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Alchemical Eschatology and Union in John Donne's Metaphysical Verse

Textual and Jungian Readings of Selected Poems

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the use of alchemical imagery in selected love poems and religious verse by John Donne. Donne's alchemical imagery has been argued to represent a blend of eschatology and alchemy, and the mystical imagery can be interpreted as a psychological representation of what Jung calls the "projection of the process of individuation". The intersection of mystical alchemy, eschatology, and psychological integration materializes as a rich literary concoction in the following poems: "A Litanye", "Resurrection. Imperfect", "A Nocturnall vpon St Lucies Day", "An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham", and "The Extasie".

Through close reading, this thesis employs a combination of textual criticism and Jung's psychoanalytic treatment of alchemy. This thesis demonstrates the purpose of alchemy in Donne's poetry to clarify, first, "why alchemy?", and second, "what makes alchemy a potent tool for the poet?". The alchemical influence in Donne's poetry has been broadly recognized by literary critics, but an integrated Jungian analysis provides a more substantial and psychologically informed understanding of Donne's poetic conceits and images. In this thesis, I present textual and historical readings within the context of the Jungian theory of individuation. The purpose of using Jung's psychoanalytic concepts is to deepen our critical understanding of the spiritual and physical experiences of Donne as psychologically descriptive and significant.

This thesis shows that Donne's use of alchemical imagery illustrates his psycho-spiritual processes and self-formation in textual form. Close reading and the integration of Jungian alchemical theories help bring these processes to the surface, making what is concealed manifest in Donne's words. While staying rooted in Christian doctrine, Donne utilizes alchemy as a tool for textual mappings of the internal motion of his soul. By appropriating alchemy as a poetic tool, Donne also participates in a diachronic thread of alchemical thinking from the wake of Hermeticism to 20th-century psychoanalysis and modern-day embodied schemata in cognitive science. The chosen imagery serves as a culturally appropriate vehicle for making sense of abstract subject matter during the golden age of alchemical developments. Furthermore, Donne's verse shows that for the poet no union and wholeness can be achieved without love as the proverbial alchemist, and neither can he experience redemptive transmutation without God as the "Arch-Chymist".

By turning to psychoanalysis and Jungian concepts, this thesis shows that the process of individuation, and mystical union – *coniunctio* – is lodged in his verse. The unification of conscious and unconscious mind is textually illustrated in Donne's reflections on the nature of love and spirituality. Indeed, the selected poems carry a distinct consciousness that seeks moral-intellectual refinement and purification to emulate the divine and to endure the transmutation process to become unified with the divine. Finally, the connection between love and alchemical transmutation lies in the union Donne seeks on spiritual and physical levels

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1. Introduction

The history of alchemy in literature and poetry is an example of the remarkable longevity to which a long-since contested theoretical frame can attest. By offering a sense of transcendent meaning in the form of metaphors and euphemisms, alchemy still speaks to people today through its ability to communicate experiences and processes of change and transformation. The early sixteenth century has been described as a polysemous allegorical tradition, an enormous yet confusing body of mythographic materials along with liturgical and sacramental symbolism as well as Hermetic correspondences, astrological, mathematical, and scientific speculations (Chambers 4). During the early modern period and early seventeenth century England more specifically, alchemical poetry continued to be produced, while in France this tradition of poetry had already started to fade (Fitzsimmons 384). The mystical tradition found in Hermetic philosophy was yoked to serve alongside the teachings of the Church due to alchemy's apparent compatibility and claimed supportive role in Christian dogma (Fitzsimmons 384; Jung 396; vol. 12). As I will later show, the processes of alchemical transmutation and transformation were easily seen as analogous with Christian soteriology, inspiring England's leading figure of the Metaphysical school of poetry, Protestant convert, and priest John Donne (1572-1631) to make substantial use of alchemical imagery and conceits in his love poetry and religious verse. As Walker has observed, in the 17th century, poets at large drew inspiration from diverse fields such as alchemy, numerology, philosophy, and cosmography, and Donne specifically adopted ideas from these fields (45). Furthermore, critics have examined the way Donne explores the self as a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm, reflecting a popular Renaissance trope of human beings as little worlds, leading Donne to ponder spiritually and theologically aligned ways of knowing and loving the self, and the greater world by extension (Harland 162). The alchemical influence in Donne's poetry has been broadly recognized but what separates him from others making use of similar imagery is Donne's sensitivity, which Nichols describes as an ear attuned to "the varying resonances of language" (354). Donne's language demonstrates an aptitude for depth of emotion, wit, irony, lexical and grammatical puns (see Fitzsimmons 2014), and awareness of mystical and spiritual schools of thought. Within the intellectual microcosms in Donne's poetry, what strikes as relevant are his reflections on describing internal processes (Walker 45). Indeed, the chosen verse in this thesis point to internal motion with limited or nonexistent external movement. The focus is on the alchemy of the soul, even as it engages the body through embodied metaphor (see Helms 423).

Born to a prominent Roman Catholic family in England, Donne can be seen to seek ways to illustrate and process his spiritual journey of conversion alongside his journey of love, both carnal and divine. This thesis examines the ways Donne navigates experiences of regeneration, spiritually and physically, using alchemical ideas as a metaphoric alembic for transformative processes of union. Having written several extensive treatises on the psychological significance of alchemy, the 20th-century psychoanalyst Carl Jung observed that alchemy is concerned with a mystery both physical and spiritual, and thus the mystical side of alchemy can be seen as a psychological problem, a projected and symbolic concretization of the process of individuation (Shams et al., 54; see Jung; vol. 13). For this reason, my approach to Donne combines alchemical readings with Jung's theory of individuation as it directly relates alchemy.

I am not the first to combine Jungian concepts with alchemy, even in the context of studying Donne specifically; to name a few, Fitzsimmons (384) and Linden ("Mystical Alchemy" 84) have noted on the correspondences in passing, and Shams and Anushiravani have written an interdisciplinary overview of Jungian psychology and alchemy in Donne's poetry, arguing that "because alchemy draws on the correspondence between psyche and matter, it is an appropriate poetic and interdisciplinary technique to draw analogies between spiritual and physical notions of transformation and perfection" (66). What alchemists sought was psychological wholeness and integration, bridging the gap between conscious and unconscious (Shams et al., 55). While Jung's treatment of alchemy was influential in the twentieth century and continues to inspire more recent studies employing his psychoanalytic framework, historians have also contested his claims about alchemy's true nature as invalid descriptions of alchemy as a phenomenon (Principe 105). Notwithstanding the criticism within an exclusively historical approach, the continuing use of Jungian concepts, however, points to the relevance of psychoanalysis and its ability to conceptualize unconscious processes, as Donne also does in his verse. This present thesis does not aim to procure scientific conclusions on the correctness or lack thereof of mystical alchemy but rather purposes a selective diachronic reading of Donne's use of alchemical imagery to gain a deeper psycho-spiritual understanding of the way Donne conceptualized the world and his inmost experiences.

Thus, I aim to present an examination of John Donne's selected metaphysical love poetry and religious verse and the use of alchemical allusions therein. Donne's alchemical imagery has been argued to represent a blend of eschatology and alchemy (Linden "Mystical Alchemy"), and such mystical imagery can be interpreted as a psychological representation of

what Jung calls the “projection of the process of individuation”. The intersection of mystical alchemy, eschatology, and psychological integration materializes as a rich literary concoction in the following poems: “A Litanye”, “Resurrection. Imperfect”, “A Nocturnall vpon St Lucies Day”, “An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham”, and “The Extasie”. To unravel Donne’s concoction, this thesis combines textual criticism with Jung’s psychoanalytic treatment of alchemy. I will demonstrate the purpose of alchemy in Donne’s poetry to clarify, first, “why alchemy?”, and second, “what makes alchemy a potent tool for the poet?”.

While this study is primarily a textual inquiry, the purpose of using Jungian alchemical concepts is to allow the reader to appreciate the spiritual experiences and their respective poetic conceits as psychologically descriptive ones, emphasizing the wealth of suggestive imagery transcribed by Donne in stanzaic form. From the Christ/Philosopher’s Stone correspondence to merging with a lover in a metaphysical alembic, a close reading of the above-mentioned poems shows that Donne uses images of mystical and operative alchemy as tools for understanding and conveying the processes inherent in spiritual love, transformation, perfection, and communion with God in the early 17th century. As such, this rich motif allows Donne to connect his internal and spiritual experiences with the worldview - the scientific and religious understanding - of his time, and the way he seeks redemption, individuation, and spiritual perfection. Furthermore, this combined approach reveals that for Donne, divine and temporal love connect with transformation and transmutation through the unification of the ego and the unconscious. In Donne’s pursuit of wholeness in the selected verse, all roads lead to the union of body and soul, beloved and self, man and God.

2. Religious Alchemy: The Blend of Alchemy and Eschatology

2.1 The Sources of Donne's Alchemical Images in "Resurrection. Imperfect"

As was established in the previous section, references to alchemy and contemporaneous science are impressively employed by Donne in what seems to be an attempt at capturing the reader's imagination and interest through the use of images that a 17th-century reader was perhaps better equipped to understand, given that said reader was educated and had access to the multiple alchemical handbooks and treatises of the time. As an educated man, Donne indeed professed extensive knowledge of not only the theoretical alchemy but also Paracelsian medical alchemy (Mazzeo 104), as will be demonstrated in a closer inspection of poems such as "Resurrection. Imperfect", and in chapter two, "A Litanye", "Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham". While it is necessary to keep in mind that alchemy as my focus of study includes some of the medical and scientific hypotheses of the time, as a theoretical approach it is more involved with the mystical, the occult as well as religious and philosophical ideas. As such, this rich motif allowed Donne to connect his internal and spiritual experiences with a larger whole in which the entire human race operates and, according to Donne, seeks redemption and, ultimately, spiritual perfection.

Seventeenth-century England witnessed an exciting time in scientific discoveries and the beginning of a new scientific age, also referred to as the European scientific revolution. The period of Donne's clerical and poetic activity marked also a substantial medical struggle between two schools, The Galenists and the Paracelsians. The Galenists maintained the idea derived from antiquity that there are four humors in the body, which consequently meant that disease was caused by their imbalance. The Paracelsians, on the other hand, claimed that disease derives from contamination from outside, which is then cured by creating a dose of a diluted version of the disease-inducing substance according to the principle of 'like is cured by the like' (Bianchi 23; Marcus 192). This theory was likened to the Aristotelian idea of catharsis, which lent the theory rhetorical power in poetry and other arts, as well, as it was believed by some that the cathartic experience of watching theater or reading poetry could also medically influence the receiver. Thus, sorrow in art form could expel sorrow in real life through catharsis, as was eloquently put by George Puttenham in *The Art of English Poesy* in 1589: "not with any medicament of a contrary temper, as the Galenists use to cure *contraria contrariis*, but as the Paracelsians, who cure *similia similibus*, making one dolor to expel another, and in this case, one short sorrowing the remedy of a long and grievous one" (136).

Could Donne perhaps have been aware of this theory? This present inquiry is not able to tell, but the intimacy of emotion present in his poetry is remarkably telling of the conviction with which Donne approached his writing – whether it was poetry or prose. Many scholars remind the reader that in the early modern English society, natural philosophy (science) often retains analogous beliefs across developing fields of scientific inquiry as well as religious thinking. As an example, as Makuchowska argues, the philosophy of alchemy had been Christianized by scholastic scribes who worked on Arabic texts involving alchemical theories. Moreover, numerous learned occultists and mystics were also theologically educated or even prestigious Churchmen (84). Indeed, the development of alchemical rhetoric had started long before Donne’s time, but by the 17th century, alchemy as a form of rhetorical tool for understanding science and spirituality had started to solidify its critical acclaim.

Donne’s use of alchemy entails both the operative branch, which could be called the prelude to modern chemistry, and the mystical branch, but as stated above, it was not uncommon to accept those two as merely different sides of the same coin. Therefore, the chymist was also adept at the mysteries of spiritual matters, and the whole universe. To read Donne, it is useful to know the following chemical processes that are relevant in the discourse of Christian eschatology (adapted from Makuchowska): *putrefaction* is the process of heating and decomposing metal with fire, also called the “death of matter”; *distillation* is the speedy vaporization of metal in heat followed by condensation by cooling the metal – a process that often produces steam, which was interpreted as ‘volatile spirits’; the processes of *dissolution* (separation into component parts) and *coagulation* (matter becoming viscous or thickened into a coherent mass). Moreover, Sir George Ripley, one of the most prominent alchemists of the late medieval period, reports as many as twelve processes, or “gates” as he called them, in alchemy, including calcination, exaltation, and projection (*The Compound of Alchymy*), but the ones listed in Makuchowska are enough for a basic understanding of the phenomenon. These processes used in alchemy take on symbolic and rhetorical meaning in many of Donne’s poems. To further understand Donne’s imagery, however, we need to be familiarized with the new contending medical school of thought, Paracelsianism, and alchemy as a science that went on to merge with the religious creed.

