Original research article
UDK 821.111.09-97Don Dž.
DOI 10.21618/fil2532151j
COBISS.RS-ID 143849985

Božica Jović[1]
University of East Sarajevo
Faculty of Philosophy
Department of English

ONENESS IN DONNE

Abstract: *In this paper we will explore the concept of "oneness" in Donne's religious and love poetry. As such, this concept can be viewed as a philosophical concept of enlightenment either through devotion or love commitment. Also, this concept can be furthermore defined in opposition to the existing concepts of "fair" and "black" that permeated the early love sonnet in the English Renaissance. The duality between "fair" and "black," one denoting purity and virtue, generally speaking, and the other "desire" and "passion" as its opposites, was crucial for the early English sonneteers that it can posit a profound question of why Donne does not continue with or embrace this duality in his love poetry. Instead, he introduces the concept of "oneness" consistently throughout his poetry.*

Key words: *John Donne, oneness, sonnet, Platonism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to Renaissance, and especially its love poetry, i.e. the sonnets, two concepts consistently repeat themselves throughout the early Renaissance in England. These concepts are just two words: "fair" and "black." However, the weight of meaning they both carry is enormous. It is a clash of titanic proportions: the never-ending conflict between two views on our human reality––the one involving all things abstract, metaphysical or "pure," and the other involving everything that is mundane, transitory and appealing to our (perishable) senses.

Of course, it is important to bear in mind that it is, after all, about love that we are talking. Something traditionally looked upon as purely subjective. In other words, it was supposed that there are as many "loves" out there as there are many individuals who experience it and take pains to describe and express the experience in one of art forms. However, it was not so in the Renaissance. Our perception of

[1] bozica.jovic@ff.ues.rs.ba

the exclusivity of individual experience and its significance differs very much from the Renaissance view upon the same thing, and especially so in poetry. As a matter of fact, individuality as such was not deemed that much valuable, even when tied to something universally perceived as unique, individual and unrepeatable as love.

If lyrical poetry is not written for the sake of expressing one's individual, unrepeatable and unique experience, for what purpose it is written then? It is obvious that there is something more universal, something more than the banality of "falling in love," in the Renaissance English sonnet. It transcends itself. The meaning of "love" is never contained within the poem itself, never confined within the limits of its fourteen lines. Decoding the meaning of love should never be exercised within poems or even poets' personal lives.

The poems from the era contain within themselves "events," a mental movement towards something *outside* of the poem: 'The Petrarchan tradition [...] is one that takes the formative role of thought seriously, its ability to habituate and change the subject who is speaking' (Netzley, 2015:p.85). The act of writing and the act of reading are both transformative in real time. They mold us from within. Additionally, they point us, the readers, towards something outside of the poem. For instance, if we dwell for a long time upon the word "fair," which appears constantly in every English sonneteer at the time, we may draw some conclusions about its relevance and meaning. Partly because of its cultural context. "Fair" has a long standing of meaning everything good: form, colour, virtue, justice, etc. However, the true meaning of the term will elude us as long as we refuse to move alongside "events," that is, the speaker's subtle allusions to something bigger than either themselves or their particular experiences described within poem.

Netzley's (2015) notion of "events" within the Renaissance English poems is of a huge importance because it makes us reconsider the purpose of the act of (usually passive) reading and thinking that follows it: '[T]hinking [...] does consider thought to be itself a type of transformative action, not a mere reflection on external events, where the time transformation really abides' (p.85). In other words, the outside world is not a mere surrounding phenomenon to the poem, its creator and its reader. Netzley does have a specific thing on mind as he wrote these words; he was thinking about the transformative and potentially revolutionary powers of religious sonnets by John Milton. This transformative power resides in the sonnet's insistence on the actuality of the present moment: 'sonnets contain events, instead of simply reporting on the already past happening of those events or advocating for or prophesying their future occurrence' (2015:p.67). In the same way, a devotional sonnet in actuality should always dwell on and within the present, even when the hope of future features prom-

inently in it. On the other hand, love sonnets, only briefly alluded to by Netzley, are riddled with anxiety for the future. However, as we will explain presently, devotional and love sonnets do share much more than ordinarily thought.

