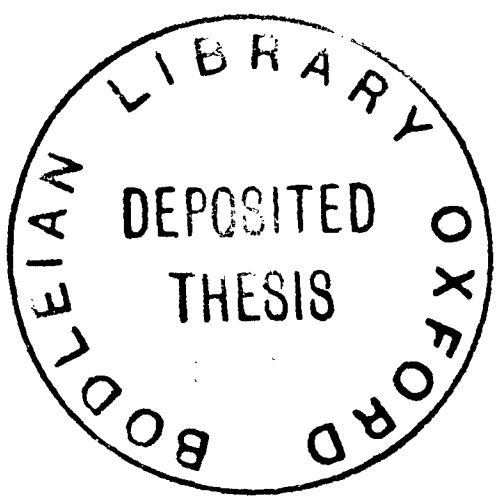
DONNE'S *DEVOTIONS* IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS EARLY SERMONS:
A Revelation of St John the Divine

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the relationship between Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1623) and his early sermons. Its underlying contention is the existence in the *Devotions* of a highly organized, thematic structure, which not only focusses major concerns scattered through the sermons, but places them in typological relation. Chapters 1-4 concentrate on Donne's discussion of these concerns in the sermons; Chapter 5 then demonstrates their recognizable convergence in the *Devotions* to trace an evolving narrative.

Chapter 1 begins with beginnings, and Donne's obsessive pursuit of the origin through recreation. This is related to his fascination with the nothingness underlying birth, which he associates with God. His attempts at infinite contraction and evacuation are examined in this context, as are his images of dissolution.

Chapter 2 then turns outwards to Donne's notions of public authority. But in both the political sphere and the Bible, truth is seen to vary with changing aesthetic and political needs, insofar as its ultimate reference points (Biblical translators, King) are themselves less than absolute.

Chapter 3 focusses on the sermons' own attempts therefore to image the absolute, arguing that Donne positions the reader at the forefront of an increasingly refined, textual present through the telescoping of real into narrative time. The sacramental nature of the read word is suggested in this conjunction of temporal passage with liturgical present.

Chapter 4 then examines the idea of division which underlies much of this discussion, as Donne deals with it explicitly and as it is manifested in the sermon structures. The paradox of the Trinity is proposed as a paradigm for Donne's ambivalence; the resolution it allows in terms of union, closure and self-containment is investigated.

Chapter 5, finally, draws these threads of beginning, authority, sacramental reading and division into the tripartite framework of the *Devotions*, ordering and re-defining them as a series of births that mark the stages of Christian life.

Acknowledgements

> if I should be slacke in celebrating thy mercies to mee ... to many other faults, that touch upon *Allegiance*, I should add the worst of all, *Ingratitude*

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I would also like to thank my family, for this "exercise of their *Devotion* and perchance *Patience*", and all votaries of "my second religion, friendship" – in particular, my housemate for the last three years, Shannon Russell, for her unstinting intellectual, emotional and practical support.

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INTRODUCTION

In the General Introduction to their edition of *The Sermons of John Donne,* George Potter and Evelyn Simpson proposed a clearly two-part, symmetrical plan of publication, with Potter to edit Vols. I-V, numbering Donne's first eighty sermons from 1615-23 (I-IV in roughly ascertainable chronological order, V containing those likely to have fallen in that period, but not datable), and Simpson to undertake Vols. VI-X , numbering the second eighty, from 1623-31 (VI-IX in order, X with the remaining undated sermons).[1] Volumes I/VI, II/VII, III/VIII and so on, were to be brought out by the editors in tandem.[2] The use of mid-1623 as a dividing line Simpson later described as "rather arbitrary", and designed merely to spread the editorial work evenly;[3] however, she also referred to Volume VI as marking Donne's return to the pulpit after a 10-month break of illness, which, in theory, suggests a reasonable argument for the 5/5 volume split.[4] In practice, publishing practicalities related to volume size dictated an "unhappy division", whereby the eightieth sermon, the last in a series of sermons on the 6th Psalm that preceded Donne's illness in 1623, appeared as VI.1.[5]

Nonetheless, the fact remains that this illness, which Donne recorded in the form of the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, conveniently divides his Ministry.

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1 (Berkeley and L.A.: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1953-62), I, v-vi; see also II, v; V, 3; X, vii. All sermon references will be to this edition, in the citational form of: Volume. Sermon Number. Page Number. Line Number(s).

2 II, vii. Potter's death after Vols. I and VI (1953) slewed events, but the emergence of the successive volumes - VII (1954), II (1955), VIII (1956), III (1957), IX (1958), IV (1959), V (1959), X (1962) - bears the imprint of the original plan (X, vii).

3 V, 3 fn.9.

4 V, 31.

5 V, 31 fn. 76. Other adjustments were made in the 10-year course of publishing the edition, on grounds of volume size; the second collection of later, undated sermons, for instance, spilled over from Vol. X into part of Vol. IX.

He himself described it as a "preternaturall Birth", in a dedication which places it in the context of a structured progress through life. This gradual "putting on of Christ", he announced elsewhere, follows an overall sequence from election to sanctification, the first expressing God's purpose before baptism, while the second occupies the life that follows; "therefore *Baptisme* intervenes, and comes *between both*, as a seale of the first, (of Election) and as an instrument, and conduit of the second, Sanctification" (V.7.160.338, 344-6).[6] Donne's own analogy suggests the usefulness of applying this statement with hindsight to the *Devotions*; if it images birth, the near-fatal 1623 fever can also be seen as a baptism by fire that intervened halfway in his preaching career (1615-31), and between the first and second five volumes of his sermons as ideally planned by Potter and Simpson. As a central text, the *Devotions* sets a seal on the earlier style and already dominant interests of the first eighty sermons (Donne's "Election" by the King to the priesthood, for God's purpose), and provides a conduit to the later consolidating eighty sermons (Donne's mounting process of "Sanctification" from Jack to Dr Donne to St John, the dutiful occupation of his last years).

It will be my purpose to examine the first of these relationships, between the early sermons and the *Devotions*. I would like to show, firstly, that the latter represents a rich distillation of ideas hitherto scattered, but already quintessential to Donne's writing; to George Williamson's observation that "The cream of his *Verse Letters* may be found in his *Anniversaries*, and the cream of his *Anniversaries* in his *Sermons*,", we might add that the cream of his *Sermons* (Vols. I-V) undoubtedly lies in his *Devotions* - "so much is one year the preparation for the next".[7] I would like to show secondly that these ideas, once recognizable, organize the *Devotions* in such a way as to create a tight structural framework.

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6 Italics in the original text, whether my own or Donne's, indicate original emphasis; where I wish to add emphasis to another's text, I have used underlining.

7 "The Libertine Donne", *PQ* 13 (1934) 276-91, 290.

It is the *Epistle Dedicatorie* to the *Devotions* which provides the unifying and fundamental metaphor for their organization, and the basis for my depiction of the text as baptismal. Donne launches here into an announcement of "*three* Births", which clearly mark the three significant stages of his career. We may list the parturitions thus:

1. "*One*, Naturall, *when I came into the* World"
2."*One* Supernatural, *when I entred into the* Ministery... *In my* second Birth, *your* Highnesse Royall Father *vouchsafed mee his Hand, not onely to sustaine mee* in it, *but to lead mee* to it"
3. "*and now, a* preternaturall Birth, *in returning to* Life, *from this* Sicknes" (3.6-10).

