

# A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

MAY 2017							JUNE 2017						
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John Donne

SATURDAY

Wk 15 □ 105-260

15

APRIL '17

John Donne wrote this poem on the occasion of parting from his wife, Anne More in the year 1611 or 1612. He was going on a diplomatic mission to France, leaving his wife behind in England. A valediction is a farewell speech.

Through this poem the poet cautions against grief about separation and affirms the special, particular love the poet and his wife share.

Like most of Donne's poems, this poem was also published after his death in the collection "Songs and Sonnets."

The speaker begins with the image of good men or virtuous men dying silently, without any complaint, softly urging their souls to leave their bodies. Such deaths are so imperceptible that the dying men's friends are not sure as to when did they take their last breath.

The speaker in a dramatic situation addresses his beloved not to make their separation time the occasion of mourning and wailing. As the virtuous men die silently and without any complaint, they should also take a peaceful leave as their love is also a virtuous one. He further

says weeping and sighing excessively would degrade their love by broadcasting it to common people. He goes on counselling her and says that when earth moves (during earthquakes) everything on the earth are shaken and brings a great deal of fear. Such events are noticed by common, ordinary people. But in the next

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MONDAY  
Wk 16 □ 107-258

MARCH 2017

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APRIL 2017

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'17 APRIL

lines he refers to the heavenly bodies - the  
 8 Sun, moon, stars and planets - their movements  
 and vibrations, which are larger and more  
 9 significant, yet they go unnoticed by most  
 people. Similarly he wants his beloved too  
 10 to be calm and fearless as this separation is  
 for the time being and their love is above all  
 11 these earthy things like eyes, lips, and  
 hands, which they are not going to miss at all.  
 12 He says it is for boring, common place people  
 who cannot handle separation because their  
 1 love depends on sensual connection.

The poet and his lover, on the other hand  
 2 experience a more rare and special kind of  
 bond. Though he has to go and their bodies  
 3 would be far from each other, their souls would  
 always be one. He is referring to their love  
 4 as platonic & spiritual. He says that the  
 physical distance between them will not serve  
 5 as a gap, but an expansion of love. The speaker  
 here gives the analogy of gold. Just as  
 6 gold can be stretched and expanded by  
 thinning it, similarly their love will also  
 expand to cover the distance between them.

After this, in the next extended metaphor  
 (conceit) he compares their souls to the  
 10 compass where her soul is the fixed foot in  
 the centre of the compass whereas his soul  
 is the foot that moves around. ~~the~~ So his  
 wife's soul is steady and it remains

MAY 2017

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JUNE 2017

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TUESDAY

Wk 16 □ 108-257

18

APRIL '17

grounded. However far the moving foot of the Compass go, it remains attached and connected to the centre of the Compass. So, though the speaker / poet is going to be physically parted, his soul will always be in touch with his beloved. The poet also appreciates the fact that because of his beloved's steady nature, he will end his tour one day from where he began - meaning thereby that he will certainly come back to ~~here~~ here again.

- The conceit of Compass is outstanding in this poem which is often cited in English literature as one of the best examples of extended metaphor. The intensity of feelings of separation is overloaded in this poem which was written to his wife Anne before taking leave for the Continental Europe tour.

⇒ This poem creates a contrast between the common love of the ordinary people and the unique love of the poet. He separates his love from others in a way that their love does not whine and show any fear of separation because their souls are connected.

With the use of metaphysical conceit, Donne actualizes his arguments and affections to his wife by substantial images and consoles his wife. With their everlasting attachment with each other, he suggests that they will reunite soon with an enhanced and purified love.