This idea of the falsity of hope is something that should be understood as a central part in Milton's religious or political sonnets. The "events" within these poems should not be something that happen after finishing reading and then ruminating upon it in the real world. The reality, as it were, actualizes itself within the symbolic space created by the act of reading. The "apocalypse," referred to in the very title of the chapter of the book, "Hope in the Present: Paratactic Apocalypses and Contemplative Events in Milton's Sonnets," is something that does not rely on hope. Netzley rather zealously and rightfully so fights against the idea of any kind of final resolution to the problems expressed in these sonnets. Milton as the author does not pose himself as a sort of poetic lord of justice for all of the evils that we are besotted by in this world. The "apocalypse" happens now: 'a non-resentful end of time, one that does not close with [...] justice for the wicked' (2015:p.67).

Speaking about the end of the world trope, it would be interesting to summarize briefly the history of various interpretations of the Book of Revelation from which our culture has borrowed its concept of the apocalypse. In his very informative and useful YouTube video, under the title "Top Seven Mysteries in the Bible," a creator who goes by his channel name Redeemed Zoomer, a gen Z guy, briefly explains different positions regarding the concepts about the end of time and how to interpret the Book of Revelation:

> 'So, there's generally four camps that theologians will fall into. The first is the Preterist camp, which says that most of the stuff in the Book of Revelation [...] has already happened [...] Then there is the Futurist interpretation, which says that most of the stuff in the Revelation is going to happen in the future [...] Then there is the Historicist interpretation of the Revelation where it's not strictly past or future, but [...] it sees the entire Book of Revelation as the unfolding of the Church history, so some of it has already happened and some of it is still going to happen [...] And the least puzzle-solving view––this is probably the most popular interpretation among Reformed theologians today––is the Idealist interpretation, which is that Revelation isn't really talking about any specific historical events [...] It's just talking about cycles of Church history [...] cycles of glory and cycles of persecution.' (14:22)

If anything, this video presents to us a clear, interesting and systematic view on the subject matter.

2. LOVE (AND POLITICAL) TYRANNY

One of the things that both types of sonnets share is the tyrannical subject/object within the poem. In love sonnets, we have the trope of "cruel mistress," the object of the speaker's desire and dread at the same time: 'Ultimately, Sidney's entire sequence [...] serves as a brief for how one can be convinced to choose, freely, deliberately, and without ideological deception, to love and abstract and eternally absent tyrant' (Netzley, 2015:p.69). The object of the poet's erotic desire is named "tyrant" by Netzley, which is very interesting as it implies even some sort of pathology. On the other hand, Netzley (2015) has the following to say: 'Milton's sonnets are political [i. e. deal with political tyranny] [...] because they strike at the heart of the Petrarchan tradition's devotion to an absolutist theory of power predicated on the temporal deferral of fulfillment' (p.67). Furthermore, we can bring in Lacanian psychoanalysis into play here about the nature of authentic human desire, more specifically erotic desire. In a video posted on YouTube, entitled "Best of Slavoj Žižek / On Cynicism, Pleasure, Philosophy, and More" (2024), the famous Lacanian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek mentions something paradoxical about the nature of desire: 'Do we really want what we think we want? Quite often what appears as an obstacle to getting what we want is really what sustains our desire' (24:26). In other words, a direct acquisition of the object of desire, kills the desire. The same can be said about the––in default of better words––divine object of desire. The very nature of our devotion is represented as a winding path full of obstacles. Moreover, in our effort to constitute our position as the subject, as a devotee, in our relationship with the divine, which is, according to Netzley (2015) riddled with anxieties, the very instability of our positive affirmation is the source of our true nature, or, our subjectivity. In other words, things are never guaranteed. Slavoj Žižek (2024), in his recent book *Christian Atheism*, among many other things, applies Lacan's psychoanalytical approach on how to deal with the "subject." It is primarily a non-essential position, that is to say, it consolidates its reality only and exclusively through relational positions: 'the circular paradox here is that the subject is the failure of the operation to become subject: obstacle is a positive condition' (p.75). The very incompleteness of one's subjectivity is paradoxically necessary in order to establish the original subject. Hence, the object, both divine and human, of one's love is viewed as being tyrannical.