In his treatise of alchemical images, Mazzeo discusses a key influential figure for Donne’s imagery: Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, or Paracelsus (1493-1541), a controversial Swiss medical innovator, and a prominent figure of medical alchemy (called iatrochemistry or chemiatria), whose ideas started to gain momentum throughout Europe and England in the later sixteenth century when his theories went from being a radical medical

movement to one of the central medical and chemical theories (Marcus 195; Principe 81). He had enemies and followers alike and was sometimes called the “Luther of medicine” because of his unorthodox medical theories that were based on alchemy, at least to a certain extent. Paracelsus was not interested in chrysopoeia – the process of making gold – but only in alchemy as one of the main pillars of medicine (Bianchi 17; Principe 128), yet despite this, he went on to create his own “chymical worldview” – a cosmological system that combined elements from ancient mysticisms, Christian theology, and a mix of Judeo-Greek ethics derived from mythologies and religion to understand the world’s genesis (Bianchi 20; Makuchowska 83). He sought to make known this comprehensive system that encompassed the spiritual and natural philosophy as chymical processes, as even God himself was to him the Master Chymist – a motif we will see in Donne also. The Paracelsian cosmology included the widely accepted Renaissance idea of a microcosm-macrocosm parallel, which likens the celestial bodies to terrestrial ones: as above, so below. His cosmology also included the theory of prime matter as a foundational principle of medicine, which Paracelsus expanded into the *tria prima*: the Arabic dyad of Mercury and Sulfur (principle of metals) was to become a triad including salt. The *tria prima* was for him the basis for everything: terrestrial, celestial; body, soul, and spirit. (Bianchi 22; Mazzeo 105; Principe 128).

What is also relevant for the present study is Paracelsus’s claim that among the Book of Nature and adhering to the “light of nature” within people’s hearts, the only true “cornerstone” of medicine is founded on scripture, anchored in Christianity, and rejecting Galenism – a doctrine emphasized also by his followers (Marcus 194). Alchemy started to enlist more and more Christian metaphors in the 14th and 15th centuries and many alchemists adhered to the analogies found between religious doctrine, hermetic beliefs, and their craft (Makuchowska 81). The “chymical worldview” of Paracelsus and the chymical processes of distillation, putrefaction, sublimation, and coagulation to purify substances into their exalted forms also took on theological correspondences during Donne’s time. One such correspondence concerns death and, more to the point in eschatological terms, the Final Resurrection. A belief shared by Paracelsians and contemporaneous theologians alike, in death the soul and spirit are separated from the body, which undergoes a process of putrefaction once in the grave. Overall, the processes of alchemy were seen as redemptive; thus, the chymist was likewise seen as a “co-redeemer of a fallen world” (Principe 129), re-enacting the processes of Genesis (Bianchi 21). It is helpful to remember that in eschatology, the expectation is that the world as we know it will be judged by fire by God, the “Arch-Chymist”, which in alchemical terms conveys an image of purification, just as an alchemist would purify precious metals.

Therefore, as many critics and alchemists alike have shown, alchemy served as an alternative or complementary exegesis of scripture and Christian doctrine, albeit with limitations that I discuss later in this thesis.

2.2 Religious Alchemy in “Resurrection. Imperfect”

In Donne, spiritual alchemy is the driving motif in “Resurrection. Imperfect” where the poetic voice describes the death and resurrection of Christ with the help of alchemical theories in order to make sense of the world-altering event:

Sleep sleep old Svnne, thou canst not haue repast
 As yett the wound, thou tookst on Frydaie last.
 Sleep then and rest: the world may beare thy staie
 A better Sun rose before thee to daie.
 Who not content to enlighten all that dwell
 On the Earths face, as thou enlightenedst Hell,
 And made the darke fires languish in that Vale,
 As att thy presence here our fires grow pale,
 Whose bodye havinge walkt on Earth, and now
 Hastinge to Heauen would that hee might allowe
 Him selfe vnto all Stations, and fill all,
 For these three daies become A Mynerall;
 Hee was all Gould, when hee lay downe, but rose
 All tincture, And doth not alone dispose
 Leaden, and Iron wills to good, but is
 Of powre to make, even sinfull flesh like his.
 Had one of those whose credulous Pietie
 Thought, that A Soule, one might discerne, and see
 Go from a Bodie, att this Sepulcher benn,
 And issuing from the Sheete, this body seene
 Hee would haue Iustly thought his bodie a Soule
 If not of any Mann, yett of the whole.

Desunt Cætera

The poem begins with an exhortation directed at the sun to rest and rejuvenate, in other words, to stay hidden as the sun did according to the scriptural event of eclipse during the crucifixion of Christ (“a better Sun”). While the suggestion is aimed at the celestial sun, considering alchemical imagery we get a sense of the speaker asking the Son of God to occupy the grave so he can accomplish conquering death as was his mission, namely, to have “enlightenedst Hell, / And made the darke fires languish in that Vale”. The alchemical imagery revolves around the vitalistic worldview which contends that metals naturally grow and develop into gold in the ground due to the sun’s (also, the “Arch-Chymist”) regenerative power. Hence, Donne makes use of his Sun/Son pun to position God as the master alchemist who prepares to raise his son from the dead in alchemical terms, and to transform his being entirely (gold into tincture), while connecting this image to the scientific awareness of how heat affects metals (Makuchowska 89), and consequently painting a picture his contemporaries – we assume – would have understood. The motifs of heat and the sun are then intertwined with the use of fire in separating and purifying metals, and the sun’s heat provides the necessary circumstances for gold to emerge from what used to be base metal. Such an image evokes a connection to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, wherein the soul goes through a process of purification before entering God’s kingdom – a belief Donne, Catholic before converting, certainly was familiar with.

Donne’s homophonic Sun/Son pun is reminiscent of the 15th-century alchemist Sir George Ripley’s treatment of creating the Philosopher’s Stone in *The Compound of Alchymy*. In rhyming verse, Ripley describes the correct ratios of ingredients:

One of the Sunne, two of the Moone,
 Till altogether like papp be doone.
 Then make the Mercurie foure to the Sun
 Two to the Moone as it should bee,
 And thus thy worke must be begun,
 In figure of the Trinitee, (“Of Calcination. The first Gate.”)

Principe quotes a version of this passage, in which the word Sunne/Sun is spelled Sonn and Sonne (123), reflecting the word’s homophonic fluidity. The sun and the moon here are alchemical references to metal ingredients (gold and silver), but the reader cannot miss the possibility of reading Ripley’s instructions with Donne’s intended pun in mind. Indeed, the correct ratio includes only one Sunne/Sonn to create the *lapis Philosophorum*, as part of the

concoction that alludes to the Holy Trinity, also loosely tying the image with Paracelsus's *tria prima*. After the process of coagulation for both the stone, Christ, and by extension, people, what rises from the grave is a new, perfected body in eschatological terms. Thus, the allusion to the sun as an arch-chemist, as well as the son as the redeemer and *panacea*, had seen many iterations before Donne's pen, which illustrates the maturity of alchemy as a mythical and operative subject in the early modern period.

Christ's journey into hell to conquer death is an integral part of the process of salvation and the possibility of the redemption of mankind, and in "Resurrection. Imperfect", this event during the three-day entombment echoes an alchemical process of using different intensities of fire to change matter from black (*nigredo*), to white (*albedo*), and ultimately, to ruby red color (*rubedo*): Christ "made the *darke fires* languish in that Vale / As att thy presence here our *fires* grow *pale*" (emphasis mine). The experiments in alchemy to transform base metal into the perfected Philosopher's Stone is a common motif throughout the history of alchemy, and a Christianized analogy had long been used by theologians and alchemists alike. The intended transformation into ruby red color can be seen to symbolize the sacrificial blood of Jesus, underlining the process through which he was transformed into a regenerative (redemptive) force, like the *lapis*. The most explicit reference to alchemy is found in the lines: "For these three daies become A Mynerall; / Hee was all Gould, when hee lay downe, but rose / All tincture [...]". While a commonly known objective of alchemy was to turn base metal into gold, here the aim is rather the transformation of gold into a tincture, which refers to a substance that can dye or transform other substances. Scholars have commented on the properties of tincture as both a medicinal panacea able to obtain eternal life (Makuchowska 93; Principe 113), or as a "soul-killing tincture [...]" in need of cleansing and purification (Linden *Mystical Alchemy* 81), which implies that the term was a reference to different alchemical or symbolical functions, even as it originally was an extraction from gold. What remains clear, however, is that Christ is referred to as an already pure substance (gold), which after the process of putrefaction is not only able to "dispose / Leaden, and Iron wills to good, but is / Of powre to make, even sinfull flesh like his", thus becoming the manifestation of the Philosopher's Stone. Donne's reference to leaden and iron wills connects the image of transmutation to the fallen human condition, as both these metals were considered to be base rather than purified. Moreover, the use of "tincture" may also refer to the *anima auri* ("soul" of gold), as some alchemists would call it (Principe 113), which helps the reader of Donne's poem to visualize this extracted substance tinging the soul of a sinner golden.

The tincture or elixir of life represents perfection and resurrection, which we see in

Donne's treatment of Christ as the transformative "tincture" above, but also in the lines of Holy Sonnet, "Oh my black Soule" (13):

"Oh my black Soule, now thou art summoned/ [...]
 Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke,
 And red with blushing as thou art with Sin.
 Or washe thee in Christs blood, which hath this might
 That beeing red, it dyes *red Soules to whight*." (ll. 1, 11-14; emphasis mine)

The three stages of alchemical transmutation here are symbolic of the spiritual transformation and salvation of a man's soul, beginning with the *nigredo* stage of putrefaction and dissolution ("Oh my black Soule [...] make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke"), which is the first stage of purifying a substance. As Mazzeo points out, red takes on a double meaning in these lines, as it both refers to the *rubedo* stage (Christ's blood) and the sinful, corrupted state of the speaker (118). The transformation of the recipient expects a progression from *nigredo* to *albedo*, which was a highly priced state of purification for alchemists, though not the ultimate glory of the *rubedo* stage (Mazzeo 118). So, we see again that for Donne the red stage of perfection was reserved only for his Philosopher's Stone or Christ, who enables the purification of a man's soul, being the tincture that "dyes red soules to white". These lines suggest that for Donne, the coveted perfection of a red *lapis* or elixir was not attainable for man, which calls for a redeemer – a psychological process we will look at later.

Just as Paracelsus referred to a "corner-stone" of medicine founded on scripture, merging religion and science in his "chymical worldview", it is possible also that Donne utilizes the *Lapis Philosophorum* – link as a contingent reference to biblical images of Christ as the cornerstone (see Psalms 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Job 38:4-6; Acts 4:10-12; 1. Peter 2:7; Ephesians 2:20-22), or St. Paul referring to Christ as the rock Israelites drank water from in Exodus 17:6 and Numbers 20:11 in his first epistle to the Corinthians (10.4). While Makuchowska mentions alchemical works depicting resurrected Christ as the Philosopher's Stone in connection to these verses, as far as poetic symbolism goes, it seems only partially feasible to equal the "rejected cornerstone" as the basis for the "quintessentially pure and potent elixir", as Linden calls the alchemical stone (*Mystical alchemy* 81). The cornerstone as a biblical motif signifies Christ's principal position in spiritual construction (the foundation for life and Church), but as the cornerstone usually was the largest and most carefully produced in a building project, there can be seen some correspondence to the Philosopher's

Stone, which was perfected in all aspects. A more plausible biblical connection lies, however, in the latter mention in 1. Corinthians, as the image of a rock wherefrom water gushed out, bringing redemption in a physical sense – potentially easy allegorical use for the panacea, or elixir of alchemists. Thus, Donne focuses on the redemptive and transformative power of Jesus’s entombment rather than on ecclesiological matters.