The first birth is literal, "Naturall"; the second is "Supernatural", or metaphorical - the seal of Donne's election to grace, his taking of Orders at the King's suggestion; the third he calls, as we have noted, the "preternaturall Birth ... *from this* Sicknes", the seal of his election to the Ministry. This overview of his career as a series of beginnings outlines the thematic structure of the text, which traces the larger lines of Donne's life even as the narrative structure concentrates on the present "preternaturall Birth". Devotions 1-4 deal thus with general ideas of beginning, or coming into the world. Devotions 5-8 are concerned with the boundaries between Church and State (Word and world), and the location of an authority that not only *leads* but *sustains* in this life. Finally, Devotions 16-19 describe Donne's fully-realized third birth, his spiritual and physical "*returning to* Life, *from this* Sicknes". This climax to the narrative, however, can only come through the evolving lessons of the text, developed most explicitly in Devotions 9-15. The doctors' 'reading' of Donne in these seven, central Devotions becomes a metaphor for our reading of the text, the means by which everyman's illness is purged. By the time we arrive at the famous Bell sequence, our consciousness of the unifying, sacramental experience of reading has prepared the ground for an epiphanic realization of the brotherhood of man. In this "preternaturall Birth", we are all born side by side.

Moreover, it seems, we are also born end to end. The *Epistle* identifies this moment with its own enunciated "*now*"; "*returning to* Life" results in return to the postdated *Epistle*. Donne's positioning of this at the forefront of the text allows him not only to introduce his beginning(s) in his end - that which, like St John's "In the beginning", was "*last written*" (III.17.348.23) - but to reveal his end (recovery) in his beginning, thereby trapping the reading process in circularity. Countering this, the final few Devotions (20-23) push beyond a rounded structure to gesture in a different direction, raising questions of closure, containment and fulfillment.

Donne's fascination with these themes that structure the *Devotions* - beginnings, authority, narrative time and structure - forms the subject of this study. Thus the *Devotions* anchors my discussion and defines its parameters. However, in the sense in which I shall be looking at the *Devotions* in the context of the *Sermons*, this is primarily a contextual study; to the extent that the bulk of it - Chapters 1-4 - discuss Donne's development of these ideas in the widely-ranging and little-examined preceding eighty sermons (Vols. I - VI.1, 1615-23). Little enough work has been done on this large body of material to justify my focus (conversely, scholarship has so thoroughly explicated Donne's poetry that I shall by and large assume the latter's relevance to be obvious). Indeed, from one point of view, the *Devotions* could be said to serve as a useful looking-glass from which to reflect back on the sermons - to provide, in retrospect, a revelation of John Donne the Divine. Chapter 5, however, will then show in detail how the ideas I have outlined above converge characteristically and with added significance in the text of the *Devotions*. Placed here in a unified framework, they construct, along the lines laid out in the *Epistle*, an *ars moriendi* that is also an order of living.

Finally, the wider, underlying context of my overall interpretation is inevitably that of twentieth-century thought. Yet as many have observed of the contemporary attraction to metaphysical thought, there are strong similarities between the two. I propose to make a virtue of necessity (and furthermore assert the relevance of this study), by fruitfully placing Donne's writing in a twentieth-century context, particularly in relation to the history of science, ideas and literary criticism.

CHAPTER ONE

Nothingness and Be(ginn)ing

> I do not therefore sit at the door, and meditate upon the threshold, because I may not enter further ...
>
> *Essays in Divinity*, 5.4-5

Of Donne's "Naturall" birth, little can be said directly. His metaphorical use of the term to describe other events in his life, however, together with his depiction of those events, reveals a complex attitude to birth in general. Our point of entry into Donne's life coincides with what he calls his "second Birth", his entry into the Ministry, and the prolonged background to this is well-known.

Donne took orders relatively late, at the age of 41-2, and only after various essays into the field of theological debate and polemic that were followed by as many retreats and disclaimers. On the occasion of Bishop Morton's offer of a Benefice in 1607, Walton's description of Donne's "faint breath and perplext countenance" as "visible testimony of an inward conflict", and of his departure and return before answering that he could "neither give my self nor you an answer", perfectly captures the in-out, to-and-fro shuttling of Donne's response.[1]

He did not, in fact, take the decisive step until January 23, 1614/15, when he was finally ordained. Before looking at the sermons that date from this time, it casts some light on his state of mind to examine the still circumspectly-named *Essays in Divinity*, said to have been written just "Before he entred into Holy Orders" in order to determine the rightness of the decision. Actually, as Evelyn Simpson remarks in her

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1 *The Compleat Walton*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Nonesuch Press, 1929), 227-8.

edition, Donne contemplated entry to the Ministry so often that the book could have been written on any number of occasions.[2] But whatever its immediate outcome, it represents Donne's view of the prospect of beginning anew, and, though usually dismissed as a dry, rather uninspired discussion of doctrinal issues, its structure interestingly reflects his ambivalence about the nature of beginnings.

The designated subject of the *Essays* is, first of all, that beginning of beginnings, *Genesis* 1.1. However, Donne's discussion of the first verse of the Bible (marginalized "*In the Beginning*", headed "Part I") is delayed till page 15. Before this "Temple" of the text, the reader traces back a "Porch" of increasingly shaky foundations. Immediately preceding lies a discussion of the source of the passage, the *Book of Genesis* as a whole. Introducing this, there is a piece on the source of *Genesis*, Moses - although Donne is unable to decide whether or not Moses is really the earliest author we possess (notably, he is concerned to "dispute not other dignities, but onely priority in time" [11.29-30]). Before this comes an introduction to the Bible that is our source in turn for Moses's life; again, however, Donne focuses on its status as actually only "the second book" of God, after the Book of Life. Finally, at the very outset of the text, there lies what Donne calls a "threshold", in which he considers the possibility of beginning: "I do not therefore sit at the door, and meditate upon the threshold, because I may not enter further" (5.4-5).[3] This 'sitting at the door' is characteristic of Donne's approach, not only to the Church prior to 1615, but to professional and public life generally. For all the analyses of why the career he sought was denied him, the fact remains of his own apparent inability to dedicate himself without reservation to a single career opening.[4] In this instance, we are

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2 *Essays in Divinity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), ix. All references are to this edition.

3 Cf. Herbert's "threshold" to *The Temple*, which shares a line with Donne's poem "To Mr Tilman", as well as a structural resemblance to the prose *Essays*. In Herbert, the "superliminare" poem lies between *Church-Porch* and *Church*, the important step being entry into the Church - turning the leaf (see Jonquil Bevan, *"Hebdomada Mortium:* The Structure of Donne's Last Sermon", *RES* 45 (1994) 185-203, 185-6); Donne's entry, in contrast, is pushed back as far as the text will go.

4 See R.C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 155ff.

sitting at the threshold to a book of repeated beginnings, and Donne's reluctance to enter decisively finds a correlative in his written work.[5]

For, paradoxically, the distinguishing feature of Donne's meditation 'upon' the threshold is that he *does* in the end enter further; yet he also *enters* further. Not content with reaching from threshold sentence through to 'first' Book, 'first' author, and 'first' book, chapter and verse, *Genesis* 1.1, Donne proposes to deal in addition with *Exodus* 1.1 - like the Bible he describes, "confessing *two* Beginnings" of subject too (17.17-18).[6] If Donne's natural birth is under-documented, his metaphorical birth receives repeated illustration - to such an extent that it too undermines the concept.