3. HUNGER AND SATIETY INTERPLAY

Netzley's (2011) analysis of George Herbert's devotional poetry, is precisely focused on the reader and their struggles in expressing and experiencing of their devotion: 'If the speaker of "Love (III)" errs, it is not because of an ineradicable lack, but rather because she imagines intimacy or presence as the completion of a quest after which there is nothing to do' (p.38). Both the imagined subject in a devotional relation and the subject in a love relation, do need their incompleteness as a permanent state, despite its perceived inadequacies, in order to constitute themselves as subjects in the first place. Subjects are noting essential, they retroactively make themselves the subjects in a specific relationship. Otherwise, the full completeness in the sense of fulfillment, would mean the end of the relationship, the end of both devotion and love. That is the significance of Plato's Eros, who is both plenty and hunger at the same time. Otherwise, we will experience, as Shakespeare puts it, "loathed satiety" (*Venus and Adonis*, l.19).

"The deferral of fulfillment" in a love sonnet refers to the eternal distance of the object of desire and love, whereas in a religious sonnet, it refers to an eluding (political) justice. In both cases there is a tyranny. However, Netzley's (2015) perception of the Petrarchan devotion is faulty. "The deferral of fulfillment" in a Petrarchan sonnet should not be understood as a sign of lamentation because of the impossibility of love's fulfillment. The truth is much more "philosophical." Actually, the lamented distance between lovers in the Petrarchan tradition illustrates not the actual distance between any two lovers, or the impossibility of love's fulfillment due to many reasons, but something more universal and inherited over from the ancient Greece. It illustrates the elusiveness and randomness of Eros, the ancient god of love, who indiscriminately makes people fall in love. The other reason is the dual nature of Eros himself, that is, the dual or opposite natures of his parents:

> 'When Aphrodite was born [...] Poros got drunk on nectar [...] and went into the garden of Zeus where, weighed down by drink, he slept. So Penia plotted to have a child by Poros by reason of her own resourcelessness, and lay with him and conceived Eros' (Plato, *Symposium* 203b)

Here Plato discusses the very origins of god of love, Eros. On one hand, his mother, Penia, or poverty, is always hungry and wants more, on the other, his father, Poros, or richness, is always, well, rich and fulfilled. Despite their differences, neither is absolute good or bad. As a matter of fact, Eros's mother is even better, because without "hunger" we would never feel a need to fill ourselves with good things, like knowledge for example: 'ignorance [...] though not beautiful and good, nor

wise, it yet seems to itself to be sufficient' (Plato, 204a). In love poetry from the Renaissance period, the lover is always hungry for more, they are never satiated with their loved one, because the moment they stop feeling hungry, the love stops and they no longer desire their beloved. Therefore, the Petrarchan subject––the lover––is always hungry for their beloved, whereas, the beloved––the Petrarchan object, we may say––is always just outside of the reach in order so that love can continue existing and not die.

4. PLATONISM IN DONNE

John Donne, who, interestingly, never wrote love sonnets, only devotional ones, similarly to John Milton, did write love poems. We can trace Platonism in one of his more known poems, "The Good Morrow." We may even claim that the dual nature of Eros is alluded to in the following lines: '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' (stanza:3, lines:19–21). The "equality" that Donne speaks about is the complimentary equality of the dynamism between "hunger" and "fulfillment." He is not talking about the equality in a sense of two identical things coexisting, because that would mean death: poverty and poverty together would mean a certain death. Therefore, his concept of "alikeness" is misleading, because we ordinarily attribute to the word the meaning of exact sameness. However, that would be like imagining "fulfillment" seeking "fulfillment," which can never be, since if "fulfillment" seeks something, it means that it actually is not "fulfillment" but "hunger." So, the "equality" and "alikeness" that Donne speaks about is the necessary complimentary dynamism between two, essentially dissimilar, things: the subject––the speaker in the poem, the lover––and the object of love, his beloved.

5. "EROS" IN RELIGIOUS POETRY

In late Renaissance, the sonnet form was still used but only as a devotional poem. Love sonnets had somehow gone out of fashion by the end of the sixteenth century. However, if we build our argument along the lines of regarding the object of the speaker's love and desire––be it human or divine––as the central point in poetry, the crucial matter is the devotion and the expression of it towards either "a cruel mistress" or the Christian God. According to Netzley (2011), devotion per se is riddled with anxiety: 'Devotional anxiety, anxiety in the presence of God' (p.106). Ideally, this anxiety should be transformed into an assurance of love by the end. But,

