

## КОМПАРАТИВНІ СТУДІЇ: ДІАЛОГ КУЛЬТУР ТА ЕПОХ

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### AN INTIMATE DIALOGUE WITH GOD IN JOHN DONNE'S "HOLY SONNETS": PETRARCHAN CONTEXT

*Метою* статті є дослідження образів платонічного та куртуазного в особистих взаєминах ліричного героя з Богом у «Священних сонетах» Дж. Донна в контексті зв'язку з петрарківською традицією. Для цього використано комплексний підхід із застосуванням елементів біографічного, генеалогічного, типологічного, герменевтичного, компаративного та структурно-семіотичного *методів* дослідження.

Окреслено погляди літературознавців на джерела «Священних сонетів» (християнські медитативні практики, біблійні книги, традиції англійської релігійної лірики), вказано на їх зв'язок із петрарківською поетичною традицією та у цьому контексті запропоновано одну з можливих інтерпретацій сонетного циклу Дж. Донна.

Встановлено, що для розуміння еволюції стосунків героїв «Священних сонетів» концептуальними є три поезії – XIV, XVII та XIX. У першій, відчуваючи власну слабкість та неможливість самотужки подолати диявола, ліричний суб'єкт Дж. Донна благає Господа відвоювати його серце у ворога, застосовуючи при цьому широку палітру типової для петрарківської лірики воєнної метафорики. Проте Творець, який у сонетах I–XIII змальований по-петрарківськи далеким, байдужим і глухим до благань протагоніста, таким і залишається.

У XVII сонеті, який сприймається як дуже близький до ліричних текстів «Canzoniere», присвячених смерті Лаури, відбувається відчутна зміна у стосунках героїв. Як і в італійського гуманіста, після кончини коханої жінки, життєва стежка ліричного суб'єкта Дж. Донна остаточно звертає до неба, і він починає відчувати, що втрату земної любові йому повною мірою компенсовано любов'ю Божественною. Проте подальші стосунки з Богом протагоніст, знову ж таки, як видається авторці, вибудовує за петрарківською моделлю, найбільш повно описаною в останньому поетичному тексті циклу.

Сонет XIX демонструє всю складність взаємин між земною людиною і Творцем. Ліричний суб'єкт Дж. Донна постійно перебуває у владі суперечливих почуттів та емоцій, що загалом корелює із петрарківським розумінням амбівалентності любовного почуття, найкраще розкритий у CXXXII та CXXXIV сонетах «Canzoniere». Підкреслено, що й поетична лексика, яку використовує у своєму вірші Дж. Донн, указує на специфічний характер стосунків його протагоніста з Богом, які у зв'язку з цим набувають ознак куртуазної любові, куртуазного схиляння-служіння.

Зроблено висновок, що взаємини ліричного героя із Господом у «Священних сонетах» Дж. Донна назагал можуть бути проінтерпретовані як побудовані на тих самих основних принципах, на яких ґрунтується концепція кохання у любовній поезії петраркізму. Протагоніст англійського поета, так само, як традиційний ліричний герой петрарківських текстів, страждає від нерозділених почуттів, усім серцем прагне взаємності, а окрім того, говорить специфічною метафоричною мовою. І навіть якщо мовна практика, якою послуговується автор, і не може вважатися винятково петрарківською, оскільки подібний риторичний код, у якому досвід духовного спілкування з Господом описувався за допомогою еротичних образів, широко використовували християнські містики, то сонетна поетична структура є, безперечно, канонічною для петрарківського ліричного дискурсу і вимагає дотримання усталених правил не лише стосовно форми, але й щодо змісту.

*Ключові слова:* куртуазна любов, образ Бога, петраркізм, платонічна любов, протагоніст, сонет.

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## Introduction

John Donne's lyrical sequence "Holy Sonnets" (entitled "Divine Meditations" in some manuscripts) consists of nineteen poems. It is impossible to find out exactly when they were composed, but it is commonly accepted that twelve of the sonnets were written in the first half of 1609, the last four – between the end of 1609 and early 1611 and the other three – much later, after 1617.

The collection was never printed during J. Donne's lifetime, although all of its texts circulated in manuscript. The sonnets of the sequence were first published (together with the author's love lyrics) only in 1633, two years after the poet's death.

Most of the "Holy Sonnets" were created during a period of great personal distress and strife for J. Donne, who suffered a combination of physical, emotional and financial hardships. That was also a time of personal religious turmoil as the English poet, born and raised in a strictly religious Catholic family, was in the process of conversion from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism and was preparing himself for taking holy orders in 1615 despite profound reluctance and significant self-doubt about becoming an Anglican priest. Such a difficult decision, which was not least motivated by the author's desire for career advancement and achieving material well-being, caused his deep worldview crisis, which is clearly felt in the "Holy Sonnets". These J. Donne's poems are about life and death, sin and salvation, doubts and repentance, fears and hopes, love and loss, but most of all – about the writer's protagonist's personal dramatic relations with God.

Being extremely interesting and original texts, J. Donne's "Holy Sonnets" often became the subject of research. They have been examined extensively, in different analytical contexts and from different perspectives, but despite that fact, it is still possible to single out some debatable issues that require further scientific studies. One of these issues is the genetic connection of the "Holy Sonnets" with various cultural and literary traditions (biblical, patristic, theological, platonian, courtly, mystical, alchemical, metaphysical, Petrarchan, etc.).

## Literature Review

Lewis Martz, for example, proved that the sonnets of the sequence had been closely related to the system of individual meditation developed by the founder of the Jesuit Order, Ignatius Loyola (for someone who practiced this form of meditation, it was necessary to recreate in their imagination a certain scene from the New Testament, place themselves among the characters, and then analyze their own experiences and draw appropriate moral conclusions) [Martz, 1954].

Annie Peppiatt pointed out that such a noticeable connection had been manifested primarily at the structure level of the sonnet itself, since "the 4 – 4 – 6 division of the Petrarchan sonnet accommodates the three-stage meditative practice of a) prelude, a composition of place to imagine theological issues as part of a concrete scene, b) meditation on one's own sin and salvation, and c) colloquy, a dialogue with God resulting in intense devotion and conviction" [Peppiatt, 2019–20, p. 2].

Helen Gardner, the editor of the most reputable edition of J. Donne's spiritual lyrics, also connected his "Holy Sonnets" with the described meditative practice [Gardner, 1952].

Unlike Lewis Martz and Helen Gardner, Barbara Lewalski derived the "Holy Sonnets" genealogy from the biblical "Book of Psalms". During J. Donne's lifetime, this book became hugely popular among English-speaking readers thanks to the excellent translation by Philip Sidney and his sister, the Countess of Pembroke [Lewalski, 1984].

This researcher's position found a response in modern literary studies. For example, Kelly Gober notes that "the Psalms served as a thematic and linguistic model for Donne as he wrote his Holy Sonnets" [Hobber, 2018, p. 7].

Norin Bieder, supporting both of these hypotheses, finds in the "Holy Sonnets" not only connections with Catholic meditation and David's psalms but also with the biblical lamentations [Bieder, 1992, p. 3]. Faith Wentz adds to this list "Song of Solomon" and Paul's writing in Romans 6 [Wentz, 2016].

Some researchers connect the "Holy Sonnets" not only with the Christian tradition but with some others, which are less sacred. In this context, Ronald Green's statements are quite interesting. Writing about the influence of the Psalms on the English religious lyrics of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this author mentions Francesco Petrarca's "Canzoniere", thus indirectly pointing to another

source of J. Donne's sonnet sequence: "the *Book of Psalms* is central to the development of the age's religious lyric. It belongs with Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* as a master text through which the writers of the age tested their capacities <...> not only as worshippers and theologians but as poets and critics" [Greene, 1990, p. 19].