One explanation can be found in Renaissance attitudes to artistic creation. It was a commonplace to compare the artist to God, making a world out of nothingness, summoning text into being.[7] As Rosalie Colie points out, however, this made of the artist both a maker and an imitator;[8] one who, in Puttenham's formulation, made from nothing, but imitated his Creator in so doing. Hence "Poetry is a counterfait Creation", a contradiction in terms (IV.2.87.902), and the doctrine of imitation continued to apply. Man *could* not make without appearing to remake; his creations were simultaneously recreations of the Original Act, beginnings begun before. Thus Donne pleads for his soul in the *Essays,*

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5 Donald Davie, for instance, while regarding the confinement of work to a poet's mind which prevents us from successfully moving into the work as essentially post-*Prelude*, considers Donne an example of the rare case where "we find, or think we find, a pre-Wordsworthian poet who meets our post-Wordsworthian expectations" (*Purity of Diction in English Verse and Articulate Energy*, Penguin, 1992, 90 fn. 1).

6 Though he also had classical precedent: see A.D. Nuttall on the *Aeneid*'s two ostensible openings (*Openings: Narrative Beginnings from the Epic to the Novel*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, 3-4) - both similarly preceded by an explanatory preface or 'opening behind the opening' (17ff).

7 Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: U.P., 1966), 115-18, 133. The analogy came naturally to Donne - in a letter, he speaks of "the honour and some of the degrees of a Creation to make a friendship of nothing" (Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne*, 2 vv., London: Heinemann, 1899, I.181: all references are to this edition).

8 *Paradoxia Epidemica,* 60-2.

> let her now produce Creatures, thoughts, words, and deeds, agreeable to thee. And let her not produce them out of any contemplation, or (I cannot say, Idaea, but) Chimera of my worthinesse ... but meerely out of Nothing; Nothing pre<e>xistent in her selfe, but by power of thy Divine will and word ... as thou didst so make Heaven ... so let my Soul's Creatures have that temper and Harmony (37).

The very creatures he invents "meerely out of Nothing" yet derive from God's "will and word", in imitation of God's Creation ("as thou didst so make Heaven").

What we face in this book of Donne's is a series of *Essays*, of relative beginnings that stretch progressively further back while yet sending us further forward to rebeginnings. Like his own biographers, Donne rushes on to the births he creates, only to find them less than absolute and back away in search of that first, archetypal origin. The very threshold of the text leads back to the title of *Essays;* on the one hand, a term connoting a first attempt,[9] and on the other, a title that in turn refers back to Montaigne's *Essais* (1580), Bacon's *Essays* (1597) and such contemporary collections as the *Essays Dedicated to Prince Henry* (1607-12).

A. Births

These issues arises naturally at the beginning of a book like the *Essays*; to an extent, as Pasternak says, "every poem describes its own birth". But they were also endemic to Donne's paradoxical habit of mind. The "action of paradox" itself, as Colie says, "is a simultaneous creation and re-creation, a simultaneous invention and imitation" that mirrors the artistic process;[10] so Donne, in a letter, called paradoxes "no things" that contrived nonetheless to be generative.[11] His first extant sermon provides an example of this paradox, developing as it does from the text beginning, "Ye have sold yourselves for

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9 The OED suggests one definition as a "first taste, of food or drink presented to a great personage" (I.4); cf. the younger Donne's reference to "devouring" and "taste" in his dedication of the book.

10 *Paradoxia Epidemica*, xiii.

11 See Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 36-7.

nought..." (Esay. 52.3).[12] It could in fact be said that Donne's entire preaching career (and certainly Potter and Simpson's 10-volume record of it) began thus out of a consideration of nothingness. I would like in this chapter to look at aspects of this consideration in those sermons that precede the *Devotions*.

The analogy of the birth of the text from nothingness stems directly from *Genesis* - the beginning of the Bible that is also the beginning of the world. However, as I have suggested, "in the beginning" could not have been in the beginning, and Donne in his sermons undermines this text just as he did in the *Essays*. Moving forward from it, he highlights the possibility of re-beginnings; of the world, with the advent of the Flood that brought all "so neare to an annihilation, so neare to a new creation, as to be but eight persons " (II.18.351.132-4),[13] and of man: "In this first Creation thus presented there is a shadow ... of our second Creation, our Regeneration in Christ" (I.8.289.163-5). In one critic's words, "The Bible offers ... a model of repeated beginnings",[14] not only in the "virtual birth-narrative" of the Flood,[15] but in its general structure of repetition. As Edmund Leach points out, "Man is created in *Genesis* (i.27) and then he is created all over again (ii.7). And as if the two first men were not enough, we also have Noah in chapter viii".[16] The world too is created "in the beginning" in *Genesis* I.1, and then all over again in *John* I.1. Finally, with *Revelation*, beginning is projected irretrievably into the future; on the Day of Judgment "we shall end, and yet begin but then" (II.11.249.522).

This, however, is not all. As in the *Essays*, Donne can also move *backward* from the First Creation, to trace in it the shadow of a still earlier Creation:

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[12] I.1 (April 30, 1615). As Gosse comments, it "has nothing in it of great importance ..." (II.80-1).

[13] Also V.4.110.503ff.

[14] Regina Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in* Paradise Lost (Cambridge: U.P., 1988), 2.

[15] Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 38.

[16] *Genesis as Myth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 7-8.

> God proceeds by example, by pattern: Even in this first great act presented in our Text, in the Creation he did so. God had no external pattern in the Creation, for there was nothing extant; but God had from all Eternity an internal pattern, an *Idaea*, a pre-conception, a form in himself, according to which he produc'd every Creature. ... God himself proceeds upon pre-conceptions, pre-meditations (IV.3.98.348-99.353).

This again detracts from the Creation as absolute beginning - the problem with births is that they imply conception. Even before "this first great act", an earlier Platonic form of it existed in the mind of God: "God does nothing extemporally, but according to his owne most holy, and eternall preconceptions, and Ideas, and Decrees" (V.1.54.689-90).[17] To return to the terms of our opening discussion on the *Essays*, "worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand: the making is a remaking".[18] A clever passage in V.18 combines the implications of the forward and backward movement I have traced: God

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[17] See also IV.9.240.119-23. This argument against the world's beginning had been countered a number of times (see Richard Dales, "Time and Eternity in the Thirteenth Century", *JHI* 49 (1988) 27-45, 39-42). Furthermore it directly opposed Puttenham's popular distinction between man's and God's creations, which rejects any notion of Platonism: though man imitates God, God "without any travell to his divine imagination made all the world of nought, nor also by any paterne or mould as the Platonicks with their Idees do phantastically suppose" (*The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker, Cambridge: U.P., 1936, 3). In fact, Donne here ascribes to God his own practice as a preacher, of delivering planned and premeditated rather than extemporal sermons (for structural evidence of this, see Judith Anderson, "Patterns Proposed Beforehand: Donne's Second Prebend Sermon", *Prose Studies* 11(2) (1988) 37-48; for biographical, Walton's " Life of Dr Donne", in *The Compleat Walton*, 255). Lynette McGrath, basing her argument that Donne privileges (actual) content over (actual) formal beauty on this order, makes the comparison: "the poet's Idea or fore-conception, which [is essential for poetic production] in little and faultily emulates the divine Idea" ("John Donne's Apology for Poetry", *SEL* 20 (1980) 73-89, 88).

In *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, Evelyn Simpson traces Donne's fascination with foreconception directly back to the World of Ideas in Plato's *Timaeus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948, 54-5). T. Katharine Thomason also shows Donne's use of Plotinian Neoplatonic thought in "The Extasie" ("Plotinian Metaphysics and Donne's 'Extasie'", *SEL* 22 (1982) 91-105). Troy Reeves's *Index to the Sermons of John Donne* , Vol. II (Salzburg, 1980) lists 28 separate references to Plato, a further 9 to Platonic philosophers, and one directly to Plotinus (127-8). Only two of these reject Plato's philosophy as inadequate to Christianity, and they both occur late in Donne's career: IX.17.379.292-3; IX.5.145.507ff; one goes so far as to suggest the reverse - that "even from *Plato* himself, some Christians might learn" (VI.11.233.380 and ff). Aquinas also dealt with ideas of eternal form in the *Summa Theologica* (and for Donne's essential, conservative agreement with Aquinas, see Reeves, *An Annotated Index to the Sermons of John Donne*, Vol. I, Salzburg, 1979, 16-30).