the initial position of the speaker/lover is the one of insecurity and anxiety. However, Netzley (2011) is very careful not to ascribe to Donne the vulgarity of a teleological motivation, in other words, the devotee should not tramp their initial anxiety and fear for an assurance of love: 'In affirming anxiety, Donne does not optimistically or resentfully tether affliction to reward, treating suffering and the anxiety that attends it as evidence of salvation' (p.107). For example, in a rather misunderstood Donne's devotional sonnet, "Batter my heart, three-person'd God," the speaker is seen as being engaged in a masochistic self-chastisement: 'Take me to you, imprison me, for I, / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me' (lines:12–14). The violent language used in the poem may be understood as signifying its opposite, i. e. love and tenderness, which is to say, ordinary expressions descriptive of love and devotion simply do not, ironically, possess the power of the emotions described. However, why does the poet need this initial violence in order to evoke the best possible thing in this world: salvation? According to Netzley (2011), Donne's conceit in this poem serves to 'disavow consolation [...] because assurance is not what devotees should desire' (p.108). In other words, similarly to Plato's Eros's parents, who are compatible precisely because they are complete opposites––hunger versus fulfillment––and thus anybody inspired by Eros never "dies," i. e. they never satiate their "hunger" to the point of a final fulfillment and therefore death, Netzley views Donne's speaker as someone who is perpetually hungry for love (divine) but never satiated to the point of ending this "hunger" and thus having done with their communion with the divine. The end of "hunger" means a certain death. However, Netzley (2015) does not see any redemptive virtue in the court poetry tradition, which treats our human love in the same way.

Regarding this sonnet, "Batter my heart, three-person'd God," Netzley steps further on and makes an error. When psychoanalysis is applied to the poem, especially regarding the subject matter of "desire," is it easy to fall into an erroneous assumption due to the violent and sexually charged imagery used by Donne:

> 'That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend / Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new. / I, like an usurp'd town to another due, / Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end; / [...] Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain, / But am betroth'd unto your enemy; / Divorce me, untie or break that knot again, / Take me to you, imprison me, for I, / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.' (lines:3–6;9–14)

It is obvious that the speaker, the devotee, sees himself as a bride to be wed. The act of receiving divine blessing, in default of better words, is seen as being akin to

a sexual act. Not any sexual act but a violent sexual act, almost a rape, although we may argue that even an "ordinary" sexual act is, in fact, a violent act due to the nature of penetration. Thus, the speaker invokes the super power to "bend," "break," and "burn" him in order to possess him. The common simile between a female body about to be "possessed" sexually in a marriage and a besieged town is quite obvious and probably very often used without any intention of making a rude or a vulgar joke. The violence begged by the speaker is due to the already existing violence of the speaker's diabolical possession by this world, the realm of Satan. Divine violence in being divine will ultimately prove to be its opposite, precisely because it is enacted by the very source of love and life. On the other hand, the speaker's "legal" marriage to this world––"bethrot'd unto your enemy"––despite its legality, is the actual act of real and deadly violence.

Netzley's erroneous assumption is the assumed gender identities of both "parties." Because of the biblical language in which the unknowable essence of the divine subject––God of Israel––is described in paternal words, as the God the Father, we attribute masculinity in its most ordinary sense to the unknowable. John Donne being a man, to put it simply, and imploring God to "ravish" or rape him so that he can become "chaste," gives us a picture of two masculine subjects engaging in a sexual act: 'the homoerotic energies ... and a desire that does not tend toward any sort of consummation' (Netzley, 2011:p.128). First of all, it is quite clear here that what Donne desires is to have a female body, not a male body, because only a female body can be sexually penetrated. Seen thus, the poem is actually heteroerotic and not homoerotic. If we really wish to nit-pick, we would most accurately describe it as transerotic. The divine "gender" identity is of less importance. What is important is that the speaker insists in their wish to untie themselves from the marriage to this world and enter a new marriage with the Lord. As a matter of fact, this is a direct allusion to the New Testament, in which the whole body of worshippers is described as a "bride" with Christ as a bridegroom, regardless of the said worshippers' actual gender identity.

The second erroneous assumption is the lack of desire, or the aimlessness of desire. It is very much not so. Donne applies this violent and sexually charged language, in order to emphasise the violence of his desire for a new life. The gender play is employed here in order to stress the compatibility of two diverse entities. The oneness, not in sameness, but the oneness in each other "otherness." Therefore, although this sonnet does appear as shocking to our modern eyes due to its erotic and violent imagery, it may not have been so to Donne's contemporaries.

