite his love, resulting in his death. "O perverse sexe, where none is true but shee,/ Who's therefore true, because her truth kills mee" (Shawcross 116). Surprisingly, the speaker does not feel any guilt himself over desiring the love of a married woman. Instead, Donne's speaker condemns the woman not for being unfaithful to her lawful husband, but for not loving him. Donne's need for love and affection is not bound by the constraints of society or even religion. However, it is the man who can not remain interested once his love has been returned in "Farewell to love." "The thing which lovers so/ Blindly admire, and with such worship wooe;/ Being had, enjoying it decays" (Shawcross 151). Is it possible that Donne might admit that being inconstant is a characteristic of all humans, men included?

Occasionally, however, condemning women for their inconstancy also means Donne must implicate his own gender for being fickle and undeserving of true devotion. In the poem "The Indifferent," Donne admits "Oh we are not [true], be not you so,/ Let mee, and doe you, twenty know" (Shawcross 95). Clearly, the speaker of this poem is only interested in the sexual aspect of a relationship with a woman, and he encourages women to do the same. The speaker of "Woman's Constancy" echoes this confession. After condemning his lover for making excuses to leave him the morning after a passionate night of sex, the speaker acknowledges that though "against these scapes I could/ Dispute, and conquer, if I would,/ Which I abstaine to doe,/ For by to morrow, I may think so too" (Shawcross 92).

By the time Donne composes the *Holy Sonnets*, his feelings of condemnation lay squarely on his own shoulders and, occasionally, on the shoulders of God. Carey reiterates that "the resentment which Donne had directed against his fickle mistresses [in the *Songs and Sonnets*] is redirected to strike at his own inconstancy and at God, who appears negligent and inattentive" (58). Donne turns his anger inward, blaming himself for his inability to obtain the love he desires. However, the fact that the objects of his condemnation have changed does not lessen Donne's ferociousness in the least.

Donne regrets the way he has lived his life in the past and feels contaminated as a result. In Holy Sonnet IX, Donne condemns himself for things he "said to all [his] profane mistresses" in his "idolatrie" (Shawcross 344). However, one gets the sense from the word "mistresses" that Donne regrets more than what he said. Donne rejects any emotions he had for women in the past as "vaine" in Holy Sonnet XV (Shawcross 348). "In my Idolatry what showres of raine/ Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart

did rent? That sufferance was my sinne, now I repent." Donne's "vaine" search for love from women has only served to make him appear worse in the eyes of God, making it harder for God to love him.

"I am a little world made cunningly/ Of Elements and an Angelike spright,/ But black sinne hat betraid to endless night/ My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die," explains Donne (Shawcross 347). Sin has infected Donne, reducing him from a being like God to a being despised by God. Donne continues to parallel the physical and emotional, maintaining that the effect of his sin is not only physical corruption but spiritual contamination as well. Donne's sense of betrayal on the part of sin is similar to his sense of betrayal by his former mistresses. Donne describes that the result of this betrayal by sin is similar to the betrayal of his mistresses, death. Bemoaning this fact in Holy Sonnet XIII, Donne relates that "[his] febled flesh doth waste/ By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh" (Shawcross 346). Sin not only has ruined his body and his life, but threatens to ruin his eternity too.

Nevertheless, despite his need to escape such feelings of self-condemnation, Donne hesitates to turn to God for love and forgiveness. God, also a substitute parent in the eyes of Donne, cannot be relied on unilaterally. "Oh my blacke Soule," laments Donne in Holy Sonnet II (Shawcross 339). "Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done/ Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee' is fled, / Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,/ Wisheth himselfe delivered from prison;/ But damn'd and hal'd to execution,/ Wisheth that still he might be'imprisoned." Donne feels trapped by his sin between needing to ask forgiveness from God and fearing God's wrath if he does. Donne goes so far as to condemn God for condemning man alone of all creations in Holy Sonnet V. "And mercy being easie, and

glorious/ To God, in his stearne wrath, why threatens hee?" questions Donne. Donne cannot comprehend how a loving God can send any of his creations, no matter how sinful, to an eternity of damnation. The description of God's "stearne wrath" implies a stiffness and rigidity of will, creating a sexual undertone to God's "threats."

In order to condemn others for not providing the love he needs, Donne feels he must justify his need as well as his deservingness to have that need fulfilled. Donne's ego must struggle against his superego to prove his worth. To this end, Donne employs justifications to escape the self-condemnation that nags at him unceasingly. Throughout the *Songs and Sonnets*, Donne's speakers often invoke justifications to support their need for emotional and physical satisfaction.