[18] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), 6.

> governs by Precedent ... he proceeds by precedents; by his owne Precedents; He does as he did before ... still he writes after his owne copy ... his Copies are better then the Originals (V.18.365.36-46).

"(S)till he writes after his owne copy", following "He does as he did before", could lend "after" an adverbial sense ("afterward" balancing "before"), but it most obviously functions as a preposition. This latter reading results in the double use of the word "copy" to mean both the original text that is copied and, in the general sense of the final clause, the subsequent, copied text. Creation and its imitation, recreation, are confused; the original is the copy, and the copy is the original.[19] Consequently, "his Copies are better then the Originals" makes no sense, lacking any indication of historical priority. Imitations, whether avowed copies or multiple "Originals", stretch out in both directions, and the authorized, single Origin is nowhere to be seen. God, like the artist, is both Maker and Imitator.

Donne's dealings with the individual births of men as opposed to the general birth of man encounter parallel problems. If his physical images of childbirth are conventionally unpleasant,[20] his metaphorical motherings are conventionally laudable[21]- for after all, since "God gives us a type, and figure of the eternity of the *joyes* of heaven, in the succession, and propagation of children here upon the earth" (V.5.116.114-15), the messy process of propagation can become joyously analogical.[22] Common, however, to Donne's thinking, is childbirth conceived of as a *process;* the question remains as to what is actually, at some original point, *begun* at birth.

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[19] In a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer, Donne compares the confusion whereby "Nature hath made all bodies alike, by mingling and kneading up the same elements in every one," with the indistinguishability of minds in kind or originality: "custom hath made every mind like some other; we are patterns or copies, we inform or imitate". The "or" implies not only an alternative subject, but an alternative (and *equivalent*) complement to the same subject (Gosse, I.177).

[20] V.10.198.12-18; V.8.172.134-5; V.8.171.118-25.

[21] I.1.154.110-11; I.5.241.186-8; I.8.293.311-294.333.

[22] This extends to textual propagation (e.g. VI.1.39.11-14), and most other births or "emergent occasions", as Donne frequently designated them (e.g. V.10.256.408; II.1.68.711; IV.4.142.358; III.11.247.233).

Here Donne runs into all sorts of theological problems. The most obvious answer was the individual, and the essence of the individual was his soul ("I am my best part, I am my *soule*").[23] But the origin of the soul was a vexed question (I.1.157.237-43),[24] leading to grammatical contradictions: "before my soul was a soul, did Christ mary my soul in his eternall Decree." Donne's conclusion was, therefore, that "it was eternal, it had no beginning" (III.11.252.428-253.30). Original sin was another possibility, being "elder" than man - "for *Adams* sin is his sin" (I.3.193.354-6) - but Donne's feelings on this are clear:

> the *union* of this soul and body is so accompanied with Gods *malediction* for our first transgression, that in the instant of that *union* of life, as certainly as that *body must die*, so certainly *the whole Man* must be guilty of *Originall sin* ... in the very first minute of our life, in our quickning in our mothers womb, wee become guilty of *Adams* sin done 6000 years before, and subject to all those arrows, *Hunger, Labour, Grief, Sicknesse,* and *Death*, which have been shot after it. This is the fearfull swiftnesse of this arrow, that *God himself* cannot get before it ... though sin doe not get the start of God, God does not get the start of sin neither (II.1.58.359-59.73).

So far from beginning at birth, original sin dates back to our quickening, an instant so indefinable from it that God himself cannot distinguish them.[25] And, just as the Creation too reaches forward, our *experience* of original sin repeats itself and can never be uniquely grasped; in as much as it manifests itself in actual sin, "we sell our selves over again in our acts of recognition" (II.3.116.794). The experience is never new; we always perceive its form as familiar. As with God's prior conception of Creation, the conception of "original sin" (its quickening) antedates the beginning-of-action and action-of-beginning that is birth.

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[23]*Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,* ed. Anthony Raspa, 2nd ed. (Oxford: U.P., 1987), 1E: 8.22. All references will be to this edition, in the citational form of Numbered Segment (M, E or P for Meditation, Expostulation or Prayer): Page Number. Line Number(s).

[24]See Julia Smith, "Moments of Being and Not-Being in Donne's Sermons", *Prose Studies* 8(3) (1985) 3-20, 8ff.

[25] Laurence Stapleton criticizes this extraordinary passage for "incredible literalness of understanding" and "breathtaking simplitude" (*The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose,* Princeton: U.P., 1973, 34-5); but she underestimates the desperation of Donne's struggle for priority. "(T)he image of *God*, and the image of *Adam*, Originall sin, enter into me at once, in one, and the same act" (II.1.59.375-7) is a less outrageous way of putting the same case.

Childbirth cannot, therefore, be taken to constitute any real beginning. Like the text, we are "born ruinous", *in medias res.*[26] Birth into the Church might be expected to constitute a more authoritative start for the Dean of St Paul's, with the "*initiatory* Sacrament" of baptism effecting the "first cure" (V.5.128.567-129.574; I.1.163.444). And, in celebrating the occasion in one of his christening sermons, Donne does indeed announce that the child to be baptized "hath this day, an inchoation and beginning" (V.7.166.576). Earlier in the same sermon, however, he has already reminded us that such a beginning is still only relative; baptism is actually intermediate between election and sanctification (V.7.160.344-6). Furthermore, as a first cure of original sin, it remains implicitly a *second* birth (III.1.67.259) - hence its figuring of the Flood, a cleansing *re*birth of the world (V.4.110.503ff).

Inevitably, rebirths lack the purity of the absolute beginning they succeed; the Flood came only "neare to a new creation" (II.18.351.133).[27] Donne desires constantly to "returne againe to the Lord, returne to that state of purenesse" (VI.1.61.802ff), to attain the final source of worlds and words.[28] Yet he is constantly frustrated, whether he look to *Genesis* or the life of his contemporaries (even of each other, "we are patterns or copies, we inform or imitate").[29] Always there are more layers to peel back, more beginnings that precede and so invalidate proposed beginnings until they themselves are preceded: before the Flood, the old world; before that, Adam in Paradise; before that,

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[26] Donne's style reflects this; Webber remarks on how difficult it is to see the beginning of Donne's sentences, fragmented as they are into the larger harmony of the period or paragraph (*Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne*, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1963, 31) - the "open form" of Donne's writing means "the sentence becomes ... the visible portion of something else into which its edges and open spaces recede" (41).

[27] Although Donne does subscribe dutifully on occasion to the more familiar rhetoric, the less problematic analogy: for instance, "we are Christians incorporated in Christ in his Church; and thereby, by that Title, we have a new Creation, and are new Creatures" (I.8.292.265-7), or "him that is become a new Creature, a true Christian ... he hath a new birth" (III.16.333.45-7).

[28] Hence his fascination with etymologies as revealing an increasing purity of meaning: "old doctrines, old disciplines, old words and formes of speech in his service, God loves best" (II.14.305.664-6); see Achsah Guibbory, *The Map of Time: Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History* (Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986), 83-4.