6. DONNE'S ONENESS

As a matter of fact, Donne apparently held a very conservative view of Christianity: 'Donne adopted an essentialist definition of Christianity that looked back beyond both the turmoil of the Reformation and the corruption of the Roman church to Apostolic teaching, the early councils and the belief in the primitive church' (Sweetnam, 2014:p.119). Therefore, despite the violent and highly suggestive imagery in his devotional sonnets, Donne remains a very conservative Christian believer. There is nothing new, shocking or perverse in his imagining of the divine encounter in the sonnet "Batter my heart, three-personed God."

A more formal form of Donne's "oneness" is to be found in his sermons:

> 'Donne stated this position forcibly in his 1621 Christmas sermon [...] "the *Christian doctrine necessary* to salvation, was delivered at once, that is, intirely, in one spheare, in the body of the Scriptures."' (Sweetnam, 2014:p.122)

The same goes for the unnecessary additions to the already established foundations of the faith: "'Articles of faith doe not beget Articles of faith'" (Sweetnam, 2014:p.122). This is to say that oneness is not about false self-copying. Oneness relies on diversity and distances, not forced sameness and copycats. We might even claim that oneness excludes sameness.

A more radical example of Donne's "oneness" can be found in his "Holy Sonnet 19." In the final couplet, the speaker claims: 'So my devout fits come and go away / Like a fantastic ague; save that here / Those are my best days, when I shake with feare' (lines:12–14). The speaker first makes sure to convince us about the actuality and formidableness of his "fear," i. e. anxiety about the state of his soul and its salvation. Thus, Netzley (2011) ascertains that: 'The two fears in these six lines are not of the same type. '"Quaking with true feare of his rod" looks toward the future and a threat of punishment [...] "Shaking with fear," on the other hand, does not anticipate a future object or threat' (p.111). These two "fears" are of a very different nature, yet by the end of the poem, in a volta, they are fused into one. The previous "bad" fear is transformed into a "good" fear by the very nature of the poet's assurance and conviction of the actual goodness in the fear of God, which is the ultimate fear. Of course, Donne here does not exercise his own ingenuity in being able to "overcome" his initial fear, but simply alludes to the Old Testament. In the interlude "Where Wisdom Is Found," in the Book of Job, Job concludes with the following: 'The fear of the Lord––that is wisdom, / and to shun evil is understanding' (Job 28:28 [New International Version]). In this most poetic and poignant part of Job, the unknown poet places his hero in a deep meditation on

the very nature of human existence with the constant questioning of 'where does understanding dwell?' (Job 28 [New International Version]). As a matter of fact, Donne expects from his readers to be experiencing exactly the same thing as his speaker and to collectively find the resolution in the sacred text.

7. FAIR/BLACK DICHOTOMY

It seems that in order to affirm one's oneness, one has to first establish differences, even the most radical ones. In early Renaissance, the English sonneteers universally acknowledged the unsurpassable differences between two aspects of love: its virtuous nature and its sensuality. Love is virtuous by its very nature of being love. Love is sensual due to the sensual nature of the physical aspects of love. However, the two are held in animosity due to certain cultural aspects of England in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. Actually, the same cultural aspects regarding the question of human mental superiority over natural world and human subjugation to the power of that same natural world, have remained the same to this day. The notion of pure intellect is still held to be opposed to our notions of sensuality. This is why early English love sonnets always contain two universal metaphors for these two concepts: "fair" for the purity of virtue, and "black" for the perceived baseness of sensuality. As a matter of fact, virtue can be used synonymously with pure intellect. Virtue is understood to be derived from pure intellectualism, to be the product of our spirit. However, Platonic ideas of the link between virtue and appreciation of beauty in all its forms, including sensual, physical beauty, stress the necessary link between the two in *Symposium*. In other words, unless we allow ourselves to appreciate beauty––starting in our intellectual infancy at a young age––we cannot attain virtue or any intellectual heights either.

8. AESTHETICS VS REALITY

Since we are preoccupied with philosophical perceptions about creativity, beauty, virtue and love, it would be interesting to dive into contemporary views on aesthetics and our actuality. Works of aesthetics are to be understood as purified forms of concepts taken out of our banal, vulgar and very often unpoetic living––what we call our "reality." For classical writers and philosophers, we may be bold to claim, the link between reality and its aesthetic mirror-images was not problematic in itself. The difference between the two was understood as a basic fact and it created a kind of comfortable position. However, in postmodernism, this opposition between