In "The Canonization," Donne begs for permission to seek out and experience love. "Contemplate, what you will, approve,/ So you will let me love" (Shawcross 97). To justify this need, Donne utilizes several different metaphors, including religious ones, to sanctify and epitomize the love between a man and a woman. Donne argues:

Call us what you will, wee'are made such by love;
 Call her one, mee another flye,
 We'are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
 And wee 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 neutrall thing both sexes fit.
 Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
 Mysterious by this love. (Shawcross 97)

Each metaphor increases the importance and power of their love. The image of the "taper" represents the consuming nature of the between this couple. The "Eagle" and the "dove" symbolize "the powerful and the meek; righteousness and mercy," attributes embodied by God himself (Shawcross 97). The Phoenix is the exemplification of the perfect union between male and female, a union that overcomes death to be renewed and reborn. Having this ability to "dye" and "rise the same" describes not only the sexual nature of the love shared by these two, but should also remind the reader of another myth in which someone "dyes" and "rises the same," namely the myth of Christ. By comparing their love to Christ, Donne is able to justify not only this love but to sanctify it as well. No one can be allowed to destroy this love for any reason. All of these metaphors serve to illustrate the vital necessity of obtaining and sustaining this perfect love for Donne.

Love by itself is not always the main concern for the speakers of Donne's poetry. In "Confined Love," the speaker invokes the laws of Nature in an attempt to justify his own lustful desires. "Beasts doe no joyntures lose/ Though they new lovers choose,/ But we're made worse than those" (Shawcross 124). Shrewdly, the speaker attempts to compare man to any other creature in nature, allowing him to have sex with whomever he pleases. For Donne, love and sex are found together. Therefore, to avoid condemnation for his sexual promiscuity, Donne creates an elaborate justification as protection against society, as well as his own superego. The speaker concludes with the argument that "Good is not good, unless/ A thousand it possesse,/ But doth wast with greediness." His argument is valid but it fails to hide the fear Donne feels over the possible consequences of his behavior.

Donne's best use of justification in the *Songs and Sonnets* is the poem entitled "The Flea." Donne writes:

Marke but this flea, and marke in this,
 How little that which thou deny'st me is;
 It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee,
 And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee;
 Thou known'st that this cannot be said
 A sinne, nor shame, nor losse of maidenhead,
 Yet this enjoys before it wooe,
 And pamper'd swells with one blood made of two,
 And this, alas, is more then wee would doe.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
 Where wee almost, yea more than maryed are.
 This flea is you and I, and this
 Our mariage bed, and mariage temple is;
 Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
 And cloysterd in these living walls of Jet.
 Though use make you apt to kill mee,
 Let not to that, selfe murder added bee,
 And sacrilege, three sinnes in killing three.

Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since
 Purpled thy naile, in blood of innocence?
 Wherein could this flea guilty bee,
 Except in that drop which it suckt from thee?
 Yet thou triumph'st, and saist that thou

Find'st not thy selfe, nor mee the weaker now;
 'Tis true, then learne how false, feares bee;
 Just so much honor, when thou yeeld'st to mee,
 Will wast, as this flea's death stroke life from thee.

(Shawcross 127-8) The arguments used by the speaker in each stanza add additional fortification against any resistance of the part of the woman.

It is interesting that the poem begins with the premise that the speaker is denied what he wants. Underlying the entire poem is the sense that the speaker is not deserving of what he wants. As a result, the speaker must create an elaborate scheme to justify his desire. In the first stanza, the speaker tries to convince the woman that having sex is no different from the sucking of their blood by a flea. The images are blatantly sexual, blood being "sucked" and "mingled" in the flea, causing it to "swell." The speaker argues effectively that what the flea does can not be considered wrong, so why should the actual "mingling" of their "blood" be any worse. Donne takes great care to dismiss any condemnation, religious or social, which might be mounted against such a mingling, proclaiming the flea's action to be neither "A sinne, nor shame, nor losse of maidenhead."

This "mingling" of the man's and woman's blood becomes a symbolic marriage in the second stanza. The speaker intentionally chooses this metaphor to sanctify the union of their blood, adding the images of the "temple" and being "cloysterd" for emphasis. Moreover, "marriage" connotes not only a physical union but a spiritual one as well. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Furthermore, the speaker contends that for the woman to "kill" this flea would be sacrilege, a sin against God.