[29] Gosse, I.177.

the world of the Angels (III.6.168.457-67). In a long passage to trace the beginning of God's love for man, Donne finds it

> now ... yesterday ... so early, as from the beginning of thy life ... before that amongst the Herd of the nations and Gentiles ... before that, in the Catalogue of all his Creatures ... yea, before this he sought thee, when thou wast no where, nothing ... in *Adam's* confused loynes ... yea, millions of millions of generations before all this he sought thee in his own eternal Decree; And in that first Scripture of his, which is as old as himself (I.5.249.468-96).

Yet if Donne's initial reference point keeps disappearing into God himself, his unsuccessful pursuit of it meets with divine approval, for "God loves not innovations; ... But it is a Renovation, though not an Innovation, and Renovations are alwayes acceptable to God ... a renewing" (II.14.305.664-9). Here Donne's argument that what appears to be an innovation is, in fact, a renovation perfectly encapsulates a way of thinking that regards everything as a rebeginning of something precedent. Strictly speaking, the matter is not one raised by the text (*Mat.* 4.18-20) at all, but Donne includes in his divisio a section that interprets it in the light of his particular interest:

> there is no new state promised them, no Innovation, (They were *fishers*, and they shall be *fishers* still) but there is an emprovement, a bettering, a reformation, (They were *fisher-men* before, and now they shall be *fishers of men;*) (II.14.287.15-18).

Donne's choice of imagery also betrays this perspective. He frequently refers, for example, not to the *creation* of man in God's image, but to his re-engraving, re-storing, re-making or re-constructing. Men are

> the *Marble,* and the *Ivory,* upon which he workes; In them his purpose is, to re-engrave, and restore his Image; and affliction (is) ... but his instrument[ ], his tool[], to make his Image more discernible, and more durable in us (III.8.193.217-21).[30]

Milton, too, according to Regina Schwartz, doubted a true beginning was accessible to language, and we might reapply her words on the subject to Donne:

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[30]See also I.1.164.494-502; V.18.371.258-70.

> Rather, his notion of beginning, like Said's, is that 'beginning is basically an activity which ultimately implies return and repetition rather than simple linear accomplishment' ... every act is an act of origin, and, conversely, the original act is an iteration.[31]

Still, if man loses a sense of beginning through too many beginnings, God has never had one. *Genesis* deals with Creation, not the beginning of God - "He was at our creation, but that was not his first scene" (II.16.334.323). From a human perspective, "The first Book of the Bible, begins with *the beginning*"; but to the question, "can there be any thing *prius principio*, before the beginning?", Donne immediately concludes, "Before this *beginning*, there is" (IV.3.89.1-4). His reference here is to the textual representation of an earlier beginning, for "the *last* beginning is the *first*; *St John's beginning*, before *Moses*; *Moses* speaking but of the Creature, and *St John* of the Creator" (IV.3.89.7-9). St John's Gospel, "*last written*" (III.17.348.23), attempts to begin with the issue avoided by *Genesis*, the eternal generation of Christ that predates the Creation: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God". Man is (re)made in the image of God, since the confusion surrounding human beginning has its counterpart in the incomprehensibility of God's. In fact, man blends into the "no where, no thing" of God's inconceivable origin, for when he himself was little more, God sought him "in that first Scripture of his, which is as old as himself" (I.5.249.488-96). It is finally the soul of man which is of God; like God, "eternall, it had no beginning..." (III.11.253.429-30). Inconceivable as it is, even Arians, who reject the co-eternity of Father and Son, admit that Christ began "infinite generations before that, [the generall creation], in the bosome of his Father, at our election" (II.16.334.327-8) - rendering their belief only theoretically heretical. This could hardly be compared with putting "a preface to *Moses* his *Genesis*", for "we must remember what he did *ante principium*, before any such beginning was. *Moses* his *in principio*, that beginning, the creation we can remember; but St. *John's in principio*, that beginning, eternity, we cannot; we can remember Gods *fiat in Moses*, but not God's *erat* in St. *John*" (II.11.246.400-406).

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31 *Remembering and Repeating*, 1.

Attempts to denotate this *erat* lead only to contradiction and confusion; "the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world" is slain "from ... that beginning which was without beginning, the eternal beginning, for there Christ came in that eternal decree, that he should come" (I.9.305.161-175). The word "beginning" is drained of all meaning here, leaving only what Edward Said calls the "empty fact of priority": "'The beginning' ... conceived of as a place in time, and treated as a root as well as an objective, remains a kind of gift inside language", and nothing more.[32] Understanding (what is signified) must give place to admiration (of the signifier) (III.12.266.381ff). There is no further line to trace, though Donne cannot resist speculating: "that were to antidate eternity it self" (I.9.306.183-4).

God, then, never begins. Existing outside time, his beginnings and endings are one and the same ("I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending"). His perspective is of a steady state universe, in contrast to man's linear, Big Bang view of Creation. Beginning is a function of creatures; thus the Arian error is to assert that "there was a time when Christ was not, intimating that he had a beginning, and therefore was a creature" (II.16.334.324-6). Specifically, to cite Hannah Arendt, "Beginning ... is the supreme capacity of man",[33] and

> With the birth of man the principle of beginning was introduced into the world. Man, therefore, is distinguished by his natality, by the fact that, because he was born into a time order, he is the custodian and harbinger of all temporal beginnings.[34]

Arendt specifies, though, that "(t)his beginning is not the same as the beginning of the world; it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself."[35] It is tempting to equate her "something", the "world", with God, and compare her distinction with Said's between the active, intentional, beginning act of an individual

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[32] *Beginnings - Intention and Method* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1978), 43.

[33] *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Deutsch, 1986), 479.

[34] Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 21ff.

[35] *The Human Condition*, 177.

and the passive, *divine* origin of a world created outside time.[36] As Northrop Frye points out, the world was artificially rather than sexually created - made, not born - and could lay claim to functioning as an absolute origin since it escaped the sexual cycle. Donne, for instance, observes the link between the creation of the fixed, heavenly stars all "at once", and the fact that they do not themselves beget (III.17.369.782ff: 791-2). The sexual cycle began only with the Fall, bringing with it an endless succession of births which were also always rebirths; and to this cycle, man (Said's clear beginner) subsequently belonged.[37] Against this argument, however, it must be admitted that Adam before the Fall was created out of dust, which corresponds to the archetypal from the earth-mother; furthermore that the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, out of 'nothing', could have sexual and so cyclical connotations.[38] The origin without beginning and outside time can really only be located in God - *both* physical individual and world are born into a time order, a cycle of beginnings which prevents removal into an unanswerable absolute.

Another way of approaching the difference is to say that where God *is*, man *becomes*. In some ways, this is Sartre's existentialism; to exist, man must become constantly, must create and recreate himself at every point of his daily consciousness in

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[36] This divine origin having equivalence with the notion of God's preconception of the world - Michael Ryan in a review for the *JEGP* notes that "It is within that hinge where preconceived idea articulates with innovative act that Said situates his notion of beginnings" (76 (1977) 467-9, 467). See *Beginnings*, 32.

[37] Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983), 106ff. It is interesting also to compare the two types of creation with Said's distinction between religious and secular narrative sources; the former "*originate* in the original mystery of a Virgin Birth that can never be wholly verified, but which demands recognition and unqualified acceptance", while the latter "*begins* in the common and indisputable fact of natural human birth ... in the natal banishment of man from immortality and in his initiation into an afflicted family" - the distinction is based again on asexual (virgin-birth) and sexual (natural human) birth narratives (*Beginnings*, 142). (The fact that Donne's faith is continually splintered by doubt explains his doomed attempts to begin; in Said's terms, they represent an aim to originate, to define the Origin, that only results in repeated (reinforced) beginnings, or births).

