

# Cloud School Pro (CSP)

## Lecture Sheet

For 1st Year Paid Group

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### Poem: The Good Morrow

Writer: John Donne (1572 –1631)

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John Donne's poem "The Good-Morrow" is part of his Songs and Sonnets published in 1633, and although he called this a sonnet, the poem is 21 lines long rather than 14 and is a mix of iambic pentameter (5 lines of unstressed/stressed syllables) and iambic hexameter (6 lines). This poem, like many poems written by other metaphysical poets, centers on love, both physical and spiritual, and is presented as a dramatic monologue.

The tone is light, informal, and highly intimate, with imagery drawn from religion (Donne was a great preacher), science, and, most interestingly, cartography. Above all, Donne speaks to his lover about physical love and its transformation to an undying spiritual love, very reminiscent of one of his later poems to his wife, "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning." Many metaphysical poems are framed on the if . . . then construct--that is, if this is true, then this must be the case, a very simple argument. Although framed as a monologue, the poem assumes the assent or agreement of the listener.

'Good Morrow' has three stanzas with twenty-one equal lines. The rhyme scheme for each of the stanza is ABABCC. Each stanza has its line of thought but perfectly cohere to deliver the theme of the poem. The poem is presented in a conversational format though the second person who the poetic persona addresses is not made known. This is common among metaphysical poets.

### Context

"The Good-Morrow" is written from the point of view of an awaking lover and describes the lover's thoughts as he wakes next to his partner. The lover's musings move from discussing sensual love to spiritual love as he realises that, with spiritual love, the couple are liberated from fear and the need to seek adventure. The poem makes use of biblical and Catholic writings, indirectly referencing the legend of the Seven Sleepers and Paul the Apostle's description of divine, agapic love – two concepts with which, as a practising Catholic, Donne would have been familiar.

### Theme

John Donne's The Good Morrow is a characteristic metaphysical poem which deals with the theme of love a strong and true passion of love. After these souls walking up the lover and the beloved are consumed with the passion of love and they became one. In fact, oneness in love triumph over all earthly mutability and morality and shines ever in mutual attachment a love which does not deal with the body but in the bond between the bond souls of the lovers. The concentration of thought and compression style marks it is a metaphysical poem. The metaphysical conceits are drawn from geography mythology scholastic and philosophy and an intellectual approach to the subject of love make the poem a metaphysical poem.

The Theme of John Donne's *The Good-Morrow*: *Love, Depth and Devotion, Triumphs over all Earthly Mutability and Morality.*

### **Mood and Tone**

The tone of the poem is light, highly intimate and introspective. The first stanza suggests surprise or realization tone. The speaker is happy to discover that he and his beloved are in love. In the second stanza the tone is confident. The speaker is so elated that he says "Let possess one world, each hath one, and is one". In the last stanza the tone is again happy about the ephemeral nature of their love.

### **Main Text**

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I  
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till  
then?  
But sucked on country pleasures, childishy?  
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?  
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.  
If ever any beauty I did see,  
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of  
thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,  
Which watch not one another out of fear;  
For love, all love of other sights controls,  
And makes one little room an everywhere.

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,  
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have  
shown,  
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is  
one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,  
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;  
Where can we find two better hemispheres,  
Without sharp north, without declining west?  
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;  
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I  
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can  
die.

### **Short Summary**

What did you and I even do before we were in love? Were we still breastfeeding? Did we only enjoy simple, childish things? Or were we fast asleep with the Seven Sleepers? It's true. But all of this is just pleasure's dream. If I ever wanted and gained something beautiful, it was just a dream of you.

And now good morning to our souls, which are waking up. They do not watch each other out of fear. There's no need for jealousy; love makes it so that we don't need to look at anything except each other. And it makes one small room as wide as the world. Let explorers cross the ocean to discover new worlds. Let other people make maps, charting worlds upon worlds. Let us have just one world: each of us is a world, and so each of us has a world.

My face appears in your eye and your face appears in my eye. And the truth of our hearts is visible in our faces. Where can we find two better globes, without the cold of the north or the darkness that comes when the sun sets in the west? When something dies, it dies because its parts were not appropriately mixed. But our loves are so perfectly matched that we have become one, and thus our love will not lose its power, and we will not die.

