

Speech on john donne

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Kushal's Speech on John Donne Poetry and W; t In what ways do Donne and Edson represent 'the kingdom of the well and ... the kingdom of the sick' in their texts? Compose the oral presentation you would give. The kingdom of well and the kingdom of the sick are paradoxical questions of our existence, which come to the fore when we ponder on the profundities of life and seek truth. This holds true for John Donne's metaphysical poetry and Margaret Edson's post-modern play W; t through its delineation of death and salvation, the key questions of human condition. Both composers use language as a didactic device to depict suffering and the emotional and psychological struggle that often prompts personal insight. John Donne's poetry delves into the 'kingdom of the well' through his refutation of medieval perception of death, shaped by the optimism of Protestant Christian ideals of afterlife. His Holy Sonnet, 'Death Be Not Proud' elucidates fear of death but instead of hiding from death, he exercises power over it.

The shift in tone after the volta, subverts death's power through the use of imagery "Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings and desperate men," signifying that death has no control over such things but is rather dictated by event, which undercuts death's perceived power over humanity. Second person references to 'thou', 'thee' and 'thy', personifies Death as the central conceit. Robbed of dignity and power, it is addressed in a confronting and mocking tone, belittled as being less than 'Mighty'. Acerbic mockery coupled with pity in the concluding sestet confirms that Death is not 'Mighty and dreadful' but in fact powerless. Donne conveys a Humanist optimism that counters any fears of the 'dreadful' immediacy of death. Instead of misgiving, there is the joyous anticipation of spiritual unity with God through

the Protestant doctrine of salvation. In 'Hymne to God My God, in My Sicknesse', the opening words 'I joy' in the third stanza establish the linking of opposites in cosmography conceit. The pain and fear of dying becomes concurrent with the joy of salvation and imminent union with God.

Correspondingly, in *W;t* debilitating pain has kept Vivian confined to her bed, beyond the 'scrupulously detailed examinations' that she had favoured in her former life. Yet like the speaker in Donne's life, the end of this life is in fact the beginning of the new. Even though Vivian is moved into isolation, she is not willing to acknowledge her inevitable death, as suffering and mortality are simultaneously deeply individual and universal problems. She discovers the fear of death is in 'just wants to curl up in a little ball', which shows her weak and fragile body and state of mind as the fear of death overwhelms her. Pain and anguish can be revelatory, prompting a cathartic change in outlook and personal values.

The stage direction 'escaping', is inserted after she begins to acknowledge that she will be unable to teach again as she is dying, however, quickly 'escapes' and change the subject. This inclusion reflects the post-modern, secular society where the reliance on religion is not as prominent, implying that people may be left unsure of what to expect after death, and as such they are reluctant to dwell on the possibilities of what could happen. In facing terminal disease, she comes to realise, Death is, 'Nothing but a breath-a comma' that separates life from everlasting. She sheds her cap, bracelet and her two gowns and "The instant she is naked, and beautiful, reaching out for the light." The theatre lights are immediately dimmed and the play ends. Therefore, Vivian death has been a transitional state and a

release. She is a vision of purity, which follows on with Donne's belief that suffering makes an individual pure and grants them into heaven. Donne had directly addressed God of guidance, and as the pain became debilitating, Vivian too calls out 'God, I'm going to barf my brains out.' She comes to realise that, Death is, 'Nothing but a breath—a comma' that 'separates life from the everlasting. It is very simple really.'

Thus, the kingdom of well overwhelms the kingdom of sick. Donne's selected Holy Sonnets emphasise Death as not a destination but a transition of redemption and the spiritual conquer of the entity. This is drawn from the beliefs of the Anglican Church, where religious values are interwoven with the journey of Death. The sonnet "Hymne to God, my God, in my sickness" adopts a sense of confident faith to engage with the audience that God is a merciful, and forgiving being. He uses his reasoning of faithfulness to position God in such a way that he should be forgiven and be able to redeem himself. Employing the technique of paronomasia, he uses the term 'streights' and 'straits' to refer to the narrow passage of water between land masses directly reflected onto the difficult times in his life thus logically arguing a place in heaven. In "Poisonous materials, the rhetorical positioning of the persona at the power of God proves the contextual belief of surrendering to God in order to achieve redemption. Demonstrating the orthodox Anglican beliefs of his time, the persona confidently states in a biblical allusion "'[God]' hadst seal'd my pardon with thy blood". This is a reference to the sacrifice by Jesus who cleansed the sins of men. Donne acknowledges that he has sinned throughout his life and therefore needs to repent in "At the Round Earth's Imagin'd Corners' when he says 'my sinnes

abound, 'tis late to aske abundance of thy grace." This statement highlights that death is a trivial obstacle, which is further enforced mercilessly with the contention in wit that "death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die."

Donne's religious values are able to relinquish his anxiety, which is what Edson reshapes in a contemporary society, bringing forward the intellectualization of death through the dichotomy of kingdom of sick and kingdom of well. Correspondingly, Vivian transitions on the power of intellect and language to the salvation of love and comfort is an almost direct reflection of Donne's poems of redemption and conquering Death in effort for peace from introspective beliefs of the Jacobean Era. Having been grown into a female independent society endorsing female independence, Vivian uses her scholarly intellect to get by in society. Her superficial self can be optimized through the alliteration of "published and perished" supporting her satirical and ironical temperament, where she embodies the self-defining process of the modern time through her expert wit and intellectual contributions to society. Vivian clearly moves away from the essential comfort of human value, yet however upon having the catastrophic weight of death upon her shoulders her 'learn[s] to suffer'. The dramatic gesture of fear "I don't feel sure of myself anymore" shows how Edson prompts the audience to realise that intellect alone cannot fill the comfort of solace.

Edson contextualises salvation by realising the timeless values she blinded herself from the Jacobean Era of Donne's poetry. The intertextual use of the exclamatory, "Oh God?" from *Poisonous Minerals* is reinforced with *Bearing [naked and beautiful, reaching for the lights... light out]* Her symbolism of 'naked and reaching' through dramatic lighting Edson shows, like Donne, that

Bearing seeks cleansing and rebirth. From being metaphorically referring to herself to as a "specimen jar" in inspiration of the treatment of doctors to her, she realises through Susie that she can give up pride and find solace. Through the emphasis of the popsicle scene, Vivian finds humour in the word "soporific" and falls into a gentle sleep as she is no longer the prideful scholar. Vivian steps out of the bed...moving slowly towards the light.' She sheds her cap, bracelet and her two gowns and 'The instant she is naked, and beautiful, reaching for the light-'. The theatre lights are immediately dimmed and the play ends. Vivian's death has been a transitional state and a release. This helps her transitioning from kingdom of sick to kingdom of the well. In this manner, Edson kingdom of sickness elucidates how contextual influences have been moulded into timeless interpretations of human bonds. Through intertextual readings of interpersonal connections, responders gain an insightful understanding of the dichotomy of kingdom of well and kingdom of sick through quintessential nature of death. Donne's selected poetry and Margaret Edson's *W;t* used the same values of mortality and salvation through Donne's context of religion and the nihilistic/scientific beliefs of Edson. This greater understanding of death and the interchangeable sentiments of human bonds remained timeless in past and will in future as people moves from the kingdom of suffering to the kingdom of well.