[38] See Samuel Abrams and Leonard Shengold, "The Meaning of 'Nothing'; I. A Note on 'Nothing'. II. More about the Meaning of 'Nothing', *Psychoanalytical Quarterly* 43(1) (1974) 115-19; and David Willbern, "Shakespeare's Nothing," in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytical Essays*, edd. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1980), 244-63.

an unending Beckettian measure of time. He thus usurps God by becoming his own Creator. In a similar way, the author is usurped by the postmodern text, "whose *beginning* condition, irreducibly, is that *it must always be produced, constantly*".[39] If the original act only appears (as we have seen) as an iteration, then conversely, "every act is an act of origin," and every word, another Creation.[40]

But for Donne, as not for Sartre, such beginning or process is divinely enabled and so not usurping:

> Such a renewing it is, as could not be done without God; no man can renew himselfe, regenerate himselfe; no man can prepare that worke, no man can begin it, no man can proceed in it of himselfe. The desire and the actuall beginning is from the preventing grace of God, and the constant proceeding is from the concomitant, and subsequent, and continuall succeeding grace of God (II.14.305.669-75).[41]

The purpose of so many beginnings is not to deny, but celebrate God; to reinforce, not replace. For Donne, as rather for Milton,

> Creation is continual, not an original event that is opposed to repetition, but a constant reaffirmation of divine initiative ... To rehearse the creation is to re-enact it. As celebrant, (he) does not discover a privileged beginning; he re-creates beginnings.[42]

Although defined against it, Donne's becoming reaffirms God's being ("though Thyself hadst no beginning, Thou gavest a beginning to all things in which Thou wouldst be served and glorified").[43] Man has so many beginnings he cannot be fixed; God has no beginning that can be fixed. Thus man, through that which makes him man, assimilates

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[39] Said, *Beginnings*, 197.

[40] Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 1; so also Arendt: "In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities" (*The Human Condition*, 9).

[41] Descartes anticipated the distinction, as being that between spiritual beings and 'Nature' (Georges Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, trans. Elliott Coleman, Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1956, 71).

[42] Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 74.

[43] Gosse, II.103.

himself to the eternal Idea of himself (and the world)[44] which has always existed in God (I.5.248.465ff).[45]

B. Annihilation

It seems, then, that the consequence of moving further and further back in search of a beginning is to be caught in what Said calls, "a tautological circuit of beginnings about to begin".[46] This he designates the "intransitive mode" of beginning, which is "tautological and endlessly self-mimetic" rather than "projective and descriptive, aiming not at an

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[44] See *Essays*, 29.17-19.

[45] See fn. 17 above; as I pointed out, Donne drew on the notion of the ultimately eternal preconception outlined by Plato, Plotinus and Aquinas, that all things have "an invisible being, in that Idea, in that pre-notion, in that purpose of God before, for ever before. Of all things in Heaven, and earth, but of himselfe, God had an Idea, a patterne in himselfe, before he made it" (VII.1.60-1: 61.356-9; cf. *Summa Theologica* I.Q.KLIV.Art.3). The logical conclusion to which Donne is taken is that since God has no origin and everything exists formally in him, nothing really can be said to have an origin. Even the poetic creation that emulates God's Creation derives from the poetic idea that "in little and faultily emulates the divine Idea" (McGrath, "John Donne's Apology", 88), that in turn is as old as God himself. In this way everything, from however many aspects it begins, is always *ideally* "for ever before". We might note, however, that Donne nowhere goes so far as to assert the eternal existence of *matter*. God's pattern for all things is Platonically complete and "invisible", and should not be confused with a physical pattern, which seems from the solidity of the imagery to be what Donne is rejecting in II.8: "God maketh no patterns of his works, no modells of his houses, he maketh whole pieces, he maketh perfect houses, he putteth his children into good wayes" (II.8.183.131-3). If we compare Donne's uses of apposition in this passage and VII.1.60-1, we see that here, the rejected "patterns" are equated with concrete housing "modells", with the parallelism of the phrase structure ("no patterns of his works, no modells of his houses") underlining their equivalence; whereas there, "God had an Idea, a pattern in himself" - the approved pattern elaborates upon an abstraction. Further, it is qualified as a "pattern in himself", the implication being that a pattern *per se* is otherwise objectively discernible. The distinction seems to be the same that Donne makes in IV.3.98.349-51: "God had no external pattern in the Creation, for there was nothing extant ... but God had from all Eternity an internal pattern, an *Idaea*". As we pursue the passage in II.8, moreover, we find that the first two parallel phrases are balanced antithetically by the following two parallel clauses: "God maketh no patterns of his works", but "he maketh whole pieces"; "no modells of his houses", but "he maketh perfect houses". Antithetical structure requires the sense to be taken physically. The import is that God does not work through successive drafts towards perfection; whatsoever he "maketh" (and this is clearly not the *mental* pattern of something that can exist ideally, "before he made it" [VII.1.61.359]), he does so in one instantaneous and perfect step (and see fn. 52 below). Thus Donne is denying progressive, not analogous creation.

[46] *Beginnings*, 76-7.

end, but a process of self-clarification".[47] Such is the intransitive mode of the *Devotions*, from whose ending we are directed back to the *Epistle* at the beginning, and also that of God ("I am that I am"). Through its means Donne enacts his *imitatio Christi*, for this intransitivity is "our permanent concession as finite minds to an ungraspable absolute".[48]

But what is the "ungraspable absolute", the "archetypal unknown"[49] that lies at the Origin of all beginnings? Where is the absolute purity of "the land of promise ... their land from the beginning", when "Our best state in this life, is but a returning, to the purity, which we had in our baptism" (I.7.281.482-93)? The answer is clear; we have

> onely to aske that man, who will need deny the world to be made of nothing, of *what* it was made; and, if he could find a preexistent matter, of which he thought the world was made, yet we must aske him againe, of *what*, that preexistent matter was made, and so upwards stil, till at last it must necessarily come to *nothing* (III.8.195.291-5).

Indisputably, the great grandfather of all the world is nothing (IV.3.90.30-1). From this it follows that the attempt to define beginning is actually an attempt to approach the asymptote of being/ nonbeing; the desire to return to some mythical 'birthpoint' through recreation represents an attraction to the annihilation beyond.[50] This birthpoint that separates annihilation and creation may be likened to Victor Turner's account of the "liminal period" or transitional stage in cultural rites of passage: "inherently unstable ... a 'no man's land' without clearly definable boundaries" (the point of a point is that it has no definable boundaries). Regina Schwartz compares this area with Milton's chaos, but I

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[47] *Beginnings*, 72-3.

[48] *Beginnings*, 77.

[49] *Beginnings*, 78.

