

John Donne



Thou hast made me
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Relationship with God

- ❖ Presents himself as a suppliant, yet uses authoritative language when telling God what to do:
- ❖ ‘Thou hast made me [...] / Repair me now’
- ❖ As in ‘Batter my heart’, the speaker implies that God created him so is responsible for repairing him
- ❖ The speaker is like a flawed machine



Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste,
I run to death, and death meets me as fast,

- ❖ Dramatic opening
- ❖ Direct address to God which is both a request and a command: 'Repair me now'
- ❖ Anguished plea to God to repair him is similar to that in 'Batter my heart'
- ❖ Sense of urgency as the end of the poet's life draws near: repair must happen 'now'
- ❖ Death is personified. Poet and death run towards one another, suggesting both inevitability and a sort of intimacy. Balance of this line beautifully evokes a couple running towards one another.

And all my pleasures are like yesterday;

- ❖ The poet's life up to this point fades into insignificance in the face of death
- ❖ He can take no pleasure in life now and wishes only to be cleansed of past sins and brought to God

I dare not move my dim eyes any way,
Despair behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sin in it, which it towards hell doth weigh.

- ❖ The poet is clinging to his soul and his vision of God and dares not look anywhere else.
- ❖ There is nothing behind him but despair and nothing in front of him but death, and he is terrified.
- ❖ Harsh 'd' sounds drive home the sense of misery and despair: 'dim eyes', 'Despair behind, and death before'
- ❖ He fears he is too weak to hold on much longer and may be dragged down into hell.

Language and mood

- ❖ Note the change in mood from the octet to the sestet.
- ❖ Octet is full of despair and this is reflected in the language: 'decay', 'death' used three times, 'dim', 'Despair', 'terror', 'feebled', 'waste', 'sin,' 'towards hell doth weigh'.
- ❖ The poet is being **dragged down** and fears even to look around lest he plunge towards hell.
- ❖ The language in the sestet is about **rising up** towards God and heaven: 'above', 'I rise', 'Thy grace may wing me', 'Thou like adamant draw mine iron heart'.



Only thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can look, I rise again;

- ❖ Change in mood
- ❖ If God helps the poet to look towards him, he may be saved.
- ❖ He cannot achieve salvation alone.

But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
That not one hour I can myself sustain;
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.

- ❖ Conceit of man being a machine made by God is continued here: he has an 'iron heart' and God is the magnet or 'adamant' which can draw him upwards.
- ❖ Speaker fears he is susceptible to temptation and that sin is the iron in his soul.
- ❖ God's grace may, like an angel, 'wing' the poet towards heaven. The word 'may' suggests a sense of doubt. However, the sestet offers a note of hope that is absent from the octet.