By the last stanza the woman is trapped. Denying the argument that the "mingling" of her blood with the speaker's blood in the flea has any significance, she does indeed kill the flea. However, by her actions, she also destroys any resistance she might make to the speaker's original argument that any mingling of their blood, whether by sex or within a flea, is of no consequence and should not be denied. Therefore, the speaker can now justify his assertion that "Just so much honor, when thou yeeld'st to mee,/ Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee." The relevance of this entire poem is that Donne feels compelled to take what he needs but not without an explanation. If women are unwilling to give him love, he will trick them into it but not without feeling guilty. Therefore, Donne must justify his need as well as his means.

Donne is not as successful, however, at employing justification against God's condemnation in the *Holy Sonnets*. Unable to dispute God over his need for salvation with human justifications, Donne is forced to seek salvation through Christ. Ultimately, however, condemnation keeps finding its way back into Donne's thoughts. Like Donne's struggle with sin, this battle against condemnation requires the aid of justification in an attempt to achieve some balance.

Donne makes an effort to refute the necessity for salvation using simple human logic. Donne questions God's reasoning in Holy Sonnet V, contending that "If lecherous goats, if serpents envious/ Cannot be damn'd; Alas; why should I bee? Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,/ Make sinnes, else equall, in mee, more heinous?" (Shawcross 341). Donne disputes with God for condemning man merely because men possess the "intent" and "reason" God has "borne" in them. However, the condemnation within Donne is too strong to allow this argument any power over his fear. By the

next breath, Donne turns his condemnation inward yet again, stating "but who am I, that dare dispute with [God]?"

Donne finds justification for his sin in the eyes of God only through Christ. In Holy Sonnet VIII, Donne finds salvation, proclaiming that the "Creator, whom sin, nor nature tyed,/ For us, his Creatures, and his foes, hath dyed" (Shawcross 343). Furthermore, Donne finds that God "Hath deign'd to chuse [him] by adoption,/ Coheire to'[Christ's] glory, and Sabbaths endlesse rest" (Shawcross 345). Donne, who cannot merit such rewards by his own strivings, is driven to find justification for his claim to them, his selection by God.

However, despite the assurance of Christ's salvation, condemnation is never far from Donne. Donne feels the need for individual intervention on the part of God to rid Donne of his insecurity and self-condemnation. In Holy Sonnet II, Donne believes he must justify his need for a special dispensation of God's help as a means of escaping the condemnation he is experiencing. Donne pleads, "Oh [my blacke Soule] make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,/ And red with blushing, as thou are with sinne;/ Or wash thee in Christs blood, which hath this might/ That being red, it dyes red soules to white" (Shawcross 339). The colors "blacke" and "red" symbolize not only Donne's feelings of condemnation but also his hope for justification from Christ. Caught between these two extremes, Donne desires the "blacke" of mourning and the "red" of Christ's blood to cover over the "blacke" and "red" of his sinful soule. Similarly, Donne enlists the aid of justifications to beg for intervention by God in an effort to hold his feelings of condemnation in abeyance in Holy Sonnet XIV. Donne feels his life "must be burnt; alas the fire/ Of lust and envie'have burnt it heretofore,/ And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,/ And burne me o Lord, with a fiery zeale/ Of thee'and thy

house, which doth in eating heale" (Shawcross 347). Again, the agent of sin and of salvation is the same, fire. By burning Donne with a "fiery zeale," God covers over the burnt remains left by "lust and envie." Donne requires more from God than Christ's salvation. However, before he can ask for God's help, Donne exhibits a compulsion to justify his neediness. Even after his conversion, Donne cannot escape his own feelings of worthlessness and undeservedness.

Compounding the conflicts within Donne between sufficiency and need as well as condemnation and justification is a struggle between omnipotence and impotence inherent in Donne's poetry. Erikson warns that a failure to resolve Oedipal strivings in stage three of his Life Cycle theory results in exactly this type of conflict. The fact that Donne's father died and his mother remarried soon after during this crucial period in Donne's development suggests that effects of this event on his young ego would be tremendous. On the one hand, Donne must have felt incredibly omnipotent, causing the death of his greatest competitor in the rivalry for his mother's affections simply by wishing it so. However, on the other hand, the guilt he likely felt over bringing his mother such unhappiness coupled with the loss of his mother's affection to a new man led to feelings of incredible impotence. This conflict between feelings of omnipotence and impotence is never resolved for Donne.