2.3 The Psychological Significance of Donne’s Treatment of the Philosopher’s Stone

The central alchemical conceits Donne uses in “Resurrection. Imperfect”, especially the image of the Philosopher’s Stone, function as a vehicle for imparting the monumental weight of what Donne believes happened on Golgotha. The use of these conceits and symbols also points to the significance of Donne’s poem in psychological terms, revealing the unconscious processes that guided alchemists throughout its history, as well as Donne in his quest for the purpose and spiritual meaning of the human condition. This connection between the process of alchemy and the symbolism therein links the images of Donne’s poetry to Carl Jung’s concept of *individuation*. The overall claim in his books *Psychology and Alchemy* (vol. 12) and *Alchemical Studies* (vol. 13) is that the symbolism and themes in both the operative and theoretical branches of alchemy (which often were not separated in Donne’s time) express and reveal the process of becoming a “self”, the integration of the conscious and unconscious, or the evolution of personality, which Jung calls individuation:

The mystical side of alchemy [...] is essentially a psychological problem. To all appearances, it is a concretization, in projected and symbolic form, of the process of individuation. Even today this process produces symbols that have the closest connections with alchemy [...] the best and clearest material comes from persons of sound mind who, driven by some kind of spiritual distress or for religious, philosophical, or psychological reasons, devote particular attention to their unconscious. (106; vol. 13)

For Jung, individuation is not merely a psychological phenomenon, but it concerns the spiritual, philosophical, and mythical aspects of human development as an individual as well as part of the collective (35; 475; vol. 13) and as such, embraces alchemy as a product of this self-actualizing process. This leads us to the question of the Philosopher’s Stone in connection to Christ in “Resurrection. Imperfect”. Jung treats the image of the redeemer as one of the

archetypal figures of our consciousness, and while the Christianized correlation between the redemptive *lapis* and The Son of Man was likely the result of translating and circumventing Gnostic and Arabic texts by scholastic monks during the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the symbolic contents of this parallel denote the projection of unconscious matter into physical matter in the laboratory as well as in Donne's poetry (Jung 346; vol 12). For analytic psychology in general, the aim is not to prove or disprove questions of faith and spirituality, as it is not the purpose of the psychoanalyst to do so (according to Jung), but rather to understand the process of uniting the unconscious with the conscious mind (15; vol. 12). Likewise, this thesis does not seek to question Donne's poems or his faith, but rather aims to demonstrate the magnitude of his themes as part of human experience.

The separation, putrefaction, and solution of Christ's body, or the *nigredo* stage of creating *lapis Philosophorum*, convey the beginning of a psychological process, which, according to Jung, is part of individuation. As the alchemist throws himself to the work of producing the stone, he commits to a process of patience, humility, and most importantly, "determined and perfect love" (Morenius in *De transmutatione metallorum*; qtd. in Jung 272; vol. 12). Similarly, Walker notes that in cases where the alchemical process is not fruitful or good, one can conclude the love also being false, since love for alchemists and for Donne in his poem "Love's Growth" is a product of the process of alchemical union (58) – a theme we will examine more in later chapters. The alchemist must have *amor perfectissimus* to be successful in his quest of applying the power of his imagination, meditation, and religious fervor into the steps of the process, all guided by God's bestowal of "divine and immaculate science", and it is through this that the "darknesses", or the *nigredo* substance, of their minds can be purified and transformed (Jung 271; vol. 12). While the alchemist sees the stone as the redeemer, or *logos* he sets free from the materiality of this world by applying himself to the work, Donne looks to Christ as the already purified and perfected stone, the panacea for the ages, the *pneuma* (fire, or spirit) that is everywhere at once; ubiquitous, as the *prima materia* also is. For many alchemists, for example, Paracelsus and his followers, the lapis is an imitation of Christ, but many took this further and saw the alchemical work as a continuation of the redemption, which Jung takes to mean the redemptive (assimilating) work within their psyche, again pointing to individuation. The Church and many early modern period theologians used alchemical images and concepts quite liberally, but the origins of alchemy are not rooted in Christianity, but rather in Gnostic, even pagan sources, which reminds us not to take Donne's writings too far into the sphere of mystical alchemy, despite its prevalent symbolic use. As has been noted earlier, Donne utilized alchemy consciously for different

purposes throughout his varied writings (Linden *Darke Hieroglyphicks* 156), whether it was satire, praise, instruction, grief, or the omnipresent divine love. For Donne, then, alchemy is a tool, not the substance of faith itself.

The connection between the “determined and perfect love” of an alchemist, which we might call the spiritual or divine love in Donne, and the themes of transmutation and transformation lie in the treatment of the soul as a key concept and one of the most important aspects of human experience. In the last six lines of “Resurrection. Imperfect”, Donne discusses the body and soul of Christ, but also of the collective: “[...] his bodie a Soule [...] if not of any Man, yett of the whole”. He describes how those “of credulous Pietie” might picture a discernable soul rising from the body in the tomb, yet what the witness of the tomb comes to see is a body that has the form of the soul “of the whole”, i.e., the collective, or the macrocosm. Notice the parallel between these lines and what Jung argues is the alchemical goal of creating *a corpus subtile*, a transfigured and resurrected body, i.e., a body that was at the same time spirit (427; vol. 12). The incorruptibility of the stone and its redeeming potential is a result of “the chaotic antagonism of the elements” being replaced by “the most intense mutual alliance” (426; vol. 12), which for Donne was accomplished in Christ, and so we can see in his poem the redeemer and the stone representing the integration of the conscious (the ego) with the unconscious (both personal and collective), which leads to the wholeness of the human psyche in Jungian terms.

Likewise, the reader of Donne’s poetry is reminded of the Paracelsian *tria prima*, which holds within the transcendent existence of body, spirit, and *soul*. Jung’s suggested projection of unconscious matter into the processes of alchemy implies a unification of the corporeal and incorporeal; in other words, a union of body and soul to achieve a state of integration and perfection, which is only attainable through the “perfect love” of a devoted alchemist. In “Resurrection. Imperfect”, Donne imagines the resurrection of the collective soul via Christ’s death and transformation, which the poem’s witness receives through the ability his soul allows him: a perfected love, purified and activated by faith. The *anima auri*, or soul of gold, mentioned earlier, is emblematic of the soul of Christ, who “was all Gould [...] but rose/ All tincture [...]” and extends to the eschatological doctrine of the resurrection of spiritual bodies (1. Corinthians 15.51). As Makuchowska observes (92), the alchemical theory of the soul of the universe, *prima materia*, is condensed in a paradox of a corporeal spirit in the lines of the poem: “Hee would haue Iustly thought his bodie a Soule”. Here, Christ becomes a uniting symbol for the process of individuation, following what Jung argues is the psychological necessity of projection of the redeemer-image (476; vol. 12). The refining

and purifying process of the soul is present in other Donne poems, as we will later see, but here the *lapis*-Christ correspondence is directly linked to the alchemical idea of a mercurial substance or soul filling the entire universe. God as the “Arch-Chymist” is the catalyzer for the Aristotelian principle of intrinsic finality, or the interior motion of the soul towards perfection, as Christ becomes the *pneuma* that in Stoicism is a divine organizing principle of air and fire combined, and so unites opposites, or in Jungian terms, the conscious and the unconscious (Jung 301, vol. 12). Concerning Donne’s poem, it is important to note that only Christ’s body, like gold, is incorruptible and capable of transforming into the quintessence (the fifth essence permeating all nature and essence of the purest kind). Human flesh, then, is ultimately corrupt, which in Christianized alchemy is a necessary premise to justify the need for a savior figure, and this in the realm of Jungian psychology is a universal element in the collective and personal consciousness, as we have seen above. Interestingly, Makuchowska suggests that this theological tenet might provide an answer to the title of the poem, pointing on one hand to the perfection of the stone/Christ and on the other to the imperfection of the human condition while on earth, as well as the Hermetic interpretation of the fall of man having caused the loss of our immortal, perfect bodies, leaving only our souls intact or susceptible to immortality and incorruptibility (92).

In *Alchemical Studies*, Jung states that the stone concept in alchemy can be interpreted as a symbol for what he calls the inner Christ, or God in man (96). The underlining argument is that the projection of unconscious matter into the *lapis*-image denotes “too great a remoteness” in relation to the Savior and “Christ’s spirituality [being] too high and man’s naturalness [...] too low”, the symbol takes the form of a redeeming stone, but as Jung observes, it does not replace Christ but rather compliments it. Thus, the “better Sun” that we “would have lustly thought [...] a Soule” in Donne might be seen to employ the role of *filius macrocosmi*, the Son of the Great World or the macrocosm, pointing to the “border regions of the psyche” as the source of this image, according to Jung. What I find fascinating is the parallel between the observation of the irreconcilable gap between man and his redeemer and what Targoff claims to have been Donne’s fundamental uncertainty about his position as a redeemed chosen one of God, leading him to “position himself on the threshold between one world and the next in order to imagine—and attempt to control—what awaits him on the other side.” (107). With a similar devotion and “perfect love” of that of an alchemist, Donne imagines the transforming entombment of Christ and the subsequent salvation of mankind to manifest as the soul of the whole, and yet, at the same time, the corrupt nature of man creates a spiritual chasm. As such, the imagery of alchemy and its objectives Donne used may

unconsciously have assimilated and integrated his psyche into what Jung sees as human wholeness. The spiritual goal of alchemy being “healing self-knowledge and the deliverance of the pneumatic body from the corruption of the flesh” (Jung 104; vol. 14), we see how Donne’s imagery in “Resurrection. Imperfect” paints a picture of the totality of redemption the speaker seeks; indeed, the sought *lapis* is an all-embracing symbol for such totality. While the treatment of the *soul* in Donne and his contemporaries is closer to Jung’s concept of the *psyche* rather than his concept of the soul (something akin to personality), the overarching sense of striving towards unity between unconscious and conscious is what Donne’s divine love and the redeemer-image – whether symbolic in the Philosopher’s Stone or the body of Christ – allude to. The themes of union, transformation, and perfection will be examined further in what follows.

3. Eschatological Fire and Alchemical Union

3.1 Resurrection – The Reunion of Bodie and Soule

As was previously demonstrated, the combination of alchemical ideas and images of purification and union in combination with eschatological concepts captures the reader's attention in "Resurrection. Imperfect". The overarching presence of this combination deserves our attention in another poem found among Donne's compiled *Epicedes and Obsequies*, namely "An Elegie vpon the death of Ladie Marckham", a poem that has attracted critical discussion on the "servile flattery" and highly embellished poetic conceits Donne pens around the deceased lady who died in 1609 (Linden *Darke hieroglyphicks* 167). Exemplifying an intriguing choice from Donne regarding the function of the poem, the elegy's central conceit employs alchemy and eschatology as the primary vehicles for the tribute – a choice that both amplifies the flattery and sheds light on Donne's understanding of the constitution of humans, particularly the physical and spiritual transformation death issues. Donne's treatment of man's relationship with the macrocosm and God in a psycho-spiritual union deserves our attention in two other poems, as well. Thus, in what follows, I will examine the use of alchemical imagery concerning eschatology and the pursuit of union in "An Elegie", as well as "A Litanye", and finally in "A Nocturnall vpon St. Lucies day, being the shortest day".

The elegy begins with a microcosm reference by stating that man himself is a world within the greater macrocosm and continues with an allusion to the alchemical motif of base vs. pure metals/materials discussed earlier: "Man is the world, and Death the Ocean, / To which God giues the lower parts of man." (ll. 1-2). The "lower parts of man" seems to refer to the baseness, or the corrupt parts of human nature, and thus what needs to be purified through putrefaction, distillation, and coagulation. Death is described as an ocean or sea that God has separated from us in creating the microcosm we live in, yet it "roars" and splashes onto our shores when a friend dies and is taken from those Donne addresses:

This Sea environs all, and though as yet
 God hath sett marks and bounds twixt us, and it,
 Yet doth it roare, and gnawe, and still pretend,
 And breakes our banck when ere it takes a friend. (ll. 3-6).

The line “God hath set marks, and bounds twixt us and it” may be a reference to Proverbs 8.29: “when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth”, which lends weight to the poem’s use of Christian doctrine of a God who, during the last days, will come forth with a new command in judging the world. The water motif can also be linked to alchemy in the form of dissolution and purification in lines 7-10:

Then our land-waters (teares of Passion) vent;
 Our waters then about our firmament
 (Tears which our Soul doth for her sin let fall)
 Take all a brackish taste, and funeral,

The now-obsolete term for an arch or vault of celestial bodies (firmament) is the source of these holy tears that turn “brackish”, i.e., partly salty or saline in taste, and “funerall” both for the honor of the deceased but also for her sins as in preparation for the putrefaction (*nigredo*) stage of transformation on her behalf. While the saline taste of these tears alludes to the pain of loss, it can also be interpreted as a reference to alchemical processes, which, in the first stages of putrefaction often created a foul smell (Makuchowska 85), particularly in proximity to the word “funerall” (here an adjective). Notice that it is through the soul which is closer to God (and the celestial sphere) that the speaker can access tears of remorse. Yet, the intermediary tears are not effective enough as they are also stained by sin, and thus lacking in the power to reach a state of *albedo*, echoing the distinction made in “Resurrection. Imperfect” between the perfected stone/Christ and the fallen man: “[a]nd e’en those tears which should wash sin, are sin. / Wee after Gods Noe, drowne the world agen.” (ll. 11-12). The second line is ambiguous due to the differences in manuscript versions; some say: “after God, drown”, and another: “after Gods Noah” (Variorum 118; vol. 16) again borrowing biblical images of death and purification to create the world anew. In the following lines, man is “envenomed”, i.e., capable only of stinging himself with venom, highlighting Donne’s conviction of needing a savior not only for our sins but also to love with a purity undefiled by the venom he speaks of:

Nothing but man, of all envenom’d things,
 Doth work vpon it self with in-borne stings;

Teares are false spectacles; we cannot see
 Through passions mists, what wee are, nor what shee. (ll. 13-16).