[50] Julia Smith's article, "Moments of Being and Not-Being in the Sermons," similarly attributes Donne's preoccupation with the creation of the world and the human soul to his desire to grasp "the moment of creation of being from nothing ... this instant of time which spans two adjacent and disparate times, holding them in tension and containing in itself the characteristics of each". However, instead of logically following the imaginative impetus of the movement back into nothingness, she sees the point itself as important in its guarantee of continuity, as a very defence against not-being (3).

would argue that it differs from chaos by exactly as much as it differs from cosmos. As Turner himself says,

> Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and ... reformulation ... logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens, for example, huts and tunnels that are at once wombs and tombs.[51]

This is not the point of chaos, neutrality, which separates good and bad, positive and negative, but the point between being and non-being, *between* chaos ("undoing") and non-chaos ("reformulation"). Not this liminality, this "womb" of beginnings, but that which lies inexpressibly *behind* is the source of all births, all "positive structural assertions": the hidden Origin, generative nothingness, Levi-Strauss's "silent zero point" that can never be experienced. Birth is our first indication of what has already been lost - to recall Said, "the empty act of priority".[52]

In *The first Anniversary*, Donne laments:

> Wee seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
> Of nothing hee made us, and we strive too,
> To bring our selves to nothing backe (ll. 155-7).[53]

Significantly, this only *seems* ambitious;[54] the striving for "infinite nothings"[55] is also a search for God, and the lament is as much for its failure as anything else. Since God "is not tyed to any *place*; not by essence," but "fills every place, and fills it by containing that place in himselfe" (II.10.217.138-40), he must occupy *both* sides of the birthpoint asymptote. On the one hand, he epitomises complete Essence; "all that is, is nothing, but with relation to him." As the ultimate "spacious and extensive *Qui Sum, I am*" of

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51 "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage" in *The Forest of Symbol: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1967), 97 (quoted in Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 18).

52 *Beginnings*, 316 and ff. As Julia Smith remarks, Donne tends to image an instantaneous leap from nothing to creation, without passing through primary matter ("Moments of Being", 6-7). The birthpoint itself can only be asymptotal.

53 All references to Donne's poetry are to H.J.C. Grierson's edition (Oxford: U.P., 1971).

54 See Milton's deceptive use of "seem" in his opening description of Paradise (IV, 290-316), and Donne's own deployment of it against "His Picture" ("Elegie V", ll. 12, 20).

55 Gosse, I.171.

Being, he gives us our positive structural definition (III.8.187.12-13); we "turn, for all our being, and all our well-being, for our essence, and existence, and subsistence, upon God" (III.1.50.104-5).[56] Yet simultaneously, he is complete Absence, a black whole. Thus "God alone is all; not onely all that is, but all that is not, all that might be, if he would have it be" (IX.5.134.104-6). David Willbern calls this a

> relationship of primary creativity. Nothing ... is the very ground of being, just as silence is the ground of speech. Speech happens in silence, silence happens in speech. ... Silence, too, can speak; it is, as we say, pregnant. And when silences are broken, they are also filled. They are spaces or times for talk, occasions for creation.[57]

If "all creatures depend upon *God*, as upon their beginning, for their very *Being*", then Being like beginning can be said to be grounded in nothing (IV.7.198.711-12).

It is revealing to compare this with Milton's view of creation. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton argued that creation was *ex Deo*, and therefore by definition not *ex nihilo*.[58] Like blind, misogynistic Lear, dependent on his daughters, Milton believed with clear-cut logic that "nothing will come of nothing" - or indeed to nothing.[59] Robert Adams holds to the view that Milton's Chaos was traditionally generative;[60] however, he appears unaware of articles such as J.H. Adamson's drawing attention to Milton's position,[61] and there are inconsistencies in his own. His argument, for instance, that it is the binary relationship between good and evil, not nothingness and being (silence and speech), that structures the world only reinforces Adamson's point.[62] God and Satan

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[56]See also IV.2.85.818-86.841; III.13.277.119-24; V.16.324-7; V.17.360.814-7.

[57] "Shakespeare's Nothing," 247.

[58]*The Works of John Milton*, ed. Frank Allen Patterson (N.Y.: Columbia Press, 1933), Vol. XV, 17ff. That he distinguished between the two is quite clear from his insistence that the world was framed out of matter, though this forces him into arguing that God contains the material cause without being himself contained by it (i.e. corporeal) (21).

[59]See *Works*, 27; for an analysis of Lear's position, see Shengold, "More about the Meaning of 'Nothing'".

[60]"A Little Look into Chaos", *Illustrious Evidence: Approaches to English Literature of the Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. Earl Miner (Berkeley and L.A.: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1975), 71-89.

[61] "Milton and the Creation", *JEGP* 61 (1962) 756-778.

[62] "A Little Look into Chaos", 76-8.

create, while the Anarch, as Schwartz shows, is consistently presented as hostile and opposed to both.[63] Adams also self-contradictorily brings out Milton's awareness of the threat Chaos represents to the creative artist, particularly the epic poet with his need to order vast amounts of material.[64]

Donne's ascription of terms is manifestly different. He belongs, I would argue, to another tradition of creationism outlined by Adamson: one that stretches back through the mystics to Meister Eckhardt, Nicholas of Cusa and the ninth century writings of Erigena. According to this school, "*Nihil* does not mean mere privation of existence", but is "that which surpasses all finite understanding and therefore may be said to be *not*".[65] Only God is no thing, not materialist; creation is thus both *ex nihilo* and *ex Deo*.[66] Though God, the first agent, will not admit "Meere *vacuitie*",[67] yet he "fills it by containing that ... within himselfe" (II.10.217.138-40).

Nothingness indeed was popularly associated with God in negative theology; it opposed worldliness and the flesh, and surrounded abstract impalpables like virtue and the soul. Edward Dyer echoed general opinion in *The Praise of Nothing* (1585): "the body being one descent more from nothing then the soule, is by many degrees further from all vertue then the same" ($B1^v$).[68] Attenuation of the body therefore represented an attempt to reach God, an anorexic death-wish for perfection or what William Empson

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[63] Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 8-31. Donne too held evil to differ from a simple privation of being or goodness, though for different reasons (see pp. 52-3 below).

[64] "A Little Look into Chaos", 76. Schwartz cites this following her support of Adamson (*Remembering and Repeating*, 60-1).

[65] Adamson,"Milton and the Creation", 761ff. Donne was aware of this logic, which he attributed to the Gentiles: "that which was not at all, was made a God" (III.12.262.223).

[66] Unlike Milton's exclusively *ex Deo* cause, this does not place Christ in the same hierarchical framework as man, requiring Plotinus's rejection of Trinitarianism (see Adamson, "Milton and the Creation", 759).

[67] 5M: 25.2-4: divine vacuity was a different matter. Donne adds, "Nothing can be utterly emptie" - and indeed it can (see Paul Jorgensen on the punning irresistibly evoked by the term, in "Much Ado About *Nothing*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 5 (1954) 287-95, 289ff).

[68] Even Smith, whose argument is based on Donne's fear of nothingness, admits that "Donne felt that the soul's creation from nothing made it paradoxically closer to God, and closer to annihilation than the rest of creation" ("Moments of Being", 9ff., 13).

called a "shrinking hunger for annihilation",[69] which Donne also felt: "I have not body enough for my body, and I have too much body for my soul ... wee doe but carry an other wall about our prison, an other story of unwieldy flesh" (II.1.63.517-25). He prayed rather for "blessed nullification, a glorious annihilation of the heart" (IX.7.176-7: 177.161-2).[70] In fact, although God could be seen as occupying both sides of the being/nonbeing asymptote, there was a habit of thought that clearly preferred to associate him with the latter[71] - in Laertes' words, "this nothing's more than matter" (*Hamlet* IV.5.174). Nicholas of Cusa, while claiming that God's unity "embraces not only the different, but even the opposite, qualities or determinations of being",[72] nevertheless weighted the balance in favour of nothingness: "an understanding of God is not so much an approach toward something as toward nothing; and sacred ignorance teaches me that what seems nothing to the intellect is the incomprehensible Maximum."[73] Donne, too, with his drive back to the beginning, "quickly make[s] that, which was nothing, *All*" ("A Valediction: of weeping", l. 13). Fascinated with "the darkly radiant perfection of non-being",[74] he marvels, time and time again:

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[69] "Donne and the Rhetorical Tradition", in *Essays on Renaissance Literature* (*Donne and the New Philosophy*), ed. John Haffenden (Cambridge: U.P., 1993), 71.