The idea that J. Donne's "Holy Sonnets" have a lot in common with the lyrical tradition of Petrarchism is also expressed by Helen Wilcox in "The Cambridge Companion to John Donne": "while his (J. Donne's – M. M.) love poems in the Songs and Sonets include no formal sonnets, his devotional poetry embraces this poetic form most closely associated with the Petrarchan tradition of earthly love. In some sense, then, Donne's religious sonnets may be seen as love poems to God" [Wilcox, 2006, p. 150].

### **Aim and Objectives**

Such a wide diversity of opinions motivates us to dive deeper into the issue. This paper aims to study the images of the platonic and courtly in the protagonist's personal relations with God in J. Donne's "Holy Sonnets" in the context of the connection with the Petrarchan tradition.

### **Methodology**

In order to accomplish this, we will use a complex approach that includes elements of biographical, genealogical, typological, hermeneutic, comparative and structural-semiotic methods of literary analysis.

### **Results and Discussion**

The initial situation of the Petrarchan lyrical text was always a tragic, unrequited love. The Petrarchan hero was strongly in love with the Petrarchan heroine, who did not reciprocate his feelings and was depicted as distant, cold and indifferent to his suffering. Traditionally, this woman was essentially unattainable for the protagonist due to various reasons: a much higher social status, marriage, distance, illness or even death. Since the hero could not count on affection from her, he could only sublimate his amorous desires in inspired verse, hoping that his poetic practice would ease his mental torments.

In literature, this interpretation of love relations first appeared in the lyrics of the French poets of the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries – the troubadours. Critics usually connect the origin of troubadour poetry with a complex and, at the same time, fruitful interweaving of various sources: ancient literature, foremost Ovid's poems, rich Romance folklore, medieval Latin poetry, as well as the traditions of Arabic lyrics, in particular Sufi. It is in Provençal poems that the basic concepts of courtly love, inherited later by F. Petrarch through Italian poetry, were formed.

According to the troubadours, the infatuated protagonist was connected to his beloved woman by a kind of vassal service, fulfilling all her whims and even performing chivalric feats in her honour. Famous medievalist Clive Staples Lewis called this sociocultural phenomenon "a feudalization of love" [Lewis, 1936] and explained that in the Middle Ages, vassal loyalty had been a trait that crowned the scale of moral and ethical values, so in order to add more value to courtly love, behavioural peculiarities of the vassal relations had been projected onto it.

The woman depicted in troubadour's poems was often a wife of his suzerain, therefore, vassal honour definitely excluded any physical contact, let alone marriage. Generally speaking, the troubadours resolutely protested against the very institution of marriage, being convinced that true love could be present exclusively in the situation of a personal choice, and not a marital, political or property agreement, which marriage in fact was in the Middle Ages.

Propaganda of this idea is especially evident in the book that is pivotal for the entire courtly culture – the treatise of Andreas Capellanus, "De Arte Honeste Amandi". The author built it by analogy with Ovid's "Ars amatoria". Through direct instructions, as well as instructive dialogues between men and women of different social statuses and a list of behavioural requirements, he laid out, systematized and generalized the basics of courtly love relations as widely as possible. All in all, his code included thirty-one rules [Capellanus, Parry, 1960, pp. 184–186]; however, "no rule is made clearer than that which excludes love from the marriage relation" [Lewis, 1936]. According to Andreas Capellanus, if there were any feelings between partners in marriage, they could not be considered love, since marriage itself involved an element of coercion,

necessity. When showing affection to her husband, the wife was guided not by love, but by Christian humility and obedience. On the other hand, love is a feeling that elevates a person above the mundane, and you can really love only someone higher, nobler than you are; therefore, a husband could not love his own wife. According to “De Arte Honeste Amandi”, his feelings in marriage were something similar to parental love, while true courtly love was only possible outside of marriage. In this sense, according to the Polish scholar Maria Ossowska, “knightly culture did not belong to ‘family’ cultures” [Оссовская, 1987, p. 172].

However, according to a well-known researcher of European medieval literature William Burgwinkle, it was marriage that served as some kind of a screen that covered various forms of relations not allowed by the church in the Middle Ages, including courtly love itself. If the couple fulfilled their main duty – to give birth to children, then both husband and wife could be forgiven for certain behavioural deviations: “Rather than serving as the ultimate sign of consummation – sexual, social, and familial – marriage paradoxically marks the first moment at which, a major obstacle having been disposed of, passionate sexual love becomes a possibility. With social stability and respectability won and virginity no longer an obstacle, marriage throws the door open to its many alternatives: loveless partnerships give way to erotic pairings (Tristan et Iseut); male enslavement of younger brides gives way to fantasy lovers (the *mal mariées* of Marie de France); homosocial bonding takes precedence over heterosexual pairing once the threat of sodomy charges is erased (Yvain and Gauvain in Chrétien’s *Chevalier au lion*); magic herbs save women from unwanted sex with husbands while still guaranteeing them social status and the favour of their lovers (Chrétien de Troyes’s *Cligès*). Marriage in these cases legitimizes, enables, and masks forms of transgressive behaviour that would otherwise remain proscribed: what nineteenth-century critics called ‘courtly love’ rears its head with the alluring promise of sin” [Burgwinkle, 2008]. Hence, courtly love was not always as idealized and devoid of physicality as we used to consider.

It is also important to note that love in the courtly concept of troubadours was a controversial thing. It filled the lover’s soul with conflicting feelings, as it gave him joy and calamity, hope and despair at the same time. It was unfortunate because a priori did not allow reciprocity, but it was also happy, as it was given to a man not in order to conquer a woman, but to achieve true nobility through his love for her, to rise to the highest levels of spiritual and poetic perfection. That is why the desire for a Mistress was endless, and that is why love in the courtly concept was characterized by a powerful transforming power. It acquired this peculiarity due to Plato’s ideas.

The very term “platonic love” refers us to the philosophical paradigm of this ancient Greek thinker. In the dialogue “The Symposium”, he proposed several concepts of love and formulated the idea of a “love ladder”, fundamental to the whole Petrarchan poetic discourse. According to Plato, love is a unique feeling capable of elevating an earthly being to the highest realms – the world of ideas. The process of climbing the “love ladder” appears in his philosophy as a gradual realization of the absolute value of spiritual beauty, identified with eternal divine good. The first step to the ascent is a prolonged contemplation of the love object’s physical beauty, which should end with the realization of the fact that the beauty of one human body is no different from the beauty of any other, that is, physical beauty is the same in all its manifestations. Understanding this, according to Plato, is a powerful motivation for “someone on the right track” [Plato, 2008, p. 48] to consider all external beauty to be homogeneous, which, in its turn, reduces the attractiveness of the person to whom love feelings are directed, since now this person no longer stands out from others. Next, the main transition should take place, and the lover should understand that inner beauty is something radically different from outer beauty and, at the same time, something much more valuable, but, as in the previous case, it is also homogeneous. At this stage, he should reach a point where physical beauty will lose its importance, and internal beauty will be treated as a guide to the ideal world.

