

The Ecstasy, by John Donne

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.

Our hands were firmly cemented
With a fast balm, which thence did spring,
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string;

So to intergraft our hands, as yet
Was all our means to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.

As 'twixt two equal armies, Fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
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,
And we said nothing, all the day.

If any, so by love refined,
That he soul's language understood,
And by good love were grown all mind,
Within convenient distance stood,

He (though he knew not which soul spake
Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take,
And part far purer than he came.

This ecstasy doth unperplex

(We said) and tell us what we love.
We see by this, it was not sex,
We see, we saw not, what did move:

But as all several souls contain
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love, these mixed souls doth mix again,
And makes both one, each this and that.

A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size
(All which before was poor and scant)
Redoubles still, and multiplies.

When love with one another so
Interinanimates two souls,
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,
Defects of loneliness controls.

We then, who are this new soul, know,
Of what we are composed, and made,
For th' atomies of which we grow
Are souls, whom no change can invade.

But, O alas, so long, so far
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They are ours, though they are not we, we are
The intelligences, they the spheres.

We owe them thanks, because they thus
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yielded their forces, sense, to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay.

On man heaven's influence works not so,
But that it first imprints the air;
So soul into the soul may flow,
Though it to body first repair.

As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot, which makes us man:

So must pure lovers' souls descend
To 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
Weak men on love revealed may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.

And if some lover, such as we,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still mark us, he shall see
Small change when we're to bodies gone.