

Comparison between donne and wit



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The exploration of connections instigates a process of reflection whereby the inspiration of the known reflects upon the new, while the new resonates with the known. Thus, it can be seen that texts may be interesting on their own, but through connected exploration, become illuminating. The connections shared between Donne's metaphysical poetry and Edson's play *Wit* involves more than the adaptation of ideas and form, portraying the relationship between text and context.

The modern drama *Wit* re-embodies Donne's experiences of agency and self evaluation, thereby revitalising the humanistic paradigms of the Jacobean period within her secular context. Thus the reciprocal values of these texts transcend contextual limitations, their meaning immortalised, remains ever relevant. The revival of metaphysical ideology within the Jacobean Renaissance, transformed the Catholic conventions of blind faith into the Protestant teachings of religious re-examination, the theological transition inducing uncertainty amongst society. Authored during Donne's religious incertitude, *If Poisonous Minerals* demonstrates the re-evaluation of faith and its inherent need for spiritual growth within an ideologically conflicted environment. The subversion of traditional sonnet structure, juxtaposes personal doubt within the octet to religious revelation within the sestet, the transitory process of the rejuvenation of faith, reflecting both the persona's spiritual growth and Donne's personal, theistic metamorphosis. Alluding to original sin, the metaphysical conceit of fruit to death within the octet, *If that tree, whose fruit threw death on me* symbolises the persona's uncertainty within God's actions, reflective of the context's perturbed religious convictions. In contrast, the

exclamatory cries within the sestet, achieved through the use of enjambment and caesura, '??? Oh God, Oh!???' presents the rejuvenation of the persona's faith, the re-evaluation, reflecting its spiritual growth, paralleling Donne's religious transcendence beyond his conflictive Reformatory environment.

The implicit transformation of self evaluation through Wit's contextual lens, reflects the influence of contemporary society's scientific constructs. In contrast to the overtly religious representation in PM, Edson presents the re-evaluation of emotion and relations, reflecting its inherent importance for personal growth within an isolated environment. In comparison to Donne's sonnet subversion, Edson's utilises characterisation to the same effect presenting a transitory process which reflects Vivian's personal growth. Initially devoid of human connections within her isolatory hospital setting, Vivian adopts an over intellectualising nature, symbolised through her anatomisation of medical terminology such as '??? insidious???' reflecting the dehumanisation and emotional detachment arising the contextual importance of scientific rationality. This intellectualism is later juxtaposed with her rejection of Donne's scholarly works, reflected in Edson's dialogue, '??? I'll recite something by John Donne. No!?' By the explicit reference, Edson metaphorically parallels Vivian's abandonment of Donne to her rejection of intellectual pursuits, simultaneously catalysing Vivian's re-evaluation. The established relationship between Vivian and her contrasting foil Susie reflected by emotional diction, '??? Susie, you're still going to care of me aren't you???' illustrates the conclusion of the re-evaluative process, symbolising

her established emotional connections. Thus the connected exploration of self evaluation, in contrast to its exploration in either text alone, illuminates previously undisclosed perspectives.

Through the intertextuality within Wit and the consequent revitalisation of humanistic paradigms, Edson's criticism of her own secular context is enhanced. By her explicit reference to PM, resurrecting Donne's theological faith, in conjunction with her appropriation of wit, comparing death to sleep, "one short sleep past", Edson provides further insight into the humanistic values of Donne's religious context, simultaneously presenting their absence within her own text, reinforcing the dehumanisation arising from her context's secularity. As a scholar of metaphysics, the acceptance of mortality was fundamental in Donne's pursuit for spiritual fulfilment. Plagued throughout life by the stillborn birth of four children, death embodied a psychological barrier to Donne impeding its attainment. Authored in the wake of his looming fatality, *Death be Not Proud* reflects agency over death and its precursory requirement in the acceptance of mortality. The personification of death through second person references, "though, thee" mortalises death as a conquerable entity, the perceptual transformation a catalyst enabling the persona's empowerment. Absolute agency is reflected by the metaphysical conceit of death to sleep, "one short sleep past and death though shalt die", the metaphor a contextual reflection of the Renaissance semblance of the disparate conditions.

The caesura within the conceit, explicitly referenced in Wit, epitomises death, not an insuperable barrier, but a breath separating life from life

everlasting???, the assertion of death??™s fragility, symbolic of the persona??™s absolute empowerment. Finally reference to pleasure derived from death in the diction, ??? much pleasure, from thee much more must flow???, illustrates the persona??™s acceptance of mortality consequent from its precursory empowerment. Edson??™s implicit transformation of Donne??™s experience of agency is heavily influenced by the cathartic experience achieved in her work with AIDS patients. Similar to Donne, death was a regularity within her personal context, its common occurrence challenging Edson??™s perceptions of the effectiveness of modern medicine. In comparison to DP, Wit presents agency over death and its precursory role in the acceptance of mortality, challenging the immortality envisaged by the context??™s scientific advancement. Initially presented with her diagnosis, Vivian claims false empowerment, her breaking the fourth wall enhancing her dissolution, ??? I know all about death, I am after all a scholar of Donne??™s holy sonnets???.

The dissolution is juxtaposed by her acceptance of the DNR code, ??? If my heart stops beating, let it stop???, the final choice to perish, symbolic of absolute agency achieved. Finally Edson??™s explicit reference to the ??? little white rabbit???, a reflection of Donne??™s faith in god, allegorically symbolises her acceptance of mortality, its conclusive reading demonstrating the inability of modern medicine to provide immortality. By the connected exploration of the experience, the two texts affirm a didactic approach, illuminating new meaning in respect to human agency. Within his personal context and historical stage, the acceptance of mortality was a looming inevitability for Donne, reflected in his verbose argument forcing death to

submission in DP. Challenging the false promise of immortality reflected by modern medicine, Wit re-embodies the fatalistic paradigms of the Jacobean period by her explicit reference to DP. By the reference, agency??™s precursory role and thus illuminated and its timeless need, transcending beyond contextual influence is presented. The exploration of connections between Donne??™s poetry and Edson??™s Wit demonstrates the dynamic process whereby the inspiration of known reflects upon the new, while the new resonates with the known. The modern drama Wit immortalises Donne??™s experience of self evaluation and agency over death, demonstrating the transcendence of the values beyond their contextual limitations.