The distinction introduced by Plato between high love (so-called “Heavenly Aphrodite”) and low love (“Common Aphrodite”) “which defined the understanding of love for many centuries forward and influenced the history of European civilization” [Turenko, 2017, p. 73], was also important for the courtly concept of love, as the troubadours distinguished “*fin amor*” – refined, platonic, courtly love, and “*fol amor*” – vulgar, sensual love. In “The Symposium”, Heavenly Aphrodite was associated with exclusively male relations, while the love of a man for a woman was taken care of by Common Aphrodite [Plato, 2008, pp. 11–17]. In post-antique times, such phe-

nomenon as homoeroticism, which was common in the ancient world, acquired an extremely negative character; therefore, being adapted for Christians, this division took a completely different meaning. For example, Augustine of Hippo divided love into earthly, impure, carnal, which lured a person into the depths of hell, i. e. love-desire, love-passion, and into holy love, which elevated a person, quenching the thirst for the eternal, immortal, absolute, i.e., Christian love – the so-called “agape”. This thinker also emphasized that a man’s love for a woman or a woman’s love for a man was not self-sufficient, it was only a way to God. In his “Confessions”, he wrote: “*The good that you love is from him (God – M. M.), and insofar as it is also for him, it is both good and pleasant. But it will rightly be turned to bitterness if whatever comes from him is not rightly loved and if he is deserted for the love of the creature <...> For he loves you (God – M. M.) too little who loves along with you anything else that he does not love for your sake, O Love, who do burn forever and are never quenched*” [Augustine, 2007, pp. 65, 186].

Returning to Plato, it is worth highlighting the fact that the ideal world in his philosophical concept appeared to be very far from the real one. Its ideas were placed somewhere outside the boundaries of the physical cosmos, in some transcendent otherworld, and were not linked by any real connections with the human objective world, but were only reflected in it, as if in a huge mirror. Bridges between these worlds were built by the ancient Neoplatonists, who had formulated the principle of emanation – a kind of radiation of ideas from the metaphysical world into the earthly one. Love in their philosophical concept was treated precisely as a “heavenly emanation of the Soul longing for God” [Николаєнко, 2013, p. 117]. The original source of love, according to the founder of the Neoplatonic philosophical school, Plotinus, “must be sought in the inclination of the soul to pure heavenly beauty, in the feeling of kinship with the Divine” [Ibid].

By combining Plato’s philosophy with the ideas of the ancient Neoplatonists and noticeably Christianizing them, the Florentine Neoplatonists (Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola) brought the concept of the “love ladder” to the understanding that is familiar to us. If we read “The Symposium” really carefully, we can realize that its author, speaking of spiritual steps, meant a ladder in the literal sense. Climbing to each subsequent level leaves the previous one behind, therefore the earthly beauty of the love object, which serves as an impulse for climbing up the ladder, is left on the lowest step; that is, it is practically levelled. However, if we are speaking about the Florentine Neoplatonists, we can state that the object of love is not removed from the process of spiritual ascent in their philosophy. According to Marsilio Ficino, human beauty is not just the first level of the “love ladder”, it is an emanation of divine beauty, a visible image of God himself. To love means to enjoy this absolute beauty. In this way, the object of human love acquired the functions of a mediator between the earthly world and the Divine.

The philosophy of Neoplatonism was one of the essential elements of the Christian world concept, dominant in medieval Europe [Мозговий, 2009, p. 180], but in the works of the Fathers of the Church, the impersonal Divine (the One) of the Neoplatonists had been transformed into the Christian God, and emanation had been replaced with divine providence. Just as in the philosophy of Plotinus, the image of the Divine (the One) was embodied in the entire material world through the emanation of ideas, so in the Christian concept, the Lord invested His image in everything that exists through His providence. Furthermore, since the Christian God is love (“*God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*” (1 John 4:16)), then every part of the universe was imagined to be filled with this heavenly love, poured around. It was possible for a person to feel it through love for the Creator. Thus, in the Middle Ages, the entire social and individual consciousness was imbued with this “spiritual eroticism” – mystical love of God for the world and human beings and each person’s love for God. It was both an ethical and aesthetic category at the same time: to love the Creator meant to be moved by the beauty of His divine action and to act in the same way, and to love one’s neighbour was to find and appreciate at least one trait from God in another person.

The Ukrainian scholar Mykola Ihnatenko, exclusively in the context of the described “spiritual eroticism”, proposed to interpret all products of medieval culture, including the love lyrics of troubadours, as an integral part of the so-called “chivalric eroticism” [Ігнатенко, 1986, p. 40] – highly modified, secularized Christian mystical eroticism. According to M. Ihnatenko, the poet-troubadour identified himself with Christ and his beloved with the Virgin Mary, transferring all her virtues to the adored woman. That is why the heroine of courtly lyrics was usually depicted

as an unearthly, divine being endowed with all the highest virtues and noblest character traits, and “it is difficult for today’s reader to understand to whom the troubadour sings – an earthly woman or the Virgin. Such is Abelard’s Heloise, such is Dante’s Beatrice, such is Petrarch’s Laura” [Ігнатенко, 1986, p. 79].

In his turn, one of the brightest European intellectuals of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Denis de Rougemont, believed that the love represented in the lyrics of the troubadours symbolized the mystical love of the human soul for God. The researcher observes: “Should it be mentioned that the courtly knight often addressed his Lady by calling her señor. That is, in the masculine gender: *mi dons* (*mi dominus*), and in Spain: *senhor* (not *senhora*)? Andalusian and Arab troubadours did the same. I believe that here, too, everything is a religious or feudal symbol, and not an example of human relations” [Ружмон, 2000, p. 92]. In his brilliant work “Love and Western Culture”, D. de Rougemont pointed to one of the most important sources of southern French love courtship. According to this author’s ideas, the emergence of the courtly love concept would not have been possible without the penetration of the Christian heresy of Catharism into Provence. Moreover, Ihor Kachurovskyi, an outstanding Ukrainian diaspora literary critic, also considered the poems of the troubadours closely connected with Catharism [Качуровський, 2005, pp. 211–213]. This heresy, in turn, goes back to the eastern religion of Mani – Manichaeism, from which the Cathars borrowed their fundamental idea of dualism – the categorical opposition of the material and spiritual worlds, their incompatibility. In Christianity, this confrontation was resolved through Jesus Christ, the Lord incarnated in flesh. The Cathars did not understand this incarnation of God. For them, the human body was a prison in which the divine soul was forced to stay for a lifetime while seeking to return to the Lord’s bosom, looking forward to death, as it was the only possible way to unite with the Creator. Similar theses, by the way, can be found in the philosophy of the Neoplatonists [Мозговий, 2009, p. 185]. And that was kind of idea that formed the basis for the dramatic and irreconcilable conflict of F. Petrarch’s “Canzoniere” – between passionate love for an earthly woman and pure love for God.

The “Canzoniere” as a hypotext of European Petrarchism explicates the invariant of the Petrarchan concept of love. The love story of F. Petrarch and Laura, which formed the basis of the book, is well known; therefore, we will not focus on it here. We will only note that Laura was depicted in the “Canzoniere” as a typical heroine of courtly lyrics: she was “the suzerain, her poet a vassal, eager to follow her yet aware of his unworthiness and the hopelessness” [Waller, 1993, p. 39]. The woman was married and did not reciprocate the protagonist’s love – perhaps she did not know about it at all, since they had never spoken to each other, but she was beautiful and noble. F. Petrarch gave an angelic nature to her character, and from the very beginning of the book his persona considered love for this woman to be an actual bridge to heaven:

From her to you comes loving thought,  
that leads to highest good, while you pursue it,  
counting as little what all men desire:  
from her comes that spirit full of grace  
that shows you heaven by the true way’:  
so that in hope I fly, already, to the heights [Petrarch, 2001, p. 31].