Often in the *Songs and Sonnets*, when speakers find that their love is requited by the woman of their dreams, the love that exists between the two takes on a life of its own, creating its own universe in which the lovers are its primary inhabitants. In "The good-morrow," the love between the speaker and his lady "makes one little roome, an every where" (Shawcross 89). In like

manner, the lovers in "The Canonization" will use their love to "build in sonnets pretty roomes" to preserve their love forever.

This sense of complete power felt by Donne and his speakers results in an inflation of the ego. Along with the creation of a new universe, the speaker frequently becomes the ruler of that world. An excellent example from Donne's poetry of this ego inflation is "The Sunne Rising." In this poem, the sun symbolizes for Donne other male rivals in the pursuit of love, maybe even his father. Because he possesses his lady's love, the speaker believes that he can command the sun and the sun will obey. "Sawcy pedantique wretch, go chide/ Late schoole boyes, and sowre prentices" orders the speaker (Shawcross 93). If the sun refuses to relent, the speaker threatens to "eclipse and cloud [the sun's beams] with a winke." Clearly Donne's power resides within his mind and his thoughts, not with any physical force. Donne's speaker calls himself "all Princes," asserting not only his supernatural abilities but his earthly authority as well. By the end of the poem, the sun is demanded to serve the lovers, "To warme the world, that's done in warming us." In a reversal of his earlier dismissal, Donne forces the sun's submission to serve his needs. Similarly, the speaker in "The Anniversarie" boasts that he and his lover "are Kings, and none but wee/ Can be such Kings" (Shawcross 109). Donne craved this kind of earthly power in real life, and it is one of the reasons Donne decided to denounce his Catholic faith.

However, Donne does not always use his feelings of omnipotence to create a heaven for his lover. Occasionally, when a speaker's love is not returned, Donne employs his power to take revenge on the unrelenting mistress, devising a living hell for her on earth. This is exactly the situation for the speaker of "The Apparition." The speaker warns his lover, "When by

thy scorne, O murderesse, I am dead,/ And that thou thinkst thee free/ From all solicitations from mee,/ Then shall my ghost come to thy bed" (Shawcross 83). Even death cannot stop Donne from striking out at this woman who has refused to love him. The rage he feels over this kind of rejection knows no limitations and no forgiveness. In "Confined Love," the speaker relates the story of an unrequited lover who "Thought his paine and shame would be lesser,/ If on womankind he might his anger wreake" (Shawcross 123). The ability to punish all women for the sins of one is an enticing idea to Donne. It is possible that Donne felt by killing his father, he could also punish his mother for neglecting to love him sufficiently. If so, the actions of these speakers are completely understandable.

Donne is not so confident in his own omnipotence throughout the *Holy Sonnets*. Unlike his father, Donne cannot kill God by merely wishing it so. Donne must find some other way to exert himself without provoking God's wrath. Donne's solution is found in his salvation. One benefit of accepting Christ's salvation for Donne is the right to claim God's power. Unable to assert his own dominance in the face of God, Donne requisitions Christ's to maintain what little integrity remains of Donne's battered ego in the wake of his extreme self-condemnation.

Because God "hath deign'd to chuse [Donne] by adoption," he explains in Holy Sonnet XI, Donne feels justified to proclaim himself "Coheire to [Christ's] glory" (Shawcross 345). Part of this glory includes Christ's spoils, asserts Donne in the following sonnet, Holy Sonnet XII. "Father, part of his double interest/ Unto thy kingdome, thy Sonne gives to mee,/ His joynture in the knottie Trinitie,/ Hee keepes, and gives to me his deaths conquest" (Shawcross 345). Specifically, in Holy Sonnet VI, Donne brags about his ability to triumph over Death. "Death be not proud.../ For, those, whom thou

think'st, thou dost overthrow,/ Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.../ One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,/ And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die" (Shawcross 342). Once again, the power of Donne's thoughts and beliefs, in particular his belief in Jesus as his Savior, is victorious over the forces of Nature that would thwart his attempt to possess eternal love.

Nevertheless, however omnipotent Donne might have felt at times, the effects of his intense need for love in combination with his feelings of self-condemnation often left him impotent emotionally and psychologically, especially in the presence of God. Adding to his already existing sense of guilt over killing his father, Donne is again faced with a father in God, a father who cannot be destroyed by Donne's thoughts or wishes. Donne must either make peace with this Father or deal with the consequences in eternal damnation.

