

A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

25 If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses⁴ are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

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

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

1633

The Ecstasy¹

Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swelled up to rest
The violet's reclining head,
Sat we two, one another's best.

5 Our hands were firmly cemented
With a fast balm^o which thence did spring, *perspiration*
Our eye-beams² twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string;

So to intergraft our hands, as yet
10 Was all our means to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes³ to get^o *beget*
Was all our propagation.

As 'twixt two equal armies Fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
15 Our souls (which to advance their state
Were gone out) hung 'twixt her and me;

And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day the same our postures were,
20 And we said nothing all the day.

4. The two legs of a geometer's or draftsman's compass. This simile is the most famous example of the "metaphysical conceit" (see the "Literary Terminology" appendix to this volume).

1. From *ekstasis* (Greek), a movement of the soul

outside of the body.

2. Invisible shafts of light, thought of as going out of the eyes and thereby enabling one to see things.

3. Reflections of each in the other's eyes, often called "making babies."

- If any, so by love refined
 That he soul's language understood,
 And by good love were grown all mind,⁴
 Within convenient distance stood,
- 25 He (though he knew not which soul spake,
 Because both meant, both spake the same)
 Might thence a new concoction⁵ take,
 And part far purer than he came.
- This ecstasy doth unperplex,
 30 We said, and tell us what we love;
 We see by this it was not sex;
 We see we saw not what did move;⁰ *motivate us*
- But as all several⁰ souls contain *separate*
 Mixture of things, they know not what,
 35 Love these mixed souls doth mix again,
 And makes both one, each this and that.
- A single violet transplant,
 The strength, the color, and the size
 (All which before was poor and scant)
 40 Redoubles still,⁰ and multiplies. *continually*
- When love with one another so
 Interinanimates two souls,
 That abler soul, which thence doth flow,
 Defects of loneliness controls.
- 45 We then, who are this new soul, know
 Of what we are composed and made,
 For th' atomies⁰ of which we grow *components*
 Are souls, whom no change can invade.
- But O alas, so long, so far
 50 Our bodies why do we forbear?
 They are ours, though they are not we; we are
 The intelligences, they the sphere.⁶
- We owe them thanks because they thus
 Did us to us at first convey,
 55 Yielded their forces, sense, to us,
 Nor are dross to us, but allay.⁷
- On man heaven's influence works not so
 But that it first imprints the air:⁸

4. On this higher love, see Bembo's ladder of love from Castiglione's *The Courtier*.

5. In the alchemical sense of sublimation or purification.

6. In Ptolemaic astronomy, each planet, set in a transparent "sphere" that revolved and so carried

it around the earth, was inhabited by a controlling angelic "intelligence."

7. "Dross" is an impurity that weakens metal; "allay" (alloy) strengthens it.

8. Astrological influences were thought to work on people through the medium of the surrounding air.

So soul into the soul may flow,
 60 Though it to body first repair.⁰ *go*

As our blood labors to beget
 Spirits⁹ as like souls as it can,
 Because such fingers need⁰ to knit *are needed*
 That subtle knot which makes us man,

65 So must pure lovers' souls descend
 T' affections, and to faculties
 Which sense may reach and apprehend;
 Else a great prince in prison lies.

To our bodies turn we then, that so
 70 Weak men on love revealed may look;
 Love's mysteries¹ in souls do grow,
 But yet the body is his book.

And if some lover, such as we,
 Have heard this dialogue of one,²
 75 Let him still mark⁰ us; he shall see *observe*
 Small change when we are to bodies gone.

1633

The Funeral

Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm
 Nor question much
 That subtle wreath of hair which crowns my arm;
 The mystery, the sign you must not touch,
 5 For 'tis my outward soul,
 Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
 Will leave this to control,
 And keep these limbs, her¹ provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewy thread² my brain lets fall
 10 Through every part
 Can tie those parts and make me one of all,
 These hairs which upward grew, and strength and art
 Have from a better brain,
 Can better do it; except⁰ she meant that I *unless*
 15 By this should know my pain,
 As prisoners then are manacled, when they're condemned to die.

9. Subtle substances thought to be produced by the blood to serve as intermediaries between body and soul.

1. The implied comparison is with God's mysteries, which are revealed and may be read in the book of Nature and the book of Scripture.

2. "Dialogue of one" because "both meant, both spake the same" (line 26).

1. The soul's, but also the mistress's (cf. "she," line 14).

2. The nervous system.

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