Nevertheless, as long as Laura was alive, F. Petrarch’s protagonist did not manage to fully dedicate his life to the Lord, as was expected from a person of a spiritual rank. Therefore, from time to time, he addressed God, begging to help him find the true path and regain spiritual purity (see, for example, LXII), but poetry, dreams of fame and passionate love prevented him from sincerely and deeply repenting.

Laura’s death radically changed the situation, and F. Petrarch’s persona finally got the opportunity to unite with the Lord, that is, he managed to make a kind of a climb up the “love ladder”, but in a rather unusual way – through the death of his beloved:

Death has quenched the sun that dazzled me,  
and those eyes are in the darkness, fixed, entire:  
she is earth, who made me hot and cold:

my laurels are bare, like the oaks and elms:  
in all this I see my good: and yet I grieve.  
There's no one now to make my thoughts  
bold or timid, to make them burn or freeze,  
to make them fill with hope, or brim with pain.  
Out of the hand of him who hurt and healed me,  
who once granted me so long a torment,  
I find myself in sweet and bitter freedom:  
and turn to the Lord I adore and thank,  
who governs the world with a blink of his eye:  
I'm weary of living, and sated with it too [Petrarch, 2001, p. 507].

The development of this uneventful lyrical plot is conceptualized in the “Canzoniere” with the help of a well-judged calendar symbolism. Two dates are significant for F. Petrarch in the book – the day of his first meeting with Laura (April 6, 1327) and the day of her death (April 6, 1348). The exact dates mark the main changes in the relationship of his persona with the Lord. Since, as Thomas Roche observes: “if we take Petrarch seriously (and we always must) and imagine his Canzoniere as a leap-year of 366 days, and take further step of faith in imaging that sonnet I is a 6 April date (according to F. Petrarch, in 1327 that was the Friday of Holy Week – M. M.), we come to the beginning of *In morte* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, the date on which we celebrate the birth of Christ. Thus, Petrarch celebrates the initiation of his love for Laura on the same day that Christ died and the death of Laura on the day that Christ was born. It is a genuine opposition that only the poems themselves can fully engage and disentangle, but it should already be clear that this story, or concatenation of myth, is not the simple story of a young man who could write poetry, falling in love with a married woman” [Roche, 2005, p. XV]. We will find something similar in J. Donne’s sonnet sequence.

Turning in the “Holy Sonnets” to the sonnet genre, which was not invented by F. Petrarch himself, but was undoubtedly associated with his name and legacy, J. Donne naturally could not avoid some comparisons with the Italian humanist. Structurally, his sonnets are written according to the Italian model, which underwent certain changes in England. As it is known, the Petrarchan sonnet consists of two quatrains, based on the *abba* scheme, and two tercets, combined into a sestet, that can rhyme in different ways: as *cdcdcd* (the so-called “Sicilian sestet”), *cdecde* (the so-called “Italian sestet”) or *cdccdc*. The highlighting of the final couplet is uncharacteristic of the Italian sonnet. It is a distinctive feature of its English version, the so-called “Shakespearean sonnet”, introduced by Thomas Wyatt and finally legitimized by his younger colleague Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey.

J. Donne begins all his sonnets with the standard Italian octave composed of two quatrains with an envelope rhyme (*abbaabba*), but then, following the first English Petrarchists, abandons both the Sicilian and the Italian sestets. In the sestets of eleven poems (I, III, IV, V, VI, VII, XI, XIV, XVI, XVII, XVIII), he uses the *cdcdce* scheme, in seven (II, VIII, X, XII, XIII, XV, XIX) – *cdcdce*, in one (IX) – *accadd*. Such an interesting combination of Italian and English sonnet forms is also manifested in J. Donne’s specific usage of the so-called “volta” – a kind of semantic and / or emotional “shift”. In Petrarchan sonnets, the volta traditionally fell on the ninth line, demarcating the sestet from the octave not only formally but also semantically because if in the first four lines a particular problem was usually raised, in the following four lines it was developed and finally resolved in the last six lines. Thus, the conflict “took off”, the antitheses “merged” in the synthesis. Shakespearean sonnet, being a genre form significantly modified in English literature, on the one hand, followed this general scheme, but on the other – transferred the volta to the final couplet, the so-called “key”, which acquired a special importance. Practicing the hybrid version of the sonnet in his sequence, J. Donne introduces two voltaes simultaneously (the Italian and the English one, after the eighth line and after the twelfth line) in twelve of his poems. It seems to us that it gives him much wider opportunities for the development of the lyrical plot.

We also dare to assume that the sonnet genre form turned out to be very convenient for J. Donne, who had entered the history of world literature as the founder of the English Metaphysical School of Poetry. Metaphysical poets became famous for the intellectuality of their po-

ems, their logical harmony and refinement of thought. At the same time, they are also known for their brilliant wit and oxymoronic language. The poetics of the “metaphysical texts” is based on a metaphor of a special type, in which concepts usually converge not on the basis of their similarity, but on the contrary – on the basis of their contrast. Such a specific metaphor, the so-called “conceit”, is perceived by readers as a paradox and served for the metaphysical poets not just as a linguistic decoration, but as a kind of reflection of the extreme complexity of the world and human existence, which were especially keenly felt in the Baroque period. J. Donne quite often ends his sonnets with just such a conceit-paradox, continuing, however, the tradition of the English sonnet writers, who, starting with the earliest Petrarchist T. Wyatt, mostly gave the final couplet a pronounced aphoristic character.

At the same time, as it has been well demonstrated by Nicholas Slagter, J. Donne transfers to his texts not only the Petrarchan sonnet structure, but also the concept of relations between the main Petrarchan characters: “Donne’s desire to feel God’s divine love, when placed within the sonnet, cannot help but call on Petrarchan ideals of the lover-beloved relationship” [Slagter, 2017]. Let’s try to specify this idea.

In our view, just like F. Petrarch’s “Canzoniere”, J. Donne’s lyrical sequence can be divided into two unequal parts. The sonnet XVII (“Since she whom I lov’d”) can be assumed to be a kind of demarcation line between them. In this poem, the author writes about his wife Ann More’s death at the age of thirty-three in 1617. Similar to the Italian poet’s texts, the death of his beloved becomes a turning point in the relationship between J. Donne’s persona and the Lord. So that this thesis does not seem unfounded, let us refer to the observations of the writer’s biographers, in particular, Edmund Gosse, who, following Izaak Walton, a contemporary and a friend of J. Donne, allowed that “though Donne inquired early in life into the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism, yet that he lived until the death of his wife without religion” [Gosse, 2008, p. 100].

Thus, in the sonnets written before 1617 (I–XVI), the English writer constantly emphasizes his persona’s sinfulness and inability to overcome earthly, bodily temptations (I, II, V, VI, XI, XII). In most of these texts, the protagonist directly addresses God, begging for conversion and salvation (I, II, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XIV, XVI). However, the Lord does not answer him, remaining silent and distant, like a heroine of the Petrarchan hypertext. J. Donne’s persona can only look to the unreachable heavens and hope for God’s mercy:

Onely thou art above, and when towards thee  
By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe... [Donne, 2011, p. 427].

He often feels abandoned and forgotten by the Lord, sometimes even desperately assuming that God does not love him, having chosen someone more worthy of His affection; that is, as in the concept of courtly love, the protagonist’s love for the Lord looks unreciprocated:

Oh I shall soone despaire, when I doe see  
That thou lov’st mankind well, yet wilt’not chuse me [Donne, 2011, p. 428].

