

**John Donne** (/dʌn/ *DUN*) (1571 or 1572<sup>[a]</sup> – 31 March 1631) was an English poet, scholar, soldier and secretary born into a recusant family, who later became a cleric in the Church of England.<sup>[2]</sup> Under royal patronage, he was made Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London (1621–1631).<sup>[1]</sup> He is considered the preeminent representative of the metaphysical poets. His poetical works are noted for their metaphorical and sensual style and include sonnets, love poems, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs and satires. He is also known for his sermons.

Donne's style is characterised by abrupt openings and various paradoxes, ironies and dislocations. These features, along with his frequent dramatic or everyday speech rhythms, his tense syntax and his tough eloquence, were both a reaction against the smoothness of conventional Elizabethan poetry and an adaptation into English of European baroque and mannerist techniques.<sup>[3]</sup> His early career was marked by poetry that bore immense knowledge of English society. Another important theme in Donne's poetry is the idea of true religion, something that he spent much time considering and about which he often theorised. He wrote secular poems as well as erotic and love poems. He is particularly famous for his mastery of metaphysical conceits.

Despite his great education and poetic talents, Donne lived in poverty for several years, relying heavily on wealthy friends. He spent much of the money he inherited during and after his education on womanising, literature, pastimes and travel. In 1601, Donne secretly married Anne More, with whom he had twelve children.<sup>[4]</sup> In 1615 he was ordained Anglican deacon and then priest, although he did not want to take holy orders and only did so because the king ordered it. He served as a member of Parliament in 1601 and in 1614.

### Career and later life[edit]

In 1602, Donne was elected as a member of parliament (MP) for the constituency of Brackley, but the post was not a paid position.<sup>[1]</sup> Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, being succeeded by King James VI of Scotland as King James I of England. The fashion for coterie poetry of the period gave Donne a means to seek patronage. Many of his poems were written for wealthy friends or patrons, especially for MP Sir Robert Drury of Hawsted (1575–1615), whom he met in 1610 and who became his chief patron, furnishing him and his family an apartment in his large house in Drury Lane.<sup>[11]</sup>

In 1610 and 1611, Donne wrote two anti-Catholic polemics: *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius His Conclave* for Morton.<sup>[1]</sup> He then wrote two Anniversaries, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611) and *Of the Progress of the Soul*<sup>[16]</sup> (1612) for Drury.

Donne sat as an MP again, this time for Taunton, in the Addled Parliament of 1614. Though he attracted five appointments within its business he made no recorded speech.<sup>[17]</sup> Although King James was pleased with Donne's work, he refused to reinstate him at court and instead urged him to take holy orders.<sup>[8]</sup> At length, Donne acceded to the king's wishes, and in 1615 was an ordained priest in the Church of England.<sup>[11]</sup>

In 1615, Donne was awarded an honorary doctorate in divinity from Cambridge University. He became a Royal Chaplain in the same year. He became a reader of divinity at Lincoln's Inn in 1616,<sup>[1]</sup> where he served in the chapel as minister until 1622.<sup>[18]</sup> In 1618, he became chaplain to Viscount Doncaster, who was an ambassador to the princes of Germany. Donne did not return to England until 1620.<sup>[4]</sup> In 1621, Donne was made Dean of St Paul's, a leading and well-paid position in the Church of England, which he held until his death in 1631.<sup>[1]</sup>

In 1616 he was granted the living as rector of two parishes, Keyston in Huntingdonshire and Sevenoaks in Kent, and in 1621 of Blunham,

in Bedfordshire all held until his death.<sup>[9]</sup> Blunham Parish Church has an imposing stained glass window commemorating Donne, designed by Derek Hunt. During Donne's period as dean his daughter Lucy died, aged eighteen. In late November and early December 1623 he suffered a nearly fatal illness, thought to be either typhus or a combination of a cold followed by a period of fever.<sup>[11]</sup>

During his convalescence he wrote a series of meditations and prayers on health, pain and sickness that were published as a book in 1624 under the title of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. One of these meditations, Meditation XVII, contains the well-known phrases "No man is an *Island*" (often modernised as "No man is an island") and "...for whom the bell tolls". In 1624, he became vicar of St Dunstan-in-the-West, and in 1625 a prolocutor to Charles I.<sup>[11]</sup> He earned a reputation as an eloquent preacher. A total of 160 of his sermons have survived, including Death's Duel, his famous sermon delivered at the Palace of Whitehall before King Charles I in February 1631.

