

Domestic Interior
Eavan Boland
for Kevin

The woman is as round
As the new ring
Ambering her finger.
The mirror weds her.
She has long since been bedded.

There is a glow
About it all.
A quiet search for attention
Like the unexpected shine
Of a despised utensil.

The old oils,
The varnishes,
The cracked light,
The worm of permanence -
All of them supplied by Van Eyck

By whose edict she will stay
Burnished, fertile,
On her wedding day,
Interrred in her joy.
Love, turn:

The convex of your eye
That is so loving, bright
And constant yet shows
Only this woman in her varnishes
Who won't improve in the light.

But there's a way of life
That is its own witness:
Put the kettle on, shut the blind.
Home is a sleeping child,
An open mind

And our effects,
Shrugged and settled
In the sort of light
Jugs and kettles
Grow important by.

- Commented [NN1]:** Suggestion that she is pregnant
- Commented [NN2]:** Marriage - wedding ring (espousal)
- Commented [NN3]:** A reference to the jewel of her wedding ring, or the amber prayer beads on the wall at the back of the room
- Commented [NN4]:** Reference to the reflection of a priest in the mirror entering the room
- Commented [NN5]:** Her pregnant state, the Fall of Man and the red of the bed for passion
- Commented [NN6]:** Van Eyck was the pioneer of oils which provided a lustre/glow
- Commented [NN7]:** General impression of ennui and a maudlin tenor given the bride may have passed in 1433
- Commented [NN8]:** The Ars Nova as pioneered by the artist
- Commented [NN9]:** Van Eyck used lacquer and varnish to secure his image for immortality
- Commented [NN10]:** The artist's name
- Commented [NN11]:** No doubt a reference to the florid legal script above the mirror which may cement her position in a morganitic marriage
- Commented [NN12]:** The veneer or lustre on the reflective surfaces
- Commented [NN13]:** A reference to the fact that she appears pregnant and thus the marriage has been consummated
- Commented [NN14]:** Many supported the theory that the work was an epithalamic offering (no information puts this notion to bed, however)
- Commented [NN15]:** Costanza Trenta (the bride) died in 1433, the year before the work was created. Many read the painting as a funereal and thus posthumous portrait of her
- Commented [NN16]:** The mirror in the background is a convex type made in Augsburg, Germany
- Commented [NN17]:** As aforementioned, the artist coated the work in varnish for permanence
- Commented [NN18]:** The light is provided by one lit candle in the candelabra above, and this only appears on his side (hers has burnt down to a stump)
- Commented [NN19]:** The calligraphic script above the mirror reads: Johannes de Eyck fuit hic, meaning the artist was a witness to the marriage (if indeed it was one) and he appears in the mirrored reflection as a witness also
- Commented [NN20]:** Hinged panels were added to the painting in the 16th century, and could be opened or closed
- Commented [NN21]:** The work has a dark 'primer' layer called an imprimatura which suggests an artificial ageing with reference to 'tempus fugit'