As in F. Petrarch’s “Canzoniere”, the speaker’s earthly nature and human sinfulness prevent him from uniting with God:

I am a little world made cunningly  
Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,  
But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night  
My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die [Donne, 2011, p. 429].

In J. Donne’s texts, sins are often personified in the image of the enemy (sometimes specifically the devil), capturing the protagonist’s soul and reigning in it as in his dominions:

My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine;  
Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee?  
Why doth he steale, nay ravish that’s thy right? [Donne, 2011, pp. 427–428].



Not having enough strength to overcome him, the protagonist asks the Lord for His help in this struggle, actualizing a layer of the traditional Petrarchan military imagery, typical for the poetical development of the “love-war” concept:

Except thou rise and for thine owne worke fight [Donne, 2011, p. 428].

In general, war metaphors are not a distinctive feature of entirely Petrarchan love lyrics. Therefore, in his “Fragments d’un Discours Amoureux”, Roland Barth notes: “In the language (dictionary), the equivalence of love and war has long been established: in both cases, it is about subduing, seizing, capturing, etc.” [Барт, 2006, p. 67]. F. Petrarch also did not avoid explication of this kind of imagery. In the “Canzoniere”, the concept of “love-war” was most often realized through the images of love arrows, fired at the protagonist not only by Cupid, as it was, for example, in the ancient tradition (II, III, LXXXIII, LXXXVI, CCXLI), but also by the woman (CXXXIII, CX-LIV). For example, in the sonnet LXXXVII, it is written as follows:

As soon as ever he has launched his arrows,  
the expert archer can see from afar  
which shots have gone astray, and those  
he’s sure will hit the target he assigned:  
so you knew the arrows from your eyes,  
lady, had pierced straight to my deepest part,  
and I’d be forced to weep eternally  
because of the wound my heart received.  
And I am certain of what you said then:  
‘Wretched lover, where will crying lead him?  
Behold the arrow by which Love hoped he’d die.’  
Now, seeing how grief has bound me,  
all that my enemies do with me now,  
is not to kill me but increase my pain [Petrarch, 2001, p. 148].

In the quoted text, Laura is called an “*enemy*”. This is another conceptual image for the “Canzoniere” related to war (CCCXV, CLXX, CCCXV). Not only does F. Petrarch’s persona admire his beloved and bow before her beauty and nobility, but he also is afraid of her and is at war with her:

Many times now, with my true thought,  
I’ve dared to assail my enemy [Petrarch, 2001, p. 265].

Laura is sometimes presented to us wearing an armour (III, XLIV) or with a weapon in her hands (CXLIV), like F. Petrarch’s protagonist himself, but the armour of virtues and rhymes does not save the latter from Cupid’s shots and the murderous glances of Laura’s eyes (XCV, CX, CC-CIV), so he is often depicted as wounded (LXXV, XC, CCXLI). Metaphors of captivity are also frequent in the “Canzoniere” – F. Petrarch’s persona is both the captive of Cupid (LXV) and the captive of his Mistress (XCVII, CXXI).

This kind of poetic imagery was also widely used by the English Petrarchists, in particular Ph. Sidney, whose works J. Donne was definitely familiar with. In the sonnet XIV (“Batter my heart, three person’d God”), the latter brings the intensity of the military metaphors to the boundary level.

Structurally, this poem is composed very logically and consistently. Each of the three four-line stanzas is built on its own macro-image that is connected with one another. While most scholars are unanimous regarding the second and the third quatrains of this text, agreeing that the second stanza is clearly dominated by military discourse (manifested in such expressions as: “*batter*”, “*your force*”, “*break*”, “*blow*”, “*burn*”, “*usurp’d town*”, “*due*”, “*viceroi*”, “*defend*”, “*captivated*”), and the third one – by marital / love / sexual discourse (“*dearly I love you*”, “*loved, betroth’d*”, “*divorce me*”, “*untie or break that knot*”, “*enthrall me*”, “*chaste*”, “*ravish*”), under-

standing of the first stanza is much more controversial. In his profound article “John Donne: Holy Sonnet XIV: or the Plentitude of Metaphor”, Purificaciyn Ribes [Ribes, 1996] analyzes its most common interpretations and proves either their partial validity or their complete inaccuracy.

It is commonly accepted that the first quatrain of J. Donne’s poem is based on the parallelism between the images of a craftsman – the master creating something new, and the Lord – the creator of the entire universe. Just like the first one tries to repair some broken things, the second one has to make efforts to “make new”, “mend” the protagonist, corrupted by sins:

Batter my heart, three person’d God; for, you  
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;  
That I may rise, and stand, o’erthrow mee, and bend  
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new [Donne, p. 433].

However, according to P. Ribes, this craftsman is neither a metallurgist, a glassblower, nor a potter, as other researchers suggest (J.C. Levenson, T. Romain, R.D. Bedford). He is an alchemist, since the verbs used by the English writer to describe his activity reflect the main stages of the alchemical process [Ribes, 1996, p. 165]. Alchemists tried to extract gold by purifying different imperfect substances, and, as a parallel to this, the main goal of J. Donne’s persona in this poem is to persuade God to cleanse him of his sinful imperfections. We consider this interpretation quite convincing, since it has been proved by the critics [Albrecht, 2008; Mazzeo, 1957; Stanton, 1996] that the poet was interested in alchemical issues and used a lot of alchemical images not only in his verses, but also in the sermons and even in the private correspondence.

We should also pay attention to the fact that described parallelism is not only figurative but also linguistic – the second and the fourth lines of the sonnet are written according to a single principle. Enumerating identical clauses, the poet purposefully groups them into threes (“*knocke, breathe, shine*”; “*breake, blowe, burn*”) – this is how the Christian idea of “*three person’d God*” finds its expression on the linguistic level of this text. At the same time, this parallelism of “soft” verbs of the second line and “strong” verbs of the fourth line emphasizes the idea of God as a being that can love and punish, be patient and kind, terrifying and cruel. The well audible alliteration (“b”) in the lexemes of the fourth line only strengthens their aggressive semantics, preparing us for the perception of the second quatrain.

In this part of the poem, J. Donne’s persona compares himself to a town usurped by the enemy. His mind is so enslaved by evil that he is unable to embrace God, even when He batters his heart:

I, like an usurpt towne, to’another due,  
Labour to’admit you, but Oh, to no end,  
Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend,  
But is captiv’d, and proves weake or untrue [Donne, 2011, p. 433].

Human reason is the most significant human value and capability, but it appears imperfect and weak before the devil’s temptations. Therefore, the protagonist finds himself in a hopeless situation, when, on the one hand, he yearns for Divine love with all his heart, and on the other hand, he has no possibility of becoming closer to the Lord.

This situation determines the dominant pessimistic pathos of the second quatrain of the sonnet. However, after the eighth line, the first volta is used, marking the change of moods. In spite of the fact that the protagonist is unable to renounce sin, he is still full of love for the Lord and believes that He will be able to love him in return:

Yet dearely’l love you, and would be loved faine... [Donne, 2011, p. 433].

However, the recollection of the fact that J. Donne’s persona is literally “betrothed” with the enemy (“*But am betroth’d unto your enemy*” [Donne, 2011, p. 433]), i.e., cannot get rid of sin, “extinguishes” his affectation and returns him to the understanding of his own miserability.