Donne's lines illuminate his appreciation of the spiritual state of man as a fallen creature and the continual process of sin as something akin to dross, a waste product produced in an alchemical reaction. Man is separate from animals with his intellectual and moral faculties, and therefore capable of "poisoning" himself spiritually. Here Donne points to a clear distinction from mystical alchemy founded on purely Gnostic or Hermetic doctrine, in which the alchemist sought to continue redeeming the world and himself by freeing the divine trapped in matter, emphasizing the role of man as the center of everything (Raff 85; 184). For Donne, man is not the redeemer of himself, and relies solely on the grace of God, and the alchemical conceits are utilized to underline the necessity of a *lapis Philosophorum* as an intermediary as well as a catalyst for the proverbial transmutation process. Indeed, in his sermons, Donne argues that "[...] to finde omni-sufficiency in our selves, is an intrusion, an usurpation upon God" (7) ¹.

The poem's flattery continues by praising Lady Marckham, and distinguishing her from the rest of her peers, as "In her, this sea of Death hath made noe breach," and "Shee sinn'd but Iust enough to lett vs see / That Gods word must bee true, all, sinners bee." (ll. 17, 43-45). In her purity "her fleash [is] refin'de by Deathes cold hand" (ll. 20), which points to her grave being a "chymical alembic" (or "limbec"), as Linden observes (*Darke hieroglyphicks* 168). Comparing the transmutation process to the subterranean creation of porcelain out of clay, Donne's verse describes the grave/ alembic to be powered by her soul and God's transformative power – the elixir, panacea, or *lapis* – to go through the purification process:

As men of China after an ages staye,
 Doe take vp Purslane, where they buried clay;
 Soe at this Graue, her Limbeck, which refines
 The Diamonds, Rubies, Saphirs, Pearls and mynes,
 Of which this flesh was; her Soule shall inspire
 Fleash of such stuff [...] (ll. 21-26).

¹ Sermon. *Preached at White-hall, the first Friday in Lent.* 1622.

The previous section has shown a similar conceit in “Resurrection. Imperfect”, where the vitalistic worldview of the sun’s generative power turns metals into gold under the surface of the earth, reflecting the resurrecting and regenerative power of God for Donne, and further solidifying the need for an outside generative source to access redemption.

While Donne uses the image of clay turning into porcelain through the subterranean process of transmutation, clay acts as a symbol of ruin and depression in “A Litanye”, a 28-stanza religious poem resembling a prayer in which each section is dedicated to different parties. In addressing God the Father in the first stanza, Donne describes his heart as clay:

Father of Heaun, and Him by whom

Itt, and Vs for itt, and all else, for vs,
Thou madest, and Gouvern'st euer, Come
And Re-create mee, now growen ruinous.
My hart is by Deiection, Clay,
And by Self-Murder, redd,
From thys redd Earth, O father purge away
All Vitious tinctures, that new fashioned
I may rise vp from Death, before I am dead. (ll. 1-9)

As we saw in “An Elegie upon the death of the Lady Marckham”, clay represents the stage of *nigredo* in the alchemical process of transmutation, the first stage in which the original substance is to be transformed into a higher, purified material. Dejection is the cause of the undesired state of the heart of the speaker in “A Litanye”, so much so that he sees himself as “growen ruinous”, echoing the uncertainty of salvation Donne felt at times (see chapter 1; Targoff 107). The employment of alchemical concepts here is attuned to the context of Christian thought in the poem; the speaker addresses the omnipresent creator of the cosmos in an appeal to “re-create [him]” as an alchemist may wish to re-create base metals into gold. “A Litanye” also utilizes images that are not in conformity with the alchemical interpretations we have examined. Unlike the *rubedo* stage in alchemy and preparing the Philosopher’s Stone, here *red* is symbolic of death and the corrupt nature of man, both in “self-murder” and in the “vicious tinctures” rather than emblematic of a stage of pure perfection and the highest possible state of transmutation. In “Resurrection. Imperfect”, Donne uses “tincture” to describe the resurrected perfection of Christ, the redeeming panacea, but to illustrate the

corrupt state of the earth, Donne chooses to use the same word in “A Litanye”. As noted in the discussion of “Resurrection. Imperfect”, tincture can function as both a medicinal elixir or a “soul-killing tincture [...]” in need of cleansing and purification (Linden, “Mystical alchemy” 81). While Donne’s “tincture” may carry a meaning opposite to the Paracelsian *medicina*, the purpose remains to submit to “[t]he ultimate goal of the Christian [which is] to conform the self to Christ so perfectly that the restored divine image mirrors Christ completely, or is Christ” (Harland 165). This mirroring of Christ can only come about by attaining the *rubedo* stage in alchemical terms, which for Donne is not an attribute man can achieve but rather embody through Christ. Thus, Donne’s choice illuminates the flexibility with which he uses alchemical ideas as tools for conveying the deeper spiritual meaning of his verse and underlines alchemy as an instrument for holding a sense of self as a microcosm within the macrocosm.

Reflecting the adaptability of alchemy as a poetic tool, Ovens argues that the role of alchemy is to act as a mediator between Neoplatonic and Christian metaphors in two of Donne’s other poems, “To the Lady Bedford” and “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” (Ovens 335), the former being a letter addressed to deceased Lady Marckham’s friend. Ovens’ primary observation is in identifying the difference between the destruction and recreation of the body following a Christian thought of a raised spiritual body upon the Final Judgment and the hermetic/alchemical interpretation of transmutation from one state to another (334-335), thus pointing to alchemy being a buffer to minimize the stark contrast between a heavenly soul and corrupt body or the Neoplatonic notion of earthly and heavenly love as separate and irreconcilable. In “An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham”, Donne describes the deceased body being “refin’de by Deathes cold hand” (l. 20), which Ovens interprets as Donne’s rejection of total entombed destruction and decay in favor of a “continuity of the body as a seat of identity” (334), thus underlining the alchemical and Hermetic influence in Donne’s writing. Whilst the process of transmutation does indicate a sense of elemental continuity, one cannot separate putrefaction and transmutation through fire as wholly different from decay and destruction. Indeed, “decay” being one of the synonyms of putrefaction, which denotes the decomposition or corruption of matter, one can observe that the first stage of transmutation and purification requires a certain “death of matter” (*nigredo*), rendering Ovens’ argument diluted (pun intended). In other words, decay or destruction and progressive transformation are not mutually exclusive but rather manifestations of death on a spectrum, enabling Donne to negotiate the inevitable end of physical existence while recognizing the union of body and soul (microcosm) with the macrocosm within his

soteriological thinking. It seems to be widely accepted that the death-resurrection motif is essential to alchemical thinking, and even Paracelsus comments on putrefaction (*putrefactio*) as “the change and death of all things, and the destruction of the first essence of all natural objects, from whence there issues forth for us regeneration and new birth ten thousand times better than before” (qtd. in Raff 143). Furthermore, concerning the separation process inherent in *nigredo*, Donne himself says that “Death is the Divorce of body and soule; Resurrection is the re-union of body and soule” (Donne 10).² Therefore, the death of matter runs parallel with spiritual or psychological death in producing a state of new birth, that is, the union of opposites, which we will discuss further later in this chapter.

In the “Elegie”, fire functions as a crucial tool for alchemical transmutation: “as God, when his last fire/ Annuls this world, to recompense it, shall / Make, and name then the Elixar of this All.” (ll. 26-28). The eschatological image of the refining and redeeming fire of God is matched with the “chymical alembic” that enables the refining of “Diamonds, Rubies, Saphirs, Pearls, and Mynes” (ll. 24) as observed earlier. Lines 25-28 suggest that the soul of the deceased lady participates in the perfecting and transforming of mortal bodies upon Judgement Day, which draws a parallel between the regenerative potential of the poem’s honoree and Donne’s imagined “Arch-Chymist” representing God. For Donne, then, the soul’s role is to be the conduit for amalgamating purified components, and thus, the ultimate transmutation will occur only at the last days, underlining Donne’s use of alchemy as that of Christianized interpretation, as it is then that God will “Make and name then the Elixar of this All” (l. 28). The elixir, or the panacea, often the same as the *lapis*, is the transformative agent in becoming a heavenly, “glorified” body, echoing the Pauline doctrine mentioned in chapter one. This eschatological tenet does not only reveal Donne’s theology but also speaks of an inward motion towards reconciling and merging parts of human psyche, both in the necessity of a redeemer-image and the transmutation through a spiritual resurrection. In lines 29-32 of the “Elegie”, Donne describes how death frees the soul from the body, which is why “They say, when the Sea gaines, it looseth too” (l. 29), and victory is achieved as both carnal death and death by sin perish: “For Graues our Trophées are, and both Deaths dust” (l. 34), and thus, in a Christianized vein alluding to Christ’s sacrifice and his second coming, all corrupt substances “shall in that great & generall refining day [...] be purged through fire” (Thomas Tymme)³. What Donne yearns for is union with the divine, which can only be achieved in the

² Sermon, *Preached at S. Pauls, upon Easter-day, in the Evening. 1624.*

³ *The practise of chymicall, and hermeticall physicke, for the preservation of health. Written in Latin by Iosephus Quersitanus, Doctor of Phisicke. And translated into English, by Thomas Timme, minister, n. page.*

mystery of *nigredo* and the resurrection of a glorified body unified with the soul.

Notwithstanding the intentional flattery in the “Elegie”, Donne points to the order of progression inherent in spiritual alchemy as simultaneously the death of the old and the birth of the perfected and new. Similarly, Donne’s elegy reads as a map of a procession in alchemical and eschatological terms. As Walker has observed, Donne’s use of processes in which analogous substances are altered to highlight the fluid rather than the static in his poetic imagery was an effective way to lead the reader through an inquiry (45). In the 17th century, the word “stuff” found in lines “her Soule shall inspire / fleash of such stuff” (ll. 25-26) primarily carries the meaning of material matter of composition, and even what a person is “made of”, including one’s capabilities or inward character. Yet, in Middle English poetry, the word also referred to a material a soldier would wear under his mail or in place of armor, even “equipment” and “provisions”.⁴ The latter group of meanings can be interpreted in a spiritual sense as Donne allegorizes theology with the use of alchemical images, and thus the double meaning invokes a picture of sanctified strength and the wherewithal to face the last days of the world. As fire begins the process of putrefaction and the *nigredo* stage, so will God’s fire offset and nullify the whole world. Principe observes accordingly that “[h]is final judgment of the world by fire [is] like the chymist using fire to purge impurities from precious metals” (128). Regeneration and redemptive work were the core of hermetic and Paracelsian alchemy (Mazzeo 109), as has been observed in the co-redeeming qualities of the alchemical processes in chapter one, but with Donne and the present poems in consideration, it is necessary to proceed with caution, insofar as Donne’s poems reflect his yearning for union with God through the redemption that he cannot produce himself, as noted earlier in this section.

In “Loves Alchymie” – a poem that treats alchemy rather satirically - Donne treats the alchemist’s attempt at creating a corporeal redeeming substance, the elixir of life, as deception and “imposture”, while comparing it to the falseness of a distinctly romantic view of love and sexual intercourse:

Oh, tis Imposture all.
And as no Chymique, yett the’Elixar gott
But glorifyes his Pregnant Pott,
Yf by the way to him befall

⁴ OED 1.b.;1. c.