crude reality and its aesthetic images has become a problem in itself. As McHale (1987) states in his eponymous study––now considered a classic––*Postmodernist Fiction*, 'A mimetic relation is one of similarity, not identity, and similarity implies difference––the difference between the original object and its reflection, between real world and the fictional heterocosm' (p.28). The real issue here is not whether the perceived difference between real life and art that imitates it, is a large one or a small one. The issue is the importance we ascribe to this problem. Depending on the historical era in which we live, this importance is likewise proportional to the historical era. The paradox is that in the postmodern era there is an obsession with "reality." The point of fiction is to be "real" as much as possible. Not as a stylistic feature of realism. Realism per se is not more "real" that, let's say, medieval allegory. The "reality" the postmodern fiction tries to emulate is multifaceted, or "heterocosmical," as McHale puts it. This complexity of reality, which no fictional structure seems to be able to emulate, is the real subject matter of art, not the mythic or poetic vision of the artist behind it. It may be that in modernism, the accepted rule was that art in itself is far superior to "reality." But, in the postmodern era, this rule has been overturned. Moreover, the artist is in a very unenviable situation: they are never real creators, they can never create anything resembling reality, they possess 'demiurgic or quasi-divine function' (McHale, 1987:p.29). It is interesting to note that early Christian philosophers, disappointed with the reality, imagined a quasi-divine god who created this world, a demiurge. This is why this world is so evil, it is not the product of "real" creation, it is an imitation. Of course, this kind of Christian philosophy was dismissed as heresy by the early Church Fathers.

The postmodern obsession with reality and the obviousness of the difference between art and life is problematic in itself as this did not bother classical writers, either from ancient Greece or Renaissance England. It was obvious that art was not life, but they were comfortable with this differentiation and did not seek to justify their art by its strong links to life. Of course, art and life are corelated, but art was better, precisely because of its artificiality. The appreciation of art's "organic forms" is a very recent idea, at least in the European civilization. The same goes for philosophy––philosophy was better because it was higher than life. Plato is not concerned with imitating life in *Symposium*––life is banal, vulgar, even unintelligent in its daily routine––but with superimposing far superior ideas about life on life itself, in order to better it. However, today's perceptions on what philosophy is, have greatly changed. Now we have a clear opposition between what is called continental philosophy on one hand, and analytic philosophy, on the other: 'in some American big universities, you had this paradox that if you dissect the brain of a rat,

it's philosophy. If you study Hegel, it's literature' (Žižek, 2023:9:20). Žižek funnily explains this paradox in his interview, posted on YouTube channel *The Institute of Art and Ideas*. The point here is that now only analytic philosophy is considered as true philosophy, possibly because of its perceived closer proximity to our reality.

To go back to the correlation between philosophy/aesthetics and life. In his rather philosophical analysis of this subject, Bottero (2022) states that the aim of his work is to offer 'an insight on the issue of relationship between the datum of death and poetics in the context of the literary and non-literary works of art' (p.323). The ultimate point of reality here is the undeniable fact of death itself; its mirror-image is the aesthetic form in which this subject is presented to the reader or a viewer. Therefore, the initial position is one of awareness of the difference between the actuality of death and our perceptions and ideas about it. In the postmodern aesthetics, the real issue would be the impossibility of faithfully representing the fact of death in art. All kinds of its aesthetic forms remain in their artificial realm, while the actual subject-matter that is death, will forever be outside of its boundaries. However, Bottero (2022) very cleverly dodges this opposition––or it may be that he was not interested in it in the first place––by establishing a different kind of duality: 'The philosophical consideration of the work of art as an object that encloses, by its ontological attributes, a sedimentation of immaterial content in the material-form' (324). So, the very materiality of the form, "an object," is opposed to its subject-matter in its very immateriality. Ideas are superimposed onto reality and are, thus, superior to reality. Paradoxically, the postmodern insistence, at least in McHale's view, on the unbridgeable chasm between art and life, which in itself is considered tragic because the true aim of art should always be reality, almost deifies reality, whereas the classical approach puts the reality where it should belong, on a lesser shelf of an imaginary cupboard of ideas. The paradox here is that reality is more "real" in the classical approach, as it is tightly controlled and structured by ideas, whether philosophical or poetical. In the postmodern view, it forever eludes our grasp and becomes "larger than life."