However, even though Donne wants to be a good child to God, he does not have the power to change his own evil ways. Consequently, the *Holy Sonnets* are steeped with a sense of Donne's powerlessness to obtain God's forgiveness through his own strength. Tortured by fears that his earlier way of life meant he was eternally damned, Donne felt compelled to plead for and to submit to any type of punishment provide by God here on earth to avoid an eternal hell.

For Donne, the realization of his impotence to overcome temptation and sin is overwhelming. "Our old subtle foe so tempteth me,/ That not one houre I can my selfe, sustaine" admits Donne in Holy Sonnet XIII. The sense of defeat and despaire in these lines cannot be overlooked. In Holy Sonnet I, Donne cries out to God to for help. "Why doth the devill then usurpe in mee?/ Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?/ Except thou rise and

for thine owne worke fight,/ Oh I shall soone despaire" (Shawcross 339).

Again, Donne takes on a female persona, feeling "ravish[ed]" by evil. God is called on to "rise," in a very sexual sense, and reclaim what is rightfully his, his possession.

To escape this extreme sensation of condemnation and helplessness, Donne feels that drastic measures are required on the behalf of God to scourge Donne of his sin. One of the best examples of this need for punishment felt by Donne is Holy Sonnet X. Donne begs God:

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
 As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
 That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, 'and bend
 Your force, to break, blowe, burn, and make me new.
 I, like an usurpt towne, to'another due
 Labour to'admit you, but Oh, to no end,
 Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,
 But is captiv'd, and proves weake or untrue,
 Yet dearly'I love you, and would be lov'd faine,
 But am betroth'd unto your enemye,
 Divorce mee,'untie, or breake that knot againe,
 Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
 Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee. (Shawcross 344).

Clearly, in this poem, Donne feels impotent to change his life so dramatically through his own efforts.

Donne wants God to "batter" his heart, not just "knocke, breathe, shine, and ... mend" it. Donne feels the need for an extreme, almost violent intervention by God to subdue and tame the evil within him. His desire to

experience total helplessness is thought, by Donne, to be the only way to atone for his sins and to regain his omnipotence through Christ. "That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee" reasons Donne. Like a piece of stained glass, Donne pleads with God to "breake, blowe, burn, and make [him] new." Unable to be rehabilitated or salvaged, Donne's only hope is to be completely remade. Only then does Donne think he can escape the guilt and condemnation he feels within him.

Donne admission that his own abilities are insufficient in the face of his sin is difficult for him because his feelings of omnipotence are still present. "Reason," Donne's thoughts and beliefs that have been so powerful in the past, has now become "weake or untrue," falling "captive" to his lustful desires. The imagery of the "usurpt towne," "labour[ing] to admit" God, suggests to the reader the reason Donne cannot win this struggle by himself. Even in the presence of God, Donne's sexual passions find away past his ego's censorship into the light of day. Passions that strong and cunning cannot be turned off or simply ignored. From Donne's perspective, these passions must be destroyed.

All Donne wants from God is to "be lov'd," but he does not believe that he is. Again, the need for love dominates Donne's priorities. The reason, Donne believes, that he is lacking God's love is that he is "betroth'd" to the Devil. Donne urges God to undo this marriage, "imprison" and "enthrall" him. Just as Donne and the speakers of his *Songs and Sonnets* needed complete possession of their female lovers to feel loved, Donne wants God to possess him completely to prove that he is worthy to be loved. Curiously, Donne assumes a female persona throughout this poem as a sign of his submission and weakness. It is apparent from Donne's writings that he does not feel women are very strong. Therefore, in order to reconcile the

conflict between his own feelings of strength and weakness, Donne divides himself into a male and a female self. Donne concludes this sonnet with the belief that unless God "ravishes" him, he will never be "chast." This extreme metaphor is both shocking and horrifying but it illustrates the tremendous need on Donne's part for God to intervene and drastically change Donne from within.

Holy Sonnet XIV echoes this same sentiment by Donne. Both his body and his spirit require God's renovation, being both "drown'd" and "burnt" in an attempt to cleanse Donne from his iniquity. Ironically, just as opposite emotions are constantly at battle within Donne, opposite measures are sought to bring relief. Furthermore, again Donne would like God to captivate him completely. Therefore, only by "eating" Donne, actually physically consuming him, God can "heale" him.