Some Odoriferous thinge or Medicinall
 So louers dreame a ritch and long delight
 But gett a Winter-seeming Sommers Night. (ll. 6-12)

The alchemical simile has been categorized as one of Donne's satirical, yet conventional applications (Linden, *Darke hieroglyphicks* 157), but shows yet again the intentional use of alchemy as a tool for poetic enhancement in constructing an understanding of the human constitution as a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm. While Donne may have been critical of alchemists who "glorify their pregnant pot", we also see in "A Litanye" that he believed in the purification of one's soul – an alchemical transmutation - that occurs even before one's death, as he writes in the first stanza: "O father purge away / All Vitious tinctures, that new fashioned / *I may rise vp from Death, before I am dead*" (ll. 7-9, emphasis mine). This conceit, however, is to be understood through Christian doctrine that is similar to the treatment of the Philosopher's Stone as an equivalent for Christ in "Resurrection. Imperfect". As noted earlier, Jung's statement about the psychological necessity for projecting the redeemer-image onto the stone or a symbolic equivalent of the stone can be observed in "Resurrection. Imperfect" but also in "A Litanye" as Donne calls upon a higher power and visualizes the event of resurrection for himself in rising "new-fashioned" and purified. Jung observed in *Psychology and Alchemy* that the philosophical water or mercurial water (another common alchemical emblem) is a derivative of the redeeming *lapis*, or the ubiquitous *prima materia*, which in Paracelsian view is uncreated and beyond any other element. Yet simultaneously, the philosophical water acts as a solvent (235, 321; vol. 12), and to use a solvent is to dissolve or eliminate an unwanted substance, which is what Donne is praying for in "A Litanye" and acknowledging in the "Elegie". For Donne, the inward motion towards psychological and spiritual wholeness requires an active solvent, and for him, it is found in Christ. This spiritual and psychological significance is apparent in the projected redeemer-image in all the above-mentioned poems as it points to the process of individuation, which involves the union and harmonious assimilation of the unconscious with the conscious. It is this wholeness through union that Donne's poetic voice seeks and amplifies; in "An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham" the union is the result of alchemical and eschatological fire, in "A Litanye" it is likewise the outcome of spiritual purification. This union, or *coniunctio* (literally, "conjunction") is what Jung describes as the process of alchemical combinations of substances. He also describes it as the union of opposites in Christian doctrine, namely in the union of Christ and the Church through the redeeming work

alluded to in Donne's verse, which the Philosopher's Stone symbolizes (Jung 355; vol. 16). Thus, the bridge between the divine love in Donne's poems and the process of transformation and transmutation is the union of psychological components just as it is also the union of body and soul as well as that of the microcosm and macrocosm.

3.2 Alchemical Union in "A Nocturnall vpon St. Lucies day, being the shortest day"

One of the Donne poems that has received much speculation concerning its contents, addressee, and thematic mappings that metaphorize alchemical processes in service to the emotive impact the poem boasts after the death of "her" (see Duncan 1942, Edgecombe 1994, Fitzsimmons 2016, Fox 1978, Makuchowska 2014, Nichols 2011). With the use of hyperbolic grief consuming the bereft speaker through and through, the nocturn's strength lies in its subtle yet impactful layering of alchemical mysticism, apophatic Neoplatonic theology, stylistic maneuvers across grammar and lexis, as well as canonical choices alluding back to Spenser's *Epithalamion*, for instance (for canonical criticism, see Edgecombe 1994). Critics have grappled with the poem's interpretive complexity, calling it "difficult" (Duncan 280; Murray 118) and "highly figurative" and "somber" (Fitzsimmons 384) as the poem's satirical, yet desolate stance leaves the function of alchemy with death and eschatology less transparent than perhaps the poems discussed so far. Alchemically, the poem's focus falls on the metaphoric process of creating an elixir with transmuting powers, or the quintessence (Shams et al. 61), and therefore the following discourse aims to examine the purpose of alchemy and other relevant traditions – literary, theological, and physical - to uncover the poetic road that leads to union, both psychologically and in religious terms.

The central theme in the "Nocturnall" is death and desolation, and as such the poem lacks simplicity as is fit for such an occasion as losing a spouse, a patroness (Lucy, Countess of Bedford), or a child, all of which have been suggested in autographical criticism (Fitzsimmons 388; Edgecombe 144; Makuchowska 112), albeit the theory of Donne writing the poem as an anti-epithalamion of losing a wife – Anne More – seems compelling in light of the direct references to love, "lovers", and "Beds feete" (perhaps, both marital bed and death bed). The poem begins with introducing the date: the thirteenth of December encapsulated in a refrain "midnight" that repeats in the last stanza, invoking a sense of loss, grief, and a barren internal landscape:

Tis the yeares Midnight, and it is the dayes,

Lucies, who scarce seauen houres herself vnmaskes,
 The sunn is spent, and now his flaskes
 Send forth light squibbs, no constant rayes;
 The worlds whole sapp is sunke,
 The generall Balme, th'Hydroptique Earth hath drunck,
 Whether as to the Beds feete life is shrunk,
 Dead, and enterred; yet all these seeme to laugh
 Compar'd with mee who am their Epitaph. (ll.1-9)

The shortest day of the year also occasions the celebration of St. Lucy and with that, an invocation of light to prevail over darkness, which grants the poem's bleak tone a "light squib" of hope and, perhaps, an expectation of a reunion, as the last stanza might suggest: "Lett mee prepare towards her [...]" (l. 43). A tacit allusion to alchemy is already present in the first stanza with the sun (as in the "Arch-Chymist"), is personified as "he", suggesting an image of an alchemist whose "flaskes" (here perhaps referring to a bottle of a bulbous shape and a long neck, also used in the laboratory) are running out of his concoctions, nearing the inevitable death of his enterprise, and with that Donne's suggestive language creates a subtle satirical slant on the alchemist's elixir-infused dreams. Following Donne's homophonic pun Son/Sun, the active agent "he" has been observed as a potential reference to Christ in the "Nocturnall" (Makuchowska 114), but this requires emphasizing the implicit nature of such a parallel that is more aligned with hermetic and Gnostic doctrine than with purely Christian theology. Donne, however, does allude to the possibility of seeing the world and the speaker's state as unsalvageable, that is, beyond soteriology, as he writes in the last stanza: "nor will my *Sun* renew" (l. 37, emphasis mine), emphasizing the gloom of the poem.

The first stanza is shrouded in a feeling of sinking and depletion; the speaker's microcosm has exhausted its vital, circulatory fluids, all implying a Paracelsian understanding of nature and the human constitution. Indeed, Paracelsus's *tria prima* is lodged in the stanza: the sun represents sulfur, while the vital liquid ("sap") refers to Mercury and "the general balm" salt (Makuchowska 111), which in Paracelsian thinking as well as Gnostic (alchemical) tradition is the natural substance most endowed with the light, creating an ontological center when activated (Raff 182-84). Salt is even described as "the incarnation of the divine" in Gnostic and mystical alchemical traditions (Raff 185). The "hydroptique", i.e., thirsty or dropsical earth is juxtaposed with the alchemical and Paracelsian belief of a naturally occurring body balm with preservative and healing properties (Shams et al. 57; also see

chapter I). The absence of the “*balsamum suum/sumum*” creates a favorable climate for decay and dissolution, similar to the putrefaction observed in “An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham” and “Resurrection. Imperfect”. The separation and dissolution inherent in the *nigredo* stage of experimental alchemy are described in the famous 16th-century treatise *Rosarium Philosophorum* as processes that allow substances to be turned into the *prima materia* from which everything was created (Makuchowska 111). In concordance with Hermetic philosophy, as the microcosm suffers from the lack of the *balsamum suum*, so does the entire macrocosm with both the earth and celestial bodies, mirroring the desolate experience of the speaker. The extraction of the healing and preserving body balm required access to mummies (Makuchowska 111) – a process familiar to Donne as he uses this image in the last lines of “Loves Alchymie”: “Hope not for Minde in woeman; At theyre best / Sweetnes, and Wit, they’are but Mummye possest”. Beneath what seems on the surface to be a satirical take on female nature is an acknowledgment of the medicinal purpose of mummies and the body balm’s presupposed healing qualities paralleled with the qualities of women.

The voice of “Nocturnall” expresses a life that is buried with his lost loved one, and yet such a description does not manage to capture his state of being, as all the above-mentioned metaphors “seeme to laugh/ Compar’d with mee who am their Epitaph” (ll. 8-9). Donne continues by exhorting his readers to “studie mee” to learn the true mystery of love that both ruins and re-begets:

Studie mee then you who shall Louers bee
 At the next world, that is, at the next springe
 For I am euery dead thing,
 In whom Loue wrought newe Alcummy,
 For his art did expresse
 A quintessence euen from nothingnesse,
 From dull priuations, and leane Emptinesse
 Hee ruind mee and I am rebegott
 Of absence, dareknes, death, things which are not. (ll. 10-18)

The second line in the second stanza may refer to a cyclical understanding of the world and its constant death and re-birth cycle inherent in alchemical thinking (*opus circulatorum*); the world renews itself after the death of winter and the long darkness of St. Lucy’s to awaken again in the spring. An essential image in alchemy is that of the Ouroboros, a dragon or

serpent eating its tail, signifying the process of death and re-creation, which is linked to the status of an alchemist as the redeemer of quintessence-infused matter as he labors to free substances from their corrupt states (Jung 345-6; vol. 12). For some mystics and theologians, alchemy served as a contingent exegesis for scripture (see chapter 1 and Makuchowska), and in this vein, the creation of Donne's world is seen as a series of chemical reactions, which the alchemical *opus* seeks to continue through transmutation. Here, Donne's transformation into a "euery dead thing" activates a redemption work deep in his psyche as he is being shaped by "newe Alcumy" in the hands of love (cf. Jung 354; vol. 12).

Critics have focused on the "complete reversal of the alchemist's dream" in terms of preparing the quintessence (Duncan 280), which seems to be at the crux of the poem's thematic puzzle. The second stanza boasts of being "euery dead thing" and "A quintessence euen from nothingnesse", and, as Makuchowska argues, the sequence of events is similarly reversal, even regressive towards the primeval mass, or *prima materia*, resembling the first alchemical process of *nigredo* (111-12). Love as the active agent, the figurative alchemist in the poem, is the instigator of the process of becoming nothing after the death of "her". To understand the quintessence Donne speaks of, compare the second stanza to Thomas Tymme's translation of *The Practice of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke*, mentioned earlier: "God will make new Heavens and a new Earth, and bring all things to a christalline cleernes, & wil also make the 4. Elements perfect, simple, & fixed in themselves, that all things may be reduced to a *quintessence of Eternitie*" (n. page). This eschatological alchemy assumes a sympathy between the current, postlapsarian world and its materials as the process only requires bringing the four elements together as perfected in a way that creates one quintessence of eternity. In the "Nocturnall", however, what comes together to form a quintessence are "dull priuations", "leane Emptinesse", and "absence, darcknes, death" (ll. 16, 18). This is what Makuchowska calls the Nihilixir (111), and I would argue that the function of this on a poetic level is to point to an experience of catharsis (see chapter 1), which metaphorically precedes formlessness; reducing everything to nothing – the only warranted portrayal of the magnitude of the loss. The paradox following the regressive process of undoing until the speaker is one with the primordial mass presupposes an existence beyond ontological states of being and nonbeing (Nichols 375). For Donne, these ontological states become merged and horizonless in the wake of losing his wife.

To appreciate the subtle depth of what critics have grappled with in terms of the "quintessence from nothingnesse" on a spiritual, emotional, and psychological level, it is helpful to look at the poem from the perspective of Dionysian negative theology. Instead of

seeing the reversed process in “Nocturnall” as an alchemical failure, the speaker can be interpreted to pursue a level union with the divine, and perhaps his deceased lover; a union that transcends foundational categories of existence. In the context of apophatic Neoplatonic theology, and more specifically, Dionysian negative theology, the poem’s resolution recognizes an ascension to the level of nothingness, in which it is necessary to negate the principles of being, as God himself cannot be spoken of, or described at all. As Nichols argues, God’s transcendence means he is an absence in presence, a nothing that is all things: union with God happens when we leave behind everything as it’s a union based on nothingness (353). In other words, nothingness is the goal in negative theology, the only plausible exegesis, as the tradition looks to such transcendence as the only means to achieving union with the divine. Negative mysticism and theology are considered to have been influential in the seventeenth century and a familiarity with the tradition has been observed in Donne’s writings, pointing to Donne having reason to expect his contemporaneous readers to recognize the idea of nothing being all (Nichols 353-54). Indeed, if God can only be understood and appreciated in negative terms of unbeing and unknowing, then the prevalent lack of light and the keen sense of absence and emptiness in the “Nocturnall” describes the beginning of a unification process. The pending reunion may be that of the speaker and God or the lover, perhaps even both, as “she”, whom we may assume to be Anne More from a biographical standpoint, is repeatedly present in the last stanza:

But I am none; nor will my Sun renewe.
 You Louers, for whose sake the lesser Sunn
 At this tyme to the Goate is runne
 To fetch new Lust, and giue it you
 Enjoy your Summer all.
 Since shee enjoyes her long nights festiuall.
 Lett mee prepare towards her, and lett mee call
 This houre her vigill, and her Eue, since this
 Both the yeares and the dayes deepe midnight is. (ll. 37-45)

The paradigmatic shift in understanding the goal of the poem and the function of alchemy as an essential element predicts a union of souls through assuming a state of nothingness beyond being. Therefore, the psychological and mystical significance becomes easier to grasp, as the poetic “vigill” can in Jungian psychology denote a stage in the process of *coniunctio*, i.e., the

unification of opposites symbolizing the formation of “self” towards wholeness. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung describes the essence of the alchemist’s work to consist of “separation and analysis on the one hand and synthesis and consolidation on the other” (xiv; vol. 14). As Donne’s speaker affirms that he is “euery dead thing”, we see that he is preparing himself for a mystical union with God and/or his wife (Nichols 356), which serves as a representation of the process of individuation, in which the conscious (ego) merges with the unconscious to create wholeness in spiritual and psychological terms. In “Resurrection. Imperfect” and the “Elegy” these “hints or representations of wholeness...are parallel images of the *lapis Philosophorum* and its many equivalents; also Christ, who for alchemists was the *lapis*” (xv; vol. 14). Likewise, in the “Nocturnall” the mystical divine union following the speaker’s state as “Love’s limbec [...] the grave / Of all, that’s nothing” (ll. 21-22) points to the advancement of psychological assimilation and integration amid grief.