Nevertheless, there is nothing impossible for the Lord; that is why J. Donne’s persona sincerely believes that God can free him from the devil’s embrace. For this, the Lord

has to go to war against him, conquer the stronghold of the protagonist's heart, separate him from the enemy, and take into His own captivity, imprison him in His own prison:

Divorce mee, 'untie, or breake that knot againe,  
Take mee to you, imprison mee for I  
Except you 'enthrall mee, never shall be free... [Donne, 2011, p. 433].

As it can be seen, with the development of the lyrical plot, images of war and violence in the poem are becoming more and more cruel ("*batter*" – "*breake*" – "*blowe*" – "*burn*"; "*imprison*" – "*enthrall*") until they flow into a potent metaphor, built according to the principle of oxymoron:

Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee [Donne, 2011, p. 433].

In order to obtain innocence, spiritual purity, the protagonist of the sonnet XIV must be "*ravished*" by God. This is perhaps one of the most powerful conceits in J. Donne's entire poetic practice, as it is difficult to imagine more incompatible things than virginity and rape, grotesquely combined in this extravagant trope.

Nevertheless, "this extravagant use of intense erotic imagery <...> was a continuation of the medieval saints and reflected the best of the contemplative-mystical tradition of the historic Christian spirituality" [Schwanda, 2012, pp. 165–166]. It is worth noting that Christian mystics used to exploit erotic images while speaking about their spiritual experience. The beginnings of this practice can be traced back to the Old Testament, where many motifs of lustful desire and carnal love can be easily found. During the period of Eastern Fathers of the Church, they were reinterpreted according to the concept of medieval "spiritual eroticism". Gregory of Nyssa, who devoted much attention to the interpretation of the "Song of Songs", is famous for his extraordinary virtuosity in the matter of "spiritualization" of the biblical erotics. In the image of the bride longing for the bridegroom in this Old Testament book, Gregory of Nyssa saw the human soul dreaming of merging with God – the bridegroom. That is why she talks without shame about her passion and her desire to enjoy the groom's beauty and kisses. She dreams of letting him into her "vineyard" and treating him with her sweet wine. Thus, according to Gregory of Nyssa, all passionate, erotic elements in the Bible only figuratively depict the spiritual marriage of the human soul with God.

Medieval mystics, describing their communication with the Lord, used the same language formulas as the Provençal poets. Considering courtly love as an allegory of the human soul's love for the Lord, the hidden message of the Provençal Cathars, transmitted through the poems of troubadours to the wide world, D. de Rougemont explained it as follows: "If the soul cannot essentially unite with God, as Christian orthodoxy claims, then from here it follows that the soul's love for God is a mutual unhappy love. It can be predicted that this love will be expressed through the language of passion, that is, through the language of the Cathars, 'profaned' by literature and adapted to human passions" [Ружмон, 2000, p. 149]. After analyzing the texts of St. Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross (both were only slightly younger than J. Donne: the former died in 1582, the latter – in 1591), Meister Eckhart, John van Ruysbroeck, the Swiss researcher compiled a whole catalogue of topics, motifs and images common to the troubadours and Christian mystics, for example, "sweet wound", "the sting of love that wounds without killing", "passion that 'separates' lovers from the world and human beings", "grievances and pain more desirable than joy and earthly happiness", "stolen heart", etc. [Ружмон, 2000, pp. 152–153].

Such a parallel usage of the same language units in completely different discourses is fixed lexicographically. Thereby, it is not difficult to find out that in the 17th century, the verb "*to ravish*" utilized by J. Donne in sonnet XIV was used in two main meanings: 1) to abduct, rape, carry away by force and 2) to exalt or transport with joy [Schwanda, 2012, pp. 164–165]. The modern Oxford English Dictionary also captures both of these meanings [Simpson, Weiner, 2000, p. 235]. In the works of Christian mystics, they mostly merged, as, for example, in the texts of Bernard of Clairvaux, who described his state of union with the Creator precisely as "enrapture" or "divine rape"; as a perfect lover, God was depicted by the obscure thirteenth-century spiritual writer Gérard of Liège [Newman, 2004, p. 86]. Eleanor McCullough sums up on that: "For medieval mys-

tics, to be possessed by God is to be ravished by him. In being ravished by God, the soul becomes chaste" [McCullough, 2007]. She is also convinced that J. Donne "deliberately gives both a sexual and sacred interpretation of the word 'ravish'" [McCullough, 2007].

According to the Ukrainian researcher Tetiana Riazantseva, this combination of erotic and religious, sacred and profane is one of the extreme manifestations of the "presence of thought in an image" characteristic of metaphysical poets [Рязанцева, 2014, p. 39]. The search for analogies between the physical and spiritual aspects of human life, the external and the internal, quite often resulted in their texts in the use of poetic images related to the sphere of the bodily. At the same time, metaphysical poetry was also characterized by a contrasting tonality in highlighting spiritual phenomena through the physical ones, the ability to interpret this type of images in the opposite way [Рязанцева, 2015, p. 480]. In this sense, the analyzed line by J. Donne is an exemplary metaphysical paradox, which, combining within itself the most distant semantic elements, can never be unambiguously or exhaustively explained.

Thus, considering the fact that in J. Donne's lifetime, "ravisement could denote either the crime of rape or the experience of mystical ecstasy" [Newman, 2004, p. 86], it is pretty impossible to set what the author meant precisely. On the other hand, there is no doubt that the trope under the analysis clearly correlates with the main idea of Protestantism, formulated by Martin Luther, which consists in denying salvation by good deeds or any human efforts. Salvation in Protestantism is achieved exclusively through faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice and depends only on God's mercy. It is precisely that mercy that J. Donne's persona seeks in the poem.

The sexual metaphor is the very essence of the couplet in this J. Donne's text. According to the established poetic practice, it was in the last two lines that the solution to the controversial issue raised in the sonnet should have been proposed. In the aforementioned poem, this practice manifests itself in the fact that the protagonist abandons attempts to save himself from the enemy independently, and gives himself completely into the hands of the Lord. Although, the sorrows and difficulties of J. Donne's persona have not disappeared, he is filled with trust in God, thereby achieving a certain mental balance.

Generally speaking, the entire palette of the protagonist's emotional fluctuations is well felt in the melody of this poem, which is very far from ideal. Thus, abandoning traditional iambic pentameter, the English author uses trochee in the first line of his sonnet, and in the following lines, he utilises many spondees, creating violence-related images. On the whole, almost all lines of the sonnet (except for 3 and 11) are full of metrical irregularities, but they are not accidental. In our opinion, with the help of these irregularities, J. Donne conveys the exalted state, the excitement of his persona. This is also confirmed by the fact that the last two lines of the poem, where the protagonist finally achieves his inner peace, are written in absolutely regular iambic pentameter. However, the following poems of the sequence testify that the Lord remains indifferent to the protagonist's pleas, and his hopes for salvation, expressed in the sonnet XIV, do not come true.

In sonnet XVII, the protagonist's bitterness from the loss of a beloved is fully compensated by finding the way to God. Now, looking up, J. Donne's persona does not feel rejected; on the contrary, his spiritual thirst is quenched:

Since she whom I lov'd hath payd her last debt  
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,  
And her Soule early into heaven ravished,  
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is sett.  
Here the admyring her my mind did whett  
To seeke thee God; so streames do shew their head;  
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed [Donne, 2011, p. 435].