In the *Songs and Sonnets*, Donne is typically able to suppress his feelings of impotence through his sense of omnipotence. Because Donne's need for love is so intense, he is willing to employ any means to obtain it from his lovers. However, the speakers of Donne's poetry occasionally find themselves unable to obtain the love they desire. When this happens, the effect is devastating, shaking Donne's ego to its very core. From these defeats emerge Donne's feelings of impotence.

The speaker of "Loves infinitenesse" bemoans, "If yet I have not all thy love,/ Deare, I shall never have it all,/ I cannot breath one other sigh, to move;/ Nor can intreat on other teare to fall" (Shawcross 99). The inability to woo his lover is seen as an irrevocable defeat. Looking at Donne's early childhood, the remarriage of his mother only six short months after Donne's victory over his biological father is experienced by Donne as the same type crushing defeat. In "Twickenham Garden," the speaker desires to become a

"stone fountain weeping out my yeare" (Shawcross 116). Because his love is unrequited, Donne's heart turns to stone, forever mourning his defeat rather than searching for someone else to love.

Although each of these conflicts, sufficiency versus need, justification versus condemnation, and omnipotence versus impotence, reside primarily in Donne's subconscious, the poet was not unaware of their existence. Without the knowledge of psychoanalytic theory, it is most unlikely that Donne could have put a name to the conflicts he continually experienced. However, that does not mean Donne did not try. In Holy Sonnet XIX, Donne's last sonnet, Donne muses over his internal turmoil, writing:

Oh, to vex me, contraries meete in one:
 Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
 A constant habit; that when I would not
 I change in vowes, and in devotione.
 As humorous is my contritione
 As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:
 As ridlingly distemperd, cold and hott,
 As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
 I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day
 In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:
 To morrow'I quake with true feare of his rod.
 So my devout fitts come and go away
 Like a fantastique Ague: save that here
 Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare. (Shawcross
 350-1)

Remarkably, Donne touches on every conflict identified and discussed previously in this thesis.

Echoing Paul in Romans 7:15, Donne recognizes his inability to control his vacillations between extremes and is "vex[ed]" by this knowledge. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." These shifts between extremes have become a "constant habit," admits Donne. "Like a fantastique Ague," Donne describes that his "devout fitts come and go away." What Donne does not know is that what he experiences actually is a sickness, not of the body but of the mind and of the heart. Although "[he] would not ... change in vowes" or "in devotione," Donne is impotent to do any differently.

Donne acknowledges that his need for "contritione" and "Love" runs "cold and hott." Both "contritione" and "Love" are similar for Donne, "contritione" allowing Donne to gain the love of God, although one belongs to the realm of religion and one to the realm of the "profane." It is noteworthy, however, that the Anglican preacher is still relying on a Catholic ceremony to reach God. Nevertheless, Donne's need for this love, whether from women or God, waxes and wanes as it is "ridlingly distemperd."

"I durst not view heaven yesterday" confesses Donne, weighed down by feelings of self-condemnation. This condemnation is so great that Donne believes not even God can love him. However, "to day" is different day for Donne and with it comes a different extreme. "In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God," muses Donne. Donne uses these "prayers" and "speaches" to justify himself to God. Like his many female lovers, God must be convinced and cajoled into meeting Donne's deep needs. By "to morrow," though, the pendulum has swung back again and Donne finds himself "quak[ing] with true feare of [God's] rod." The word "rod" intimates Donne's feeling of being in a sexual competition with God. His impotence in comparison makes him "quake."

In one simple phrase Donne encapsulates this struggle between omnipotence and impotence, describing himself "as infinite, as none." Even in the presence of God, Donne feels the pull of his powerful id to take on God in a battle of wills. At the same time, Donne is excruciatingly aware of his earlier defeats and the condemnation that accompanied his hollow victory by killing his father. So which of these dichotomous emotions dominates? For this Donne, the Anglican preacher in the autumn of his life, the answer must be impotence. Donne proclaims "Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare." These days are not "best" because they are Donne's favorite, but because they are the days when he most closely resembles what he believes God would have him to be.

John Donne's poetry is among the greatest literature known to exist. They are the creations of a man who was internally conflicted, torn between the extremes of sufficiency and need, condemnation and justification, and omnipotence and impotence. Given the current knowledge provided by psychoanalysis, Donne might have been able to resolve his conflicts, make peace with his childhood and his dead father, and live a happy life. Unfortunately for Donne, he was born a few hundred years too soon. However, as painful and as tormented as Donne's life must have been, the lives of all those who read his poetry are made richer for his experiences. For this reason, may John Donne be as blessed as he has blessed his readers.

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