Jung defines the alchemical process as beginning with a state of conflict or hostility, which can be paralleled with primordial chaos or *prima materia*, from which the world came to be. Alchemists tinkering with natural materials and matter in hopes of creating an exulted state of *rubedo*, often the *lapis*, saw this stage as quite literally “killing” the material by reducing it to a state of chaos; hence calling it *nigredo* (blackening) and *mortificatio* (Raff 16). This first stage denoting the emerging *coniunctio* represents the conflict between the unconscious and the ego. In the “Nocturnall”, Donne’s speaker is being “killed” along with the death of his lover, becomes “euery dead thing” and is reduced to “a quintessence from nothingness”. The second stage Jung describes is that of separation, and in the laboratory, it would have looked like separating the “killed” matter into component parts, sulfur, and mercury, to reunite them newly purified, as has also been observed in chapter 1. This *solve et coagula* process was often repeated many times (Raff 16). In Donne’s verse, however, the separation precedes the first stage of becoming nothing, as it is by the death of “her”, in other words, by being separated from her that the speaker experiences transmutation into the elixir of nothing: “But I am by her death (which word wrongs her) / Of the first nothing the Elixer growne; /” (ll. 28-29). According to Raff, the *nigredo* (death of matter) could also in alchemical procedures take place at any stage (16), and this flexibility is present in the poem’s sequence. In the third stanza, as the speaker describes himself as a grave due to the effects of love, he also addresses himself and “her” collectively as weeping and drowning the world in tears, and thus, as “chaoses” personified. The conceit of weeping and flooding tears is present in other Donne poems, namely “A Valediction: of weeping” and “A Valediction: forbidding mourning” to name a few.

All others from all things draw all that's good,
 Life, Soule, forme, spiritt, whence they being haue;
 I, by Loue's Limbeck am the Graue
 Of all, that's nothing. Ofte a flood
 Have wee twoe wept, and soe
 Drown'd the whole world, vs two oft did wee growe
 To bee two Chaoses, when we did showe
 Care to ought els; And often Absences
 Withdrew our Soules, and made vs Carcasses. (ll. 19-27)

In the "Nocturnall", following an alchemical metaphor, the image of a flood is the aftermath of the separation, or *nigredo* stage, resulting in chaos and *disolutio*, i.e., the conflict stage as Jung calls it (xiv; vol. 14). This requires a reading in which these lines are chronologically interpreted as happening after the separation and the figurative death of the speaker. Another possibility assumes the unification process to have started when the deceased lover was alive as they formed an alchemical alembic in which they "did showe / Care to ought els". Thus, the process of becoming nothing to become united - as negative theology supposes in its paradoxical understanding of the nature of spirituality - continues after her death and can only be completed this way. The third stage is the *opus* of union, of bringing the previously hostile elements back to unity. Jung notes that the images of this union often appear in dreams and "run parallel with the corresponding alchemical symbols" (xv; vol. 14), thus highlighting Donne's "Nocturnall" and its somber yet dream-like symbolism as one such example Jung might call a "veritable treasure-house of symbols [...]" (xviii; vol. 14).

The psychological and mystical approach to alchemy often emphasizes a parable of the "chymical wedding", based on *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, written in 1605 and published in 1616 (Raff 140). The story involves a royal wedding where the king and queen are beheaded, creating a bloody and rather violent feast Mr. Rosenkreutz witnesses. After their bloody beheading, the king and queen are brought back to life as glorious, perfected beings. The wedding functions as a symbol of the alchemical union of the unconscious (the queen) and the ego, or conscious (the king); in psychological terms, this is the creation of the manifest "self" in the process of individuation (Raff 142). One cannot but notice the parallel between the sought spiritual and psychological union Donne's speaker seeks in the "Nocturnall" involving death and the mystical union following the death of both

the king and queen in the “chymical wedding”. In assuming a state of nothingness, Donne’s poetic voice renders himself dead, and through the processes of chaos and separation, he can ascend to the level of his deceased spouse in a “chymical wedding” of their own, which also marks an entrance into a realm of spirituality, echoing the metaphysical pursuit in Dionysian negative theology. Critics have noted that the ending of the “Nocturnall” has a different tone than the beginning even though it ends in a refrain of the dark midnight of the year and keeps the sympathy between the macrocosm and the microcosm the poem began with (Fox 25; Nichols 353). Indeed, the poetic voice hints at certain hopefulness as he “prepare[s] towards her”, creating a sense of certainty of the spiritual realm’s victory over physicality.

Makuchowska has pointed out that in the last stanza (see above) the presence of astrology in connection to the arcane knowledge of self-formation and a mystical union is seen in the union of the Sun and the Earth: the dying sun of St. Lucy’s Day represents the *nigredo* stage, i.e., death, and “she” is paralleled with day (Lucy) and the earth (114-15). In Jungian psychology, this is the union of the ego and the unconscious resulting in a manifest “self”. Moreover, the zodiac sign of Capricorn (“At this tyme to the Goate is runne”) represents “the transformation of the terrestrial into the metaphysical” (115). The inner conflict and chaos brought on by the separation has been transmuted into cohesion and inner certainty; the result is *coniunctio*, the union of opposites that produces wholeness. Therefore, the ending boasts a certain exultation brought on by death. Thus, in “A Nocturnall”, Donne pens a remarkable testimony of his love while also demonstrating the merging of cognitive components and the “perfect love” that enables alchemical transmutation. In Donne, the “limbec”, i.e., distillatory vessel used to create a laboratory setting for the “chymical wedding” assumes a merging of a marriage bed with a death bed, resulting in the union of souls. While in “An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham” and “A Litanye”, Donne’s treatment of alchemical purification and redemption rely more explicitly on the redeemer and the psycho-spiritual significance of eschatological imagery, in “A Nocturnall” the necessity of literal and symbolic death is underlined to a hyperbolized degree, Donne being re-begot of nothingness. Ultimately, the different levels of commitment to an experience of death between Donne “Elegie” and “Nocturnall”, I believe, derive from the immediacy of personal pain, which is more explicitly present in the latter for apparent reasons. To understand the depth of this loss and the union between Donne and his wife, we will proceed to examine a poem that illuminates the nature of the transcendent union of souls further.

4. Alchemical *coniunctio* and love refin'd in “The Extasie”

A perceptive and subtle inquiry into the ontological nature of love that encompasses both carnal and spiritual experiences, “The Extasie” engages in a multilayered philosophical rhetoric characteristic of the early modern period as well as metaphysical assertions concerning the primary metaphors of propagation, transformation, and ultimately, perfected union. The 19- tetrameter quatrain poem not only explores “love refin’d” – an alchemical conceit - but also asks the reader to consider the boundaries of our mind’s capacity, insofar as the soul can be seen as a semantic equivalent for the mind, as proposed by Helms (420). In this poem, Donne’s lovers are not only connected but engage in an outward motion of their souls, forming subtle, almost corporeal entities suspended between them. As Walker argues, Donne pursued the processes of merging and interrelationship – in other words, union – and the lovers in this poem are refined spiritually and physically in the course of such a process (44-5). The alchemical conceit of refinement and purification in “The Extasie” is strengthened and layered through a variety of similes and motifs, including horticultural imagery and existential consideration of the nature of a man’s soul in a Neoplatonic context. Through Donne’s treatment of the tensions between the two sexes and the subsequent bodily separation, the result is “entergraft” into an “abler soul”, founded on the internal, psycho-spiritual union of an individual as well as the union of lovers. Another question the poem poses relates to the nature of ecstasy; whether it is a mystical, out-of-body experience, a state spiritual of elation and transcendence, or the result of psychological and spiritual integration of self in pursuit of wholeness in the context of “Resurrection [as] the Re-union of body and soule” (Donne 10) ⁵. In “The Extasie”, Donne refines the notion of carnal love into a sublime integration of something akin to the *amor perfectissimus* and devotion of an alchemist as well as into the necessary physicality of embodied human consciousness. In what follows, I will show how Donne consolidates alchemical metaphors with personal psycho-spiritual developments in the expansive motion of the soul.

Donne begins the poem with a tranquil portraiture infused with sexual innuendo in the lexicon of “pillow”, “bed”, “Pregnant”, and “swel’d up”, creating a symbolic bed chamber on a mound somewhere out-of-doors where the lovers’ physical proximity creates an alembic for their souls’ interanimation:

⁵ Sermons, *Preached at S. Pauls, upon Easter-day, in the Evening*. 1624.

Where, like a pillow on a bed,
 A Pregnant banke swel'd up, to rest
 The violets reclining head,
 Sat we two, one anothers best;

Our hands were firmly cimented
 With a fast balme, which thence did spring,
 Our eye-beames twisted, and did thred
 Our eyes, upon one double string, (ll. 1-8)

Acting as a prelude to the marriage bed preceding a death bed in “A Nocturnall”, Donne tinges the first two stanzas in a suggestive tone of awaiting possibilities. Contrasted to the critiqued alchemist’s “pregnant pot” in “Loves Alchymie”, here the meaning of ‘pregnant’ forms around a transcendent *becoming*: the soul’s motion towards union. The use of violets is significant as the flower was used for medicinal purposes. Moreover, violets were used for falling asleep,⁶ tying together the image of resting on a “bed” even while a regenerative action is taking place. The holding of hands produces sweat (Kemper 3), which was believed to be a preservative balm - perhaps the very same *balsamum suum* Paracelsus preached about – preventing the body from decaying (Mazzeo 108). Using Paracelsian beliefs, Donne can textually reproduce the experience of falling in love, which may easily leave a person feeling invincible, or at least, untouched by decay. Furthermore, it has been observed that under Renaissance optics, the twisting of “eye-beams” into one “double string” leaned on the idea of a light beam being sent from an eye to the object, making sight possible (Dickson 100). The significance of these lines, while relying on an erroneous theory, succeeds in illuminating the invisible thread between lovers and the ensuing unification of opposites. Additionally, research in neurology has found that the eyes and the hands are two of the most sensitive human organs, by their linking through afferent nerves to extensive regions in the cerebral cortex dedicated to processing sensory stimuli (Winkelman 146), highlighting Donne’s starting point as sensory-informed and the focus being on the external.

Similar to the function of alchemy in “A Nocturnall”, love is an alchemist in service to the pending psychological union of the unconscious and conscious in “The Extasie”. For

⁶ “[v]iolettes make a man to slepe [...]” OED, 1.c.

Donne, the very ecstasy of love requires the first step in uniting physical bodies, which in this poem does not go beyond the innocence of handholding (ll. 9-10). The embodied experience of engaging physical senses creates a progression that allows for the irrigation of love's growth and the transformation of the soul. The alchemical alembic, however, is activated as elements are brought into contact with each other, and the physical contact allows for the mixing of ethereal components, as we will see later in the poem.

So to'entergraft our hands, as yet
 Was all the meanes to make us one,
 And pictures in our eyes to get
 Was all our propagation.