However, J. Donne's sonnet would not be a sonnet if it did not contain a paradox. On the one hand, his protagonist understands that instead of profane, earthly love, he was given something much more valuable – Divine love, but on the other hand, he still cannot accept the death of his lover. This is indicated, in particular, by the third line of the poem, which tells us that the heroine's soul was literally "ravished" to heaven too early; that is, this event is depicted as an act of violence here. The fact that J. Donne's persona did not fully accept the death of his beloved is

also indicated by the writer's three-time usage of the conjunction "but", the semantics of which is essentially denial – in the ninth and thirteenth lines (where the voltaes take place), and also in the seventh line.

Then, the first volta radically shifts the focus. If the octave was based on the images of the protagonist's experience (it should be noted that the thematic unity of the octave is emphasized on the formal level by the harmonious endings of all the lines, as well as through alliteration of the sounds "d" and "t" ("*debt*" – "*dead*" – "*ravished*" – "*sett*" – "*whet*" – "*head*" – "*fed*" – "*yet*"), from the ninth line it is focused on the highly secularized and anthropomorphized image of God. It is almost shocking, but the Lord in this text not simply acquires the ability to feel and act like an ordinary human being but is depicted as a jealous lover:

But why should I begg more Love, when as thou  
Dost wooe my soule for hers; offring all thine:  
And dost not only feare least I allow  
My Love to Saints and Angels things divine,  
But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt  
Least the World, Fleshe, yea Devill putt thee out... [Donne, 211, p. 435].

The author implicitly indicates God's jealousy to be the reason for the heroine's death, as she is some Lord's rival in this love triangle. God took the protagonist's beloved to heaven because He had wanted all of his love for Himself.

However, the final couplet, of course, removes these dramatic contradictions. The Lord's jealousy is called "*tender*" in it, that is, it is understood as pleasant for J. Donne's persona. At the end of the sonnet, he reasonably concludes that his wife, unfortunately, was just a part of this sinful earthly world, and his love for her was a temptation that drove him away from God. Therefore, her death should be considered an opportunity to get closer to the Lord.

Incidentally, it should be noted that in the sonnet V ("I am a little world made cunningly"), J. Donne already seems to have outlined such a specific direction of his protagonist's and God's relations while asking the Lord to replace the flames of earthly passions with God's sacred healing fire:

But oh it must be burnt! alas the fire  
Of lust and envie have burnt it heretofore,  
And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,  
And burne me o Lord, with a fiery zeale  
Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heale [Donne, 2011, p. 429].

It is noteworthy that in this poem, J. Donne uses the term "passion" ("*fiery zeale*") in relation to God because his persona's relationship with the Lord will be depicted as something resembling passionate love in the last (XIX), a concluding text of the "Holy Sonnets" ("Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one").

The leitmotif of this poem is the protagonist's constant swaying between the poles of various emotions. In order to display such a controversial state, the English writer used the favourite artistic means of Petrarchists – antithesis and oxymoron. In F. Petrarch's poems, the motif of disharmony of his persona's inner world was developed in many ways (see, for example, XVII, CLXIV, CLXXIII, CLXXVIII), since, as it has been already mentioned, love in Petrarchism is a quite contradictory feeling, capable of giving both painful torments and bright joy, able to throw the lover into the abyss of despair and hopelessness and then to raise him to the heights of happiness, to injure and to heal, to kill and to resurrect. Two sonnets of the "Canzoniere" – CXXXII and CXXXIV, which are also known as "icy-fire sonnets" – are the most famous in this context, since it is in them that the Italian poet most fully and insightfully formulated his original vision of love as an oxymoronic combination of fire and ice, heat and cold. In addition to the aforementioned sonnets (CXXXII, CXXXIV), motifs of "freezing fire" or "flaming ice" in different variations can also be found in such F. Petrarch's poems as CL, CLII, CCII and some others.

It is notable that J. Donne also utilizes this well-known Petrarchan metaphor in his poem, which looks structurally similar to the sonnet CXXXIV of the “Canzoniere”.

Let us compare:

**F. Petrarch**

*I find no peace, and yet I make no war:  
and fear, and hope: and burn, and I am ice:  
and fly above the sky, and fall to earth,  
and clutch at nothing, and embrace the world.  
One imprisons me, who neither frees nor jails me,  
nor keeps me to herself nor slips the noose:  
and Love does not destroy me, and does not loose me,  
wishes me not to live, but does not remove my bar.  
I see without eyes, and have no tongue, but cry:  
and long to perish, yet I beg for aid:  
and hold myself in hate, and love another.  
I feed on sadness, laughing weep:  
death and life displease me equally:  
and I am in this state, lady, because of you*  
[Petrarch, 2001, p. 221].

**J. Donne**

*Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:  
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott  
A constant habit; that when I would not  
I change in vowes, and in devotione.  
As humorous is my contritione  
As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:  
As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,  
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.  
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day  
In prayers, and flattering speeches I court God:  
To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.  
So my devout fits come and go away  
Like a fantastique Ague: save that here  
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare*  
[Donne, 2011, p. 436].

Both texts are built on a similar series of contrasting images depicting the complexity of F. Petrarch's persona's feelings for Laura, and J. Donne's persona's feelings for God. They both end with the reconciliation of antitheses in a synthesis of the sonnet key, where the former author thanks his Mistress for suffering, which helps him to become better. The latter declares the days when he suffered from torments and fear of the Lord to be the happiest in his life. It is interesting that this reconciliation seems to be planned from the very beginning of the text by the English poet, as he widely utilized the full or partial consonance of antonymous words as both external and internal rhyme: “begot” – “not”, “cold” – “hot”, “rigid” – “distempered”, “infinite” – “none”, “yesterday” – “to day”, thereby tightly linking them together and cementing into a monolith of the sonnet genre form. An unusually regular (as for J. Donne's verses) iambic pentameter also served this purpose. It is clear that this similarity in the composition of the quoted texts is caused by the traditional structure of the sonnet itself, which, being a “rigid”, “solid” genre form, requires following the established rules not only in terms of form but also in terms of content. However, the English author's poem is characterized by a number of other aspects that relate it to the Petrarchan literary tradition.

The central problem for J. Donne's protagonist in this text is looking for balance and constancy in his relationship with the Lord. He prays and sincerely repents, but these moments are frequently replaced by silence and frustration, apparently for the reason that J. Donne's persona does not feel any response. In Christianity, especially its Catholic form, repentance is the best and sometimes the only way to achieve righteousness. The writer emphasizes this as he rhymes the words “devotione” and “contrition” in the fourth and fifth lines, exactly where the first quatrain turns into the second one. Being only sporadic, and therefore not serious (“humorous”), the protagonist's repentance, of course, cannot help him propitiate the Lord. The formulation of this thought ends the octave.

Petrarchan volta, in the ninth line, initiates the solution of the outlined problem. The accumulation of time markers in the sestet (“yesterday” – “to day” – “to tomorrow”) indicates that J. Donne's persona tries to observe the issue from a temporal perspective. This point of view results in the understanding that the protagonist's relationship with God is different in each separate period of time, which, in turn, gives him a reason to hope that the current disappointment and despair are just temporary. This idea, once again, is reflected in the rhyme, since in this text “here” is rhymed with “fear”; that is, the emotions that dominate the protagonist are considered to be momentary. This brings back the hopeful mood to the end of the poem, as well as to the end of the whole sonnet sequence. In this sense, the last text of J. Donne's “Holy Sonnets” can be compared, in our view, to the last text of F. Petrarch's “Canzoniere”.