### **Detailed Summary**

The first stanza opens by posing a series of rhetorical questions that examine the narrator's life prior to knowing his true love and compares it to childhood and sleep. Donne employs an allegorical reference to the Catholic legend of the Seven Sleepers, which tells of seven early Christian children who slept in a cave for nearly 200 years to escape persecution. The poetic narrator then acknowledges that any pleasure he's experienced in his life up until this point was but a dream of his love that he encountered in that earlier 'nap' of his.

'And now good-morrow to our waking souls,' begins the second stanza, and ties into the poem's title and goal. The lovers' souls are noted as being joined, not out of jealous fear, but of pure love. The narrator dismisses the exploration of 'other worlds,' claiming all he needs is the 'one' world he and his love share as their own, since love 'makes one little room an everywhere.'

The final stanza highlights the perfection of the lovers' harmonious union, which is apparently so seamless that it makes them one inseparable being. While using geographical metaphors for death, the narrator then closes the poem with a claim to their immortality through the power and purity of their undying devotion to virtue and to one another.

### **Critical Analysis**

In his inimitable way, Donne begins the poem with a question - what thou and I did till we loved? This rhetoric easily captures the attention of the reader. The poet compares the first stage of love-sex and enjoyment with the mature type of love, the harmonious relationship of two souls. There is a lot of difference between the two types of love. The poet's wit is seen in his contrast between the two worlds- the worlds of the lovers and the geographical world. There is no 'sharp North' or 'declining West' in the world of lovers. It is a mutual love equal in quality and spirit-balanced and harmonized in such a manner that it is not subject to time or decay. The poet proceeds from the night scene and the experience of sleepy love to the morning of pure love which gives him a new life and makes him discover a world in their little room. No navigator has ever found a world as wonderful as the world of love. This discovery of true love is as welcome as the greeting of a new day

Donne's manner is that of 'concentration' advancing the argument in - stages, reasoning till he is able to prove his point and drive it home to the reader. Like an able lawyer, he presses his point in such a manner that it is very hard to refute it. Moreover, he marshals his images from different sources in such a way that the cumulative effect is irresistible. Grierson rightly points out that the imagery has been drawn from a variety of sources, i.e., myths of everyday life, e.g., the seven sleepers' den, 'suck'd on country pleasures' and 'wishing in the morning', 'one-little room', the geographical world, 'sea-discoveries', 'maps', 'hemispheres and lastly, the scholastic philosophy 'what-ever dyes, was not mixt equally'. The relation between one object and the other is made intellectually rather than verbally. Donne's method in spite of his scholarly references is not pedantic and appeals to the lay reader by its sincerity and sharp reasoning.

### **Quotations**

"I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I  
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?  
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?"

Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?"

"If ever any beauty I did see,  
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee."

"For love, all love of other sights controls,  
And makes one little room an everywhere."

"My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,  
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;"

"If our two loves be one, or, thou and I  
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die."

"Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one."

### **Figures of Speech/Poetic Devices**

**Speaker of the poem:** unnamed

**Point of view:** first person

### **Form and Meter**

Three stanzas, each a septet, ABABCC rhyme scheme, mostly iambic pentameter

### **Metaphors and Similes**

The process of "weaning"—literally, of easing a child off its mother's breastmilk—is used metaphorically to depict the speaker and his lover's childlike state in the past. The poet also invokes the concept of "hemispheres" metaphorically, with the speaker positing himself and his love as two halves of one globe. The poem contains no similes.

### **Alliteration**

"w" sounds in "Which watch not one another out of fear" and "Were we not weaned till then?"

### **Assonance**

"u" sounds in "sucked on country pleasures" and "i" sounds in "My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears"

### **Irony**

Arguably, Donne's use of religious themes in order to extoll romantic love is an ironic choice, given his historical context, since convention held that love of God was necessarily the "higher" form of love.

### **Genre**

Lyric poetry

### Setting

Implicitly, two lovers awakening next to each other.

**Protagonist:** the lover (the speaker of the poem)

### Major Conflict

The speaker's difficulty reconciling his past existence, before he met his lover, with the profound significance of love to his present life

### Allusions

"Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?" Allusion to a Christian parable

### Synecdoche

"Our waking souls," where "souls" is used as a stand-in for the speaker and his lover as a whole.

### Hyperbole

"If ever any beauty I did see, / Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee": a hyperbolic expression of the power of the speaker's love, which relegates every other experience of beauty or desire he has had to a "dream," i.e., a lesser manifestation of, his lover.

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