9. A FINAL WORD: LOVE IS AN IDEA

The Renaissance poets were not concerned with life, they were concerned with ideas. The love they present to us in their sonnets, is the idea of love borrowed from Plato. The Renaissance art is not something mimetic trying to describe its poets' individual love experiences. We may even assume that they themselves would laugh at the idea of preserving their mundane life experiences in its nude form, without

them being reorganized and re-aestheticized by a higher ideal system, which is Plato in this instance. The same goes for devotional poetry. It is not any type of individual or idiosyncratic experience that is of any value here, but the universality of the Christian devotion in its basic conservatism, as it was being understood in the Renaissance England. "Oneness" that we talk about here is the universality of the ideal framework that used to bind disperse and diverse individual experiences and thus made them valuable for everybody.

References

1. Allen R. E. (ed.) (n.d.) *The Dialogues of Plato: The Symposium.* Translated by Allen, R.E. Yale University Press.
2. Bible Gateway. (2025) *Job 28 NIV.* https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job%2028&version=NIV. Accessed 26 November 2024.
3. Bottero, S. (2023) Towards a Poetics of Death: Comparative and Aesthetical Reflections. *Philologist.* 13 (25), 323–340. DOI: https://doi.org/10.21618/fil2225323b
4. Jokinen, A. ed. (1996) Holy Sonnet 19 by John Donne. *Luminarium.* June 14 1996. https://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/sonnet19.php, Accessed 26 November 2024.
5. McHale, B. (1987) *Postmodernist Fiction.* New York, Methuen.
6. Netzley, R. (2015) *Lyric Apocalypse, Milton, Marvel and the Nature of Events.* New York, Fordham University Press.
7. Netzley, R. (2011) *Reading, Desire and the Eucharist in Early Modern Religious Poetry.* University of Toronto Press.
8. Poetry Foundation (2025) *John Donne: Batter my heart, three-person'd God.* https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44106/holy-sonnets-batter-my-heart-three-persond-god. Accessed 20 November 2024.
9. Roe, J. ed. (1992) Venus and Adonis. In *The New Cambridge Shakespeare; The Poems.* Cambridge University Press, pp. 79–138.
10. Sweetnam, M. S. (2014) *John Donne and Religious Authority in the Reformed English Church.* Dublin, Four Courts Press LTD.
11. YouTube. (2025) Top 7 Mysteries in the Bible. *Redeemed Zoomer*. 17 June 2024. Video, 19:29, https://youtu.be/R8E3I1w1jMU?si=TJFR_hMH9QVaGJ1w. Accessed 1 November 2024.
12. Žižek, S. (2024) *Christian Atheism: How to Be a Real Materialist.* London, Bloomsbury.
13. Žižek, S. (2024) On Cynicism, Pleasure, Philosophy, and More. *The Institute of Art and Ideas*. YouTube Video, 47:13. 21 March 2024. https://youtu.be/BCiYBUx7zQE?si=SnZhr5NV_s5tvBM, Accessed 11 June 2024.

14. Žižek, S. (2023) How Philosophy Got Lost. *The Institute of Art and Ideas.* YouTube Video, 35:56. 4 May 2023. https://youtu.be/06KiOj6gjbs?si=jaLE2mGh29Z6quf. Accessed 3 June 2024.

Božica Jović
Univerzitet u Istočnom Sarajevu
Filozofski fakultet
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

KONCEPT „OBJEDINJENOSTI" KOD DŽONA DONA

Rezime

U radu preispitujemo koncept „objedinjenosti" u religioznoj i ljubavnoj poeziji Džona Dona. Ovaj koncept posmatra se kao filozofski koncept koji služi u svrhu duhovnog uzdignuća koje možemo postići kroz vjeru ili kroz ljubavna osjećanja. Štaviše, ovaj koncept može se posmatrati naspram ranijih koncepata, kao što su „svijetlo" i „tamno", koji su, s jedne strane, označavali čistotu i vrlinu, a s druge, ljubavnu strast. Ova dva koncepta bila su od izuzetne važnosti za rane engleske sonetne pjesnike. Stoga, jedno od glavnih pitanja jeste pitanje zašto Don nije koristio ova dva koncepta, ovu dualnost, u svojoj ljubavnoj poeziji. Umjesto toga, on uvodi koncept „objedinjenosti", koji se neprestano provlači kroz cijeli njegov pjesnički opus.

▸ ***Ključne riječi***: Džon Don, objedinjenost, sonet, platonizam.

Preuzeto: 28. 4. 2025.
Korekcije: 23. 5. 2025.
Prihvaćeno: 22. 7. 2025.