If we interpret this text in the context of the Petrarchan tradition, we should also pay attention to the fact that in this sonnet, the protagonist's love is compared to a disease – “*ague*”. Strictly speaking, the concept of “love-disease”, like the concept of “love-war”, was not invented by F. Petrarch. Its source should be primarily found in the love elegies of Ovid, who, in turn, relied on the traditions of the ancient Greek love lyrics, but European Petrarchists actively developed it. In F. Petrarch's texts, the idea of “love-disease” took an even more acute modification – a fatal illness leading the protagonist to the inevitable death (see, for example, LXXVI, LXXIX, CXXXII, CCII, etc.). It is significant that the antithesis of heat and cold in J. Donne's sonnet can be connected with this “love-disease” metaphor, since the protagonist alternately falls into a fever, then into a chill (“*As riddlingly distemper'd, cold and hot*”), which may well be interpreted as a symptom of an illness, as well as his trembling, described in the eleventh line (“*I quake*”) and the last two lines (“*I // shake with feare*”). The enjambement used by the author in the couplet further increases the attention to this image.

Another aspect which brings this sonnet closer to the Petrarchan tradition is the fact that speaking about his relations with the Lord, the protagonist utilizes a verb that has an absolutely undeniable origin from the love language of Petrarchism – “*to court*”, that is, literally “to flatter”, “to lure”, “to tempt”. In this way, J. Donne seems to indicate that his persona's relations with God are, to some degree, similar to the relations between the characters in the Petrarchan hypertext. The fact that this English lexeme is cognate to the French word “*Courtois*”, translated as “*courtly*”, also testifies in favour of this interpretation. In view of this, we can suppose that J. Donne describes his persona's feelings for God as something close to “*courtly love*” – high love-bowing, love-service that was immortalized by F. Petrarch and his followers.

## Conclusions

Considering all that has been written, the following conclusions can be made. In our humble opinion, just like F. Petrarch's “*Canzoniere*”, J. Donne's lyrical sequence “*Holy Sonnets*” can be read linearly as a dramatic story of the relationship between its main characters, but in the English author's texts, it is not the usual Petrarchan hero and heroine, but the protagonist and the Lord. Three sonnets – XIV, XVII and XIX – are especially important and conceptual for understanding the evolution of their relations.

In the first of them, feeling his own weakness and impossibility to overcome the devil, J. Donne's persona begs the Lord to win back his heart from the enemy, using a wide palette of military metaphors typical to the Petrarchan lyrics. However, the Lord, who in sonnets I–XIII is depicted in a Petrarchan manner as distant and completely deaf to the protagonist's pleas, remains indifferent.

In sonnet XVII, which looks similar to the lyrical texts of the “*Canzoniere*” dedicated to Laura's death, a notable change in the relationship between the characters occurs. As in the Italian humanist's poems, the life path of J. Donne's persona finally turns to heaven after the death of his beloved, and he begins to feel that the loss of earthly love is compensated by the gaining of the Divine one. But his further relations with God, once again, seem to be built according to the Petrarchan model, most fully described in the last text of the sequence.

The sonnet XIX demonstrates all the complexity of the relationship between a human being and the Lord. J. Donne's persona is constantly dominated by conflicting feelings and emotions, which generally correlates with Petrarchan's understanding of the ambivalence of love, best shown by F. Petrarch in the sonnets CXXXII and CXXXIV. The poetic vocabulary used by J. Donne in this poem (“*In prayers, and flattering speeches I court God*”, “*So my devout fits come and go away // Like a fantastique Ague*” [Donne, 2011, p. 436], etc.) indicates the specific character of his persona's relations with God, which due to this verbalization have signs of courtly love, courtly service.

We can sum up that the protagonist's relations with the Lord in the “*Holy Sonnets*” might be interpreted as generally built on the same principles that are immanent for the concept of love in the poetry of Petrarchism. On this point, we tend to agree with the following statement of H. Wilcox: “The sonnets struggle to contain the contraries of desire and despair, passion and preoccupation, trials and triumphs: loving God, Donne's devotional writing suggests, can be as troubled and varied an experience as that depicted in his secular love poetry” [Wilcox, 2006,

p. 150]. The persona of the English poet, as well as the traditional hero of Petrarchan texts, also suffers from unrequited feelings, longs for reciprocity with all his heart, and, in addition, speaks in the specific metaphorical language. Even if the linguistic practice utilized by the author cannot be considered exclusively Petrarchan, since a similar rhetorical code, in which the experience of spiritual communication with the Lord was described with the help of erotic images, was widely used by the Christian mystics, the sonnet poetic structure is canonical for Petrarchan lyrical discourse and require following the established rules not only in terms of form, but also in terms of content. However, of course, this is only one possible way in which these highly complex texts can be understood.

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## AN INTIMATE DIALOGUE WITH GOD IN JOHN DONNE'S "HOLY SONNETS": PETRARCHAN CONTEXT

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**Key words:** *courtly love, image of God, persona, Petrarchism, platonic love, protagonist, sonnet.*

The *purpose* of the paper is to study the images of the platonic and courtly in the protagonist's personal relations with God in J. Donne's "Holy Sonnets" in the context of the connection with the Petrarchan tradition. In order to accomplish this, a complex approach including elements of biographical, genealogical, typological, hermeneutic, comparative, and structural-semiotic *methods* of literary analysis has been used.

The views of literary critics on the sources of the "Holy Sonnets" (Christian meditative practices, Bible books, traditions of English religious lyrics) have been reviewed, their connection with the Petrarchan poetic tradition has been pointed out and, in this context, one of the possible interpretations of J. Donne's sonnet sequence has been proposed.

It has been shown that three poems of the sequence – XIV, XVII and XIX – are especially important and conceptual for understanding the evolution of the protagonist's relations with God in the "Holy Sonnets". In the first of them, feeling his own weakness and impossibility to overcome the devil, J. Donne's persona begs the Lord to win back his heart from the enemy, using a broad palette of military metaphors typical to the Petrarchan lyrics. However, the Lord, who in sonnets I – XIII is depicted in a Petrarchan manner as distant and completely deaf to the protagonist's pleas, remains indifferent.

In sonnet XVII, which looks similar to the lyrical texts of the "Canzoniere" dedicated to Laura's death, a notable change in the relationship between the characters takes place. As in the Italian humanist's poems, the life path of J. Donne's persona finally turns to heaven after the death of his beloved, and he begins to feel that the loss of earthly love is compensated by the gaining of the Divine one. However, his further relations with God, once again, seem to be built according to the Petrarchan model, most fully described in the last text of the sequence.

The sonnet XIX demonstrates all the complexity of the relationship between a human being and the Lord. J. Donne's persona is constantly dominated by conflicting feelings and emotions, which generally correlates with Petrarchan understanding of the ambivalence of love, best shown by F. Petrarch in the sonnets CXXXII and CXXXIV. Moreover, the poetic vocabulary used by J. Donne in this poem indicates the specific character of his persona's relations with God, which are supposed to have signs of courtly love, courtly bowing-service.

It has been summed up that the protagonist's relations with the Lord in the "Holy Sonnets" might be interpreted as generally built on the same principles that are immanent in the concept of love in the poetry of Petrarchism. The persona of the English poet, as well as the traditional hero of Petrarchan texts, also suffers from unrequited feelings, longs for reciprocity with all his heart, and, in addition, speaks in the specific metaphorical language. Even if the linguistic practice utilized by the author cannot be considered exclusively Petrarchan, since a similar rhetorical code, in which the experience of spiritual communication with the Lord was described with the help of erotic images, was widely used by the Christian mystics, the sonnet poetic structure is canonical for Petrarchan lyrical discourse and require following the established rules not only in terms of form, but also in terms of content.

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