[70] This same desire gives rise to the Eutychian heresy which Donne describes in III.4.114.6-8, that heavenly bodies were "so rarifyed, so refined, so attenuated, and reduced to a thinnesse, and subtlenesse, that they were *aery bodies*, and not bodies of flesh and blood" (see A.B. Chambers, "Glorified Bodies and the 'Valediction: forbidding Mourning'," *JDJ* 1 (1982) 1-20, 8-9). Donne is careful to reject this view, but his expressions often reveal ascetic sympathy.

[71] This stance was essentially conservative, or at best, apolitical, since as Richard Helgerson points out, it "reinforced the authority of the governing order by placing its perfecting negation safely beyond reach" ("Inventing Noplace, or the Power of Negative Thinking", in *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1982, 101-21, 104). It is therefore likely to have had ruling support.

[72] Alexander Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins U.P., 1957), 9.

[73] *Of Learned Ignorance* (trans. E. Germaine Heron, Yale U.P., 1954), 39 (from Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 27). Donne refers to Cusanus in the *Essays*, where he seems to have enjoyed his cribrations of the Alcoran as much as was consonant with the Anglican faith, exclaiming, "If there were not some compassion belong'd to them who are seduced by them; I should professe, that I never read merrier books then those two" (9.26-9). Later, in April 1627, when concerned with the King's opinion on a sermon, he justifies it by comparison with Cusanus's *Cribratio Alchorani* (Gosse, II.245).

[74] Helgerson, "Inventing Noplace", 101.

> how invisible, how inintelligible a thing then, is this *Nothing*! ... We wonder to see a man rise from nothing to a great Estate; but that Nothing is but nothing in comparison; but absolutely nothing, meerly nothing, is more incomprehensible then any thing, then all things together (IV.3.100.420-101.432).

In his later work, the bias becomes more explicit as, like Dyer, he expressly acclaims the soul's affinity with nothingness as God-like:

> In Nature then, man, that is, the soule of man hath this Image of God, of God considered in his Unity, intirely, altogether, in this: that this soule is made of nothing, proceeds of nothing. All other creatures are made of that pre-existent matter, which God had made before, so were our bodies too; But our soules of nothing. ... to be made of nothing; to have no other parent but God, no other element but the breath of God, no other instrument but the purpose of God, this is to be the Image of God. For this is the nearest to God himselfe, who was never made at all, to be made of nothing (IX.2.82.506-16).

He acknowledges that "*nihil sublimius*, must needs seem strangely said, there is nothing higher than lowness" (I.9.314.501-2), and occasionally does explore the more orthodox nature of God as infinite expansion of being. But the paradoxes that arise are unsatisfying and simplistic; all Donne can really find to speak of is "a continuall dilatation of thy heart, to receive augmentation of that which is infinite" (V.2.75.633), and, again, the fact that "even to these infinite Joyes, the Resurrection gives an addition, and enlarges even that which was infinite" (V.10.212.515-6).[75] Elsewhere he rejects degrees of infinity ("that which is infinite must necessarily be equall" [V.3.80.120])[76] and the limitations of positive assertion:

> Yet I would not have all yet,
> He that hath all can have no more.[77]

For although the infinite must be unbounded - "a tide, a flood without any ebbe, a Sea without any shoare, a darke skie without any Horizon" (III.6.168.434-5) - whenever God

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[75] "Superinfinite", as Carey notes, is Donne's invention (*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, London: Faber, 1981, 113).

[76] See also V.14.271.119-22.

[77] "Lovers' Infiniteness" (ll. 23-4). For a discussion of fullness and infinity, see IV.11.287.135ff.

is expressed in this way, he becomes bounded. The infinite Sea of Christ's Passion, for instance, "must now be bounded with a very little sand" (IV.13.338.530-1), words which serve in the discussion as particles of definition: helpless pointers to God's vast and shapeless mercy, but nonetheless curtailing. The structure of a sermon also plays its part in setting limits; the second part of V.3 "seemes to present a banke even to this Sea, this infinite Sea of the blood of Christ Jesus; And an Horizon even to this heaven of heavens, to the mercy of God" (V.3.87.371-3). And if words - necessarily mortal and so flawed - bank infinity, there is a parallel in the case of an irremissable sinner's "conquest" over God:

> Those hands that reached to the ends of the world ... have I manacled ... That tendernesse that is affected to all, have I damped, retarded that pronenesse, stupified that alacrity, confounded that voyce, diverted those eyes... such a sin there is, that captivates even God himself ... and casts a dumnesse, a speechlesnesse upon the Church it selfe (V.3.91.504-95)

Repeatedly Donne claims for himself "one sin, so swelling, so high, as that even the mercy of God does not reach to it" (V.3.78.40-1).

Attempts to express God's infinitude thus lead to his being limited by definitions, tied to structure or outrageously transcended. Alternative expressions have the same result: "though God be infinite, we may go beyond God, when we conceive, or speak otherwise of God, then God hath revealed unto us" (V.2.58.16-18). The very act of speaking transcends God, by enabling a structure that contains the chaotic immeasurable. Thus although, on the one hand, "God himself is so unutterable, that he hath a name which we cannot pronounce" (*Essays*, 23.3-4), yet "in truth, we could not say this, God cannot be named, except God could be named" (24.1-2). Donne comes to terms with this paradox finally in V.12: God's mercy is the Sea, "both before it was the Sea, for it overspreads the whole world; and since it was called into limits; for it is not the lesse infinite for that" (V.12.238.259-61). 'The Sea' is already a limited concept, in theory -

> It is a Sea, as it is bottomlesse to any line, which we can sound it with, and endlesse to any discovery that we can make of it. The purposes of the world, the wayes of the world, exceed our consideration; But yet we are sure the Sea hath a bottome, and sure that it hath limits, that it cannot overpasse ... (seas) cannot exceed those bounds, which God hath placed for them" (II.14.306.696-702)

- but the very use of words means that any metaphor, however bottomless, must seem to confine God. As Donne argues in the *Essays*, "if he be called *Best*, etc, or in such phrase, the highest degree respects some lower, and mean one: and are those in God?" (21.28-30). Any attempt at description, definition or even naming must tie him inadequately into a language that suggests his measurability. Rather God is that,

> whom if you name you cannot give him halfe his name ... If you limit God with any definition, hee growes larger by that definition, for even by that definition, you discerne presently that he is something else then that definition comprehends (III.3.95.153-68).

It is the essence of God that always escapes the act of speaking: "For if thou couldest express all which thou seest of God, there would be something presently beyond that" (*Essays*, 23.1-2). Paradoxically, however, without the act of speaking, there would be no perception of transcendence. Limited forms can create the possibility of their 'unmentionable opposite', beyond-text,[78] by such necessary omission, and are to be appreciated; thus Donne's approval of the psalm as "a limited, and a restrained form" (II.1.50.27), whose boundaries paradoxically allow freedom "within the compasse of our Articles" (II.1.50.40), and thus his conclusion on this subject: "The Word of *God*, is beyond Sea, the true word, truly preached in many true *Churches* there, but yet we have it here, within these Seas too" (IV.15.369.204-6).

The Sea, then, is bottomless, yet hath a bottom; it provides an image of a 'finite infinity,' of a world that, in Cusanus's words, was 'interminate' without being positively infinite ("that is, that it utterly lacks precision and strict determination. It never reaches

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[78] What Milton in the classical tradition of Plotinus regards as by definition evil