**"The Sun Rising"** (also known as "**The Sunne Rising**") is a thirty-line poem (a great example of an inverted aubade)<sup>[11]</sup> with three stanzas published in 1633<sup>[2]</sup> by the English poet John Donne. The meter is irregular, ranging from two to six stresses per line in no fixed pattern. The longest lines are at the end of the three stanzas and the rhyme never varies—each stanza runs ABBAC CDEE.<sup>[3]</sup> Donne's poems were known to be metaphysical with jagged rhythms, dramatic monologues, playful intelligence, and startling images.<sup>[2]</sup> The poem personifies the sun.

## Content[edit]

Stanza one begins with the speaker in bed with his lover, complaining about sun's beaming rays. Donne uses expressions such as, "Busy old fool" (line 1) and "Saucy Pedantic Wretch" [perfectionist]<sup>[4]</sup> (line 5) to describe his annoyance with it. The speaker of the poem questions the sun's motives and yearns for the sun to go away so that he and his lover can stay in bed.

Donne is tapping into human emotion in personifying the sun, and he is exhibiting how beings behave when they are in love with one another. The speaker in the poem believes that, for him and his lover, time is the enemy. He asks, "Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?" (line 4)<sup>[2]</sup> or, in other words, "why must lovers be controlled by the sun?". The speaker then tells the sun to bother someone else, "go chide late schoolboys and sour prentices, Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride..." (lines 5-7), and that love knows no season, climate, hour, day, nor month.

In Stanza two, the speaker is saying how the sun believes its beams are strong but he could "eclipse" and "cloud them in a wink" (line 13). Although he can shield his eyes from the sun, he does not want to do that because it means he would be also shielding his eyes from his lover. He says, "But that I would not lose her sight so long" (line 14). The speaker proceeds to reprimand the sun and tells it to set, come back the next day, and tell him "whether both th' Indias of spice and mine be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me" (lines 16-18).<sup>[2]</sup> He wants the sun to tell him if all the kings, queens, riches and gold of the world are still out there or lying in bed next to him. Towards the end of the stanza the speaker confirms, "Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday, and thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay" (lines 19-20), that his lover is above all kings and beside him in bed are all the riches and gold that he could ever want.

Within the last stanza the speaker attempts to settle his anger in praising his lover. His lover is his world and when they are in bed together they are in their own microcosm of bliss. Stating that nothing else is half as important as his lover, the speaker insists "Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be to warm the world, that's done in warming us. Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere; this bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere" (lines 27-30). Which translates to his worrying about the sun's age and implying that all a sun is good for is warming up the world and its lovers, once it does that then its job is done. His lover is his whole world, and since the sun is shining on the bed composed of these two, then it is also shining on the entire world.

Donne must have been well aware of the Copernican Heliocentric theory when he wrote "The Sun Rising". Perhaps it is even reflected in that little unexpected epithet, "unruly" – suggesting the sun itself had challenged the Roman Catholic Church's inquisition, the inquisition trial and condemnation of Galileo Galilei as a suspected heretic, and the incompatibility of science and religion. The time period and its context, thirty years prior to Donne's birth, acted as a source of inspiration for John Donne's writing of "The

"Sun Rising," and perhaps is a critique of the Roman inquisition and counter-reformation movement. The developments in science such as the Heliocentric theory and its relation to Donne's awareness of this is in his writing of the poem (Rumen).<sup>[2]</sup>

## The Sun Rising

Launch Audio in a New Window

BY JOHN DONNE

Busy old fool, unruly sun,

Why dost thou thus,

Through windows, and through curtains call on us?

Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?

*v* *sauce* Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide *teacher*

Late school boys and sour prentices,

Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,

Call country ants to harvest offices,

Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,

Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong

Why shouldst thou think?

I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,

But that I would not lose her sight so long;

If her eyes have not blinded thine,

Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,

Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine

Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.

Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,

And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

She's all states, and all princes, I,

Nothing else is.

Princes do but play us; compared to this,

All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.

Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,

In that the world's contracted thus.

Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be

To warm the world, that's done in warming us.

Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;

This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.