As 'twixt two equall Armies, Fate
 Suspends uncertaine victorie,
 Our soules, (which to advance their state,
 Were gone out,) hung 'twixt her, and mee. (ll. 9-16)

The fusing of plant parts, so they can grow as one, introduces the horticultural conceit of propagation mixed in with the alchemical union of opposites in an alembic environment. Moving from touch to visual perception, the reflection of one another in the other's eyes reveals an internal vision, which precedes the spiritual transformation much like an alchemist "sees" the potential of uniting matter before achieving the *rubedo* stage of perfection and redemption. For Donne, the limited physical nature of their relationship creates a new microcosm, a sphere of affections that transcends the act of sex (ll. 31-2). Similarly, in "The Good-Morrow", love is what "makes one litle roome, an euery where" (l.11), a microcosm fueled by embodied love. What follows is a simile of "two equall Armies", which speaks of the equal status of their souls united as a third element "hung 'twixt her, and mee". Again, in "The Good-Morrow", alluding to the lovers' sphere, Donne writes: "What euer dyes, was not mixt equally, / Yf our two Loues bee One, or Thou and I / Loue so alike, that none doe slacken, none can dye" (ll. 19-21). Here Donne also underlines the necessity of their souls' out-of-body motion; their impending purification requires a distillation process – an image reminiscent of an alchemist freeing the indwelling soul of matter through heat. This process in alchemy is described as an elevation to a more spiritual state (Makuchowska 85), which can also be seen as an acknowledgment of Neoplatonic ideas concerning the highest form of love

excluding sex. The reader may notice here the resemblance in the treatment of the soul as an entity capable of out-of-body movement as in “A Nocturnall”: “often absences / [w]ithdrew our souls, and made us carcasses”, an image of the lovers’ souls engaging with each other in a sphere of their own despite the lack of proximity. In “The Extasie”, however, the souls’ movement occurs despite their physical proximity. The poem continues:

And whil’st our soules negotiate there,
 Wee like sepulchrall statues lay;
 All day, the same our postures were,
 And wee said nothing, all the day. (ll. 17-20)

The fifth stanza boasts the abstract state of ecstasy, i.e., being “beside oneself”⁷, implying a remaining connection to the physical body while the soul is freed within the mind’s spatial limitlessness. From an alchemical perspective, Donne’s entrance into an ecstatic experience marks the beginning of the unification process. Here the souls’ negotiation is facilitated by the movement of “self” from the body to the soul and back to the body within the container of a union. To engage with a distinct “other” (the lover), one must first actualize the individuation and wholeness of the “self”, and therefore the psychological consideration helps trace Donne’s evocative textual mapping of such a process. Raff, a Jungian analyst, describes: “since the self is the union of opposites, each stage corresponds to a different level of self-formation” (79). In the lovers’ alembic, the purification enters the first stage of an alchemically informed psychological process called *coniunctio* (“conjunction”), in which the ego realizes the existence of the unconscious, pays attention to it, and starts to engage with it, resulting in active imagination and the union of opposites (Raff 80). While Donne may not have used the same terminology, the conceptual sense is the same: the ego corresponds to the conscious mind’s awareness and the soul to the unconscious, “if this is understood as the psychic phenomenon that mediates between consciousness and the physiological functions of the body” (Jung 280; vol. 12). Donne sees the psychological transformation happening through analogous substances – the hovering souls – even while the change occurs in the lovers and between them, as Walker has also indicated in her study of numerology in “The Extasie” and “Loves Growth”, contending that constant numeric values and analogous processes provide order out of chaos and create subtle statements about the nature of love

⁷ OED 3.a.

(45). Consider the projection of the unconscious unto physical matter in Jung's interpretation of alchemy, discussed in chapter 1; what was altered was the contents of the psyche while the focus was on the physical (Principe 102). In "The Extasie", we may not have a Philosopher's Stone, but we do see the third element as the souls' enjoiment, and Donne's focus on this vision rooted in embodied ecstasy facilitates the alteration of the contents of the psyche.

While Helms asserts that for Donne 'soul' is a catchall term for cognition (421) similarly as I have contended that Jung's treatment of *psyche* is closest to Donne's *soul*, the analogy of the soul's process in "The Extasie" gains psychological and spiritual depth if the soul (the *anima corporalis* and imaginative human faculty) is to be understood as the unconscious being united with the conscious. Jung claims that the soul functions in the body but has the greater part of its function outside the body in the form of projection of unconscious matter (279-80; vol. 12), as we have observed in the alchemical *opus* earlier. In cognitive terms, the mind must utilize physical sense to engage with the world and go beyond it through imagination, pointing to the senses being "both embodied and ensouled, for they mark the overlap between human cognition and the material world in which that cognition is embedded and extended" (Helms 423). Through these psychological observations, the relevance of Donne's description becomes indisputable; his verse encapsulates a cognitive-spiritual experience that is simultaneously embodied and rooted in sensory schemata. It is only through mixing the corporeal with the incorporeal that Donne can access the process of psychological integration and the experience of wholeness. If Targoff is correct in asserting that Donne, as a dualist, rejected the hierarchy of body and soul in favor of longing for their union (22), the prerequisite for ecstasy is the merging of conscious perception and embodiment with the unconscious soul. Therefore, by the fifth verse the first stage of self-formation has been activated and a "new center", as Raff calls it, is being forged in the image of enjoined souls hanging in the air. The union of lovers is the by-product of an internal union, which is evident in the lovers' bodies lying like "sepulchral statues", evoking the alchemical concept and image of the "chymical wedding" of united archetypal opposites: male and female, sulfur and mercury, spirit and matter (Makuchowska 100). As the common emblem of *nigredo* includes an illustration of Sol and Luna (representing the archetypal king and queen) in a coffin after their death and *coniunctio* (e.g., *Philosophia reformata* 1622; Jung 410; vol.12), likewise Donne's sepulchral bodies allude to alchemical purification. Donne's experience of ecstasy, of being "beside oneself" is reminiscent of the alchemical images employed in eschatological reflections in the image of the death and merging of opposites. As George Ripley, a 15th-century alchemist, writes:

Christ said: “I, if I be lifted, will draw all men unto me.” From that time forward, when both parts, having been crucified and exanimated, are betrothed to one another, man and wife shall be buried together and afterward quickened again by the spirit of life. Then must they be raised to heaven, so that body and soul may be there transfigured and enthroned on the clouds; then they will draw all bodies to their own high estate. (*Opera Omnia* 81; qtd. in Jung 410; vol. 12)

The alchemical process of transfiguration described is distinctly paralleled with Christian dogma, which Jung supposes Ripley deliberately sought to do (410). In Donne’s verse, man and wife are figuratively buried together and quickened to life, which is manifest in the last stanza’s assertion of their bodies embodying an ethereal-like state after the reunification of body and soul (ll. 75-6).

As the poem progresses, Donne’s stanzas move into the second stage of individuation, in which the “self” develops so that it “takes on a life and reality of its own”, and the ego transforms and engages within the “manifest self”; in other words, the ego and the unconscious are bound together “in an indissoluble union” (Raff 80). This alchemical stage is “activated” from the sixth stanza and goes on until the eleventh stanza in my estimation. Donne introduces a hypothetical third person, an observer into the picture to serve as a witness to the transformative power of the main characters’ love and the consequential union:

If any, so by love refin’d,
 That he soules language understood,
 And by good love were grown all minde,
 Within convenient distance stood,

 He (though he knew not which soule spake,
 Because both meant, both spake the same)
 Might thence a new concoction take,
 And part farre purer then he came. (ll. 21-28)

The observer can only access the language of the souls through refined and purified love, but in such a case, he would not be able to distinguish between the “voices” as they “both spake the same”. This is where we enter the stage of the metaphoric “self”, the new center, and a

paradox of an embodied soul, taking on a life of its own. Indeed, the souls are perfectly attuned and indistinguishable, highlighting their union. The process has required a distillation and “death”, as noted above, and the ensuing consolidation has now enabled a deeper unification of the ego and the unconscious. Love acts as the alchemist and catalyst of a personal, yet shared experience of ecstasy. What Donne manages to capture is the “indissoluble union” emerging from one’s psyche, as the communication of souls now transcends any physical contact and can be witnessed by an outside source, though solely by someone refined by “good love”. This hypothetical person is also granted refinement and purification by heat, hence becoming a “new concoction”⁸, but the psychological relevance remains on the lovers, and the purpose of a third person is limited to the love’s affectual texture. Donne continues with an interpersonal realization of what they previously did not understand about their devotion:

This Extasie doth unperplex
 (We said) and tell us what we love,
 Wee see by this, it was not sexe,
 Wee see, we saw not what did move:

But as all severall soules containe
 Mixture of things, they know not what,
 Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
 And makes both one, each this and that. (ll. 29-36)

Still operating in the second stage of Jungian individuation and its metaphorical alchemical substance, Donne discerns through the demystifying experience of ecstasy that what motivated their affections was not sex but something that engages the whole of a human being and thus can elicit the unification of body and soul. Donne does not reject the importance of carnal love, as later stanzas show, but the focalization and the “seeing” beyond the bounds of physicality expands from within the “new center” that has been forged, rather than from focusing on the other’s body. For Donne and his contemporaries, the soul performed many functions ranging from intelligence, thought, and action to a person’s emotions and feelings,

⁸ Ripening, maturing, or bringing to a state of perfection; also, the state of perfection so produced: maturation of what is coarse, impure, or crude (OED 2.a.)

including “the three-fold cognitive image of God, with the powers of understanding, will, and memory” (Helms 420). Thus, through the love’s re-mixing of souls that already are a “mixture of things”, the scene evokes an image of an alchemist combining and consolidating substances in an alembic, further working on the souls becoming “one”. As critics have observed, amalgamating the triad of love, woman, and man in a sphere suggests the alchemical process of creating the Philosopher’s Stone (Shams et al. 59; Walker 53), and this is what enables Donne’s vision of refined souls. He then moves on to a horticultural motif:

A single violet transplant,
 The strength, the colour, and the size,
 (All which before was poore, and scant),
 Redoubles still, and multiplies.

When love, with one another so
 Interinanimates two soules,
 That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
 Defects of lonelinesse controules. (ll. 37-44)

The purpose of transplanting a violet might be found in its ability to multiply when it’s no longer competing with others for nutrients – a meaning implicit in transplanting it to a “pregnant bank”, symbolic of the female soul, as Shawcross notes (131). In the refining alembic of lovers, to which their souls have been transplanted, their love ultimately creates an abler soul, free of defects, which can be seen as the resulting manifest “self” and the consequential union. The purged and purified concoction thus approaches a higher level of awareness, which will ultimately be evident in the third stage of individuation. Donne continues:

Wee then, who are this new soule, know,
 Of what we are compos’d, and made,
 For, th’Atomies of which we grow,
 Are soules, whom no change can invade.

But O alas, so long, so farre
 Our bodies why doe wee forbear?

They're ours, though they're not wee,
 Wee are The'intelligences, they the spheares. (ll. 45-52)

These lines speak of heightened self-awareness characteristic of the ego engaging with the newly forged, manifest “self”, which in the poem allows the souls’ union. Indeed, the speaker asserts that they know all the components that they are made of. The strengthened sense of self and union resembles an alloy, which has attained a durability that exceeds that of individual components, reflected in the militaristic metaphor of “soules, whom no change can invade”. Thus, deeply engaged in the existential realization of physicality, Donne turns to the necessity of having a body. It is only through a body that we can experience love, and so Donne urges the souls to come back to flesh and bone vessels. Likewise, according to an early alchemist Dorn, the first stage of *coniunctio* – the mental union we have examined in earlier stanzas– had to precede the second stage of *coniunctio*, which involves the union of the spirit and soul with the body (qtd. in Jung 465; vol. 14). In other words, having attained the first stage of union, Donne has proceeded to the next, recognizing that while the lovers’ identity is not found in the body but rather in the soul, it is the soul that controls bodily senses just as the “intelligences”, or angels, were believed to control celestial spheres (Dickson 101). In like manner, Donne begins “Good Friday. Made as I was Rideing westward, that daye” by asserting that devotion ought to be what guides and control the sphere of man’s soul: “Let Mans soule bee a Sphere, and then, in this / Th’Intelligence that moues, devotion is.” (ll. 1-2). As the focalization is centered outside the bodies, marking the ecstasy of being beside oneself, a reversal of movement brings the lovers back to their bodies. Borrowing schemata from cognitive science, we may find clarity in understanding the processes Donne describes. From a cognitive perspective, Helms argues that the soul-body relationship is again built on embodied experience in that the soul must engage the affections and faculties which are accessible to physical sense (65-7):

We owe them thanks, because they thus,
 Did us, to us, at first convay,
 Yelled their forces, sense, to us,
 Nor are drosse to us, but allay.

On man heavens influence workes not so,
 But that it first imprints the ayre,

Soe soule into the soule may flow,
 Though it to body first repaire. (ll. 53-60)

Long before cognitive science or 20th-century analytical psychology had emerged as fields of study, Donne grappled with existential and psychosomatic realities using material language. The body emphasis is further developed with alchemical imagery of dross, which signifies a waste product produced in a “chymical” reaction, and alloy (“allay”), which is a mixture of base and nobler metals to create a strengthened product. For Donne, the transformation and purification of the soul is not disjointed or severed from the body, as it becomes the necessary medium to experience an emotional and spiritual connection with another, requiring the soul to return (“repaire”) to the body. As Thomason has noted in her examination of Plotinian metaphysics in the poem, the exchange of souls cannot be separated from sensation and sensuality (97). Furthermore, Donne’s words on the necessity of having a body echo Jung’s observation on what is lacking in a mere mental union: “[s]uch an interior operation means a great deal, since it brings a considerable increase of self-knowledge as well as of personal maturity, but is merely potential and is validated only by a union with the physical world of the body” (466; vol. 14).

The second stage of the *coniunctio* process goes on throughout the rest of the poem while also subtly entering the third stage from line 57 onwards. By turning to a celestial metaphor, Donne weaves in the stars’ effect on his microcosm by way of “imprinting the air”. This opening towards the higher spheres recognizes a necessity for something greater than the immediate world of man. The final stage of the psychological *becoming* we’ve dealt with involves the newly formed “self” coming into union with a level of reality that transcends it, with the divine world that the 16th-century alchemist Dorn called the *unus mundus* (Raff 80). In other words, the “self”, including spirit, soul, and body, is in union with a bigger reality than itself - a spiritual reality. In “The Extasie”, Donne thus creates a psychological progression, just as alchemy itself aims at the union of opposites, and he continues:

As our blood labours to beget
 Spirits, as like soules as it can,
 Because such fingers need to knit
 That subtile knot, which makes us man:

So must pure lovers soules descend
 T'affections, and to faculties,
 Which sense may reach and apprehend,
 Else a great Prince in prison lies. (ll. 61-68)

If soul and body were believed to be connected through “spirits”, or vapors in the blood, and soul as the *anima corporalis* dwells in the blood (Jung 280; vol. 12), the point of connection is then found in the acceptance of a man as combined interdependent faculties, as Donne says: the hard to perceive “knot” that makes us human relies on the vapors, or spirits to work within us as intermediaries for the soul. Critics have elaborated on the soul having three faculties: growth, sensation, and cognition (Dickson 102), tying the image closer to an embodied perception of a descending movement as the “pure lovers soules” must now come down to the body’s ability to sense. This descent has been observed as a “legitimate movement within a Neoplatonic system”, in which Intellect, Soul, and Nature are hierarchical constituents, and soul and love both have higher and lower capacities that inform each other (Thomason 94, 101). Neoplatonic and Plotinian metaphysics are evident in Donne’s witty poetry, as Thomason notes, which is seen in the soul’s flight as a turning to the higher faculty (Intellect) while still in the body, making the mystical union with the highest entity – The pre-existential One – possible for an embodied soul (96). Just as the alchemical allegory points to the necessity of matter as the object of transmutation and purification, so does the descent show the necessity of matter, solidifying the second stage of self-formation. The inclusion of Plotinian ideas in the lines above still ties the psychological progression to the third stage of uniting the “self” to the spiritual realm, or the highest existing entity, The One. Thus, Donne observes the “subtle knot, which makes us man”, which we can appreciate as a perceiving of self-formation and psychological integrity, encompassing matter, mind, and the spirit. As Graziani argues, the souls gain knowledge of the whole nature of man in the process described in “The Extasie” (132). Furthermore, as the 16th-century alchemist Dorn wrote about the *unus mundus*, a spiritual reality characteristic of the third stage of *coniunctio*, likewise Plotinus considered the possibility of the unity of the soul, being an earlier witness to the concept of *unus mundus* (see Jung 534; vol. 14), creating a diachronic thread from Plotinus to Jung, which Donne carefully picked up and integrated into his reflections on the constitution of human from his perspective as a man of the early 17th century.

The last line in stanza 17 introduces an idea of “a great Prince” lying in prison if the souls cannot commune with the bodies, reversing the traditional Platonic idea of the body as a

reading (102). Due to the sublimation process the souls have engaged in, we can allegorically witness the “chymical” *solve et coagula* procedure, which leads to the reunion of matter and spirit, perfectly mixed proportions of corporeal and incorporeal elements, just as enduring love must be equally mixed in “The Good-Morrow”, as shown earlier. As the alchemist would rely on the hylozoistic principle that all matter is alive and infused with vital spirit (Principe 101), so does Donne rely on his body being infused with the incorporeal, creating “[t]hat subtle knot, which makes us man”, yet now in an exalted form, with an “abler soul”. What this ultimately offers Donne is a “window” into eternity through the visualization of the self, as Jung suggests (535; vol. 14), or a “transformation of man into Man” and “the beautification of self through love”, as Thomason notes on the didactic force in the poem (97).

While Winkelman claims that Donne’s treatment of bodies in “The Extasie” points to the subservient role of the body to the soul (148), I would argue that in the present poem, Donne underlines the role of the body as mutually vital to all the soul faculties man possesses. Contesting the Neoplatonic view of the body’s inferiority to the soul, Donne asserts that we need the body to experience love (Targoff 51) and to commune with other souls, i.e., to experience a deeper connection spiritually, emotionally, and physically, we are indebted to the body’s capacity to mediate between the mind and the physical world. In the union of body and soul, we recognize the mutual dependency on the mind and the body. According to embodied realism, one needs a body to interact with and perceive the world and needs a body to understand the world; equally, one needs a mind (Helms 424). Thus, through analytical psychology, we see the threads of the individuation process embedded in the metaphors Donne uses to describe and conceptualize the nature of love he experienced – both concerning God and his wife. Through the union of body and soul between two lovers – even before sexual consummation as in “The Extasie” – as well as in the profound nothingness that follows an irrevocable loss, Donne captures cognitive complexity and his psycho-spiritual processes.

5. Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, I have examined Donne's use of alchemical imagery in detail in "Resurrection. Imperfect", "An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham", "A Litanye", "A Nocturnall vpon St Lucies Day", and "The Extasie". The main objective of this thesis has been to show the purpose of alchemical imagery and how textual criticism in conjunction with the Jungian treatment of alchemy points to Donne's psycho-spiritual processes and their significance in self-formation. Donne's critically acclaimed and astute observations on the nature of divine and carnal love as well as the conceived position of man as a microcosm during a time of scientific revolutions and religious upheavals illustrate a transcendent cognitive-embodied human experience. Upon close reading, the psychological processes in the above-mentioned verse become evident. The alchemical imagination examined creates a diachronic thread from the wake of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism to 20th-century psychoanalysis and modern-day cognitive science – a thread Donne picked up and wove into his reflections on the constitution of man, body, and soul while staying rooted in Christian doctrine and worldview. The close reading of Donne's selected poems reveals the answer to the question "what for?" and "why alchemy?", as the imagery serves as a culturally appropriate tool to make sense of the abstract and experiential subject matter during the golden age of alchemical developments.¹⁰ The versatility of alchemy points to Donne's pursuit of the true nature of spirituality and union with the divine or a spouse and his desire to explain the very fabric of our existence. For Donne, no union and wholeness can be attained without love as the proverbial alchemist, and neither can man achieve redemptive transmutation without God as the "Arch-Chymist". Yet to answer the question "what makes alchemy a potent tool?", we turn to psychology, and in this case, the theory of individuation, as "through alchemy, unconscious and conscious are altered and integrated" (Shams et al., 55). While Donne certainly could not have been a student of Jung's alchemical theories or modern-day cognitive schemata, his poetry carries a distinct consciousness that seeks moral-intellectual refinement and purification to emulate the divine and to endure the transmutation process to become unified with the divine.

Regarding "Resurrection, Imperfect", Donne shows us the process of putrefaction and coagulation as spiritually and psychologically revealing in the form of the *lapis Philosophorum* – or Christ. Donne's eschatological consideration is built on a scaffolding

¹⁰ See Principe 107–136.

based on the alchemical processes of *nigredo*, *albedo*, and *rubedo* to show that the body rising out of the Easter tomb is nothing but perfected and purified, potent with redemptive force. From a theological perspective, Donne suggests that the ultimate perfection – the *rubedo* stage – is only attainable in Christ and through Christ, which distinguishes his use of alchemy as a tool for religious inquiry, rather than the substance of belief itself. As the vitalistic worldview affords through the sun’s generative power to turn base metals into gold below the surface of the earth, reflecting the resurrecting and regenerative power of God for Donne, the irrigation of unconscious matter seeks to be consolidated and unified in Donne’s eschatological verse. The *lapis*-Christ correspondence lodged in the verse points to the unconscious processes that guided alchemists throughout the history of alchemy.¹¹ Donne’s quest for the purpose and spiritual meaning of the human condition, as well as the need to project a redeemer-image onto physical matter, speaks of the same underlying inward motion toward the union of the psyche.

In chapter two, expanding on the thematic combination of alchemy and eschatology, “An Elegie vpon the death of the Ladie Marckham” and “A Litanye” show most significantly that, for Donne, humans as spiritually corrupt beings need a savior and the purification provided by the *lapis* or elixir to be able to love adequately and appropriately. For Donne, man is not the redeemer of himself, as in mystical alchemy might be the case in the alchemist’s pursuit of continuing the redemption work through his craft.¹² The sought emulating of Christ, as is proper for a Christian, is possible only by attaining the *rubedo* stage, which Donne can be seen to embody through Christ. The refining and redeeming fire of God is activated in a “chymical alembic”, and the ensuing separation process inherent in the *nigredo* stage points to “Death [being] the Divorce of body and soule; Resurrection is the re-union of body and soule”.¹³ Donne yearns for a union with the divine, which is found in the mystery of *nigredo* and the resurrection of a glorified body unified with the soul, and this union is the result of alchemical fire. To be purified, Donne needs an active solvent, and for him, it is found in Christ, symbolizing the inward motion toward psychological and spiritual wholeness.

In “A Nocturnall vpon St Lucies Day”, the prevalence of Dionysian negative theology and alchemical metaphors point to the advancement of psychological integration amid grief and separation. As God is only understood in negative terms of unknowing and unbeing in

¹¹ Jung 346; vol. 12.

¹² Jung 306; vol. 12.

¹³ Sermons, *Preached at S. Pauls, upon Easter-day, in the Evening*. 1624.

negative theology, the loss of light and the tender feeling of emptiness in the “Nocturnall” speaks of the beginning stages of a unification process. Jung’s psychological interpretation of the alchemical process is evident in Donne’s verse: the stages of conflict and hostility, separation and chaos, and finally, the bringing of hostile elements back to unity.¹⁴ Donne’s poetic voice assumes a state of nothingness in “A Nocturnall” by rendering himself dead. Moreover, through the processes of chaos and separation, he can be joined by his deceased spouse in a “chymical wedding” of their own. Thus, to become united one must become nothing, and this process can only be completed after the death of “her”.

A thorough close reading and application of Jung’s three stages of individuation¹⁵ as psychological processes in “The Extasie” reveals how Donne uses alchemical metaphors to describe and conceptualize the nature of love he experienced – both concerning God and his wife – by embedding threads of the individuation or *coniunctio* process, in his imagery. As was observed in chapter three, Donne’s embodied and sensorial experience creates an internal and symbiotic process, allowing for the irrigation of love’s propagation and the soul’s transformation. In the alchemical alembic, elements are activated by bringing them into contact with each other. Significantly, Donne shows that to engage with a distinct “other”, one must first actualize the individuation and wholeness of the “self”, and this psychological requirement illustrates Donne’s evocative textual mapping of the individuation process. Equipped with a modern understanding of psychology, even with the limitations of applying Jung’s treatises and the obvious fact that Donne was not knowledgeable of Jungian concepts, the reader can appreciate how Donne’s verse paints a picture of forging a new center of consciousness – the manifest “self” – followed by the ego and the unconscious forming “an indissoluble union”. Finally, the third step in *coniunctio* is the process by which the manifest “self” comes into a relationship with a greater reality of the macrocosm and the divine. Moreover, the process Donne describes in “The Extasie” requires distillation and death in the image of the sepulchral statues. Love as the alchemist and catalyst of a personal, yet shared experience of ecstasy allows for the consolidation and unification of the ego and the unconscious, creating “[t]hat subtile knot, which makes us man”.

More research into the mind of Donne via psychoanalytic concepts and more recent cognitive science is needed and can yield a more extensive understanding of the human condition. Donne’s poetry offers valuable materials for the study of sensorimotor apparatus in

¹⁴ Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*.

¹⁵ As described in Raff 80–82.

textual format. Furthermore, extending a combination of textual criticism and psychoanalytic concepts to Donne's prose and letters would deepen our understanding of his alchemical imagination, providing us with invaluable schemata of psychological self-formation and movement of the human mind.

Finally, to answer the question of how spiritual and temporal love connect with alchemical transmutation, I argue, again, that the connection lies in the textually encoded union Donne seeks on spiritual and physical levels. Scholars have discussed the alchemical *opus* as a circulatory one: its fundamental aspects include the manifestation of what is concealed while simultaneously concealing what is manifest (Bianchi 19). Donne's words reveal the internal movement towards psychological assimilation and self-formation in the pursuit of divinity and union – a process that presupposes metaphoric concealment in the form of putrefaction of apparent substances. The poetic voice of Donne emerges as an integrated psyche, an embodied soul fully activated in the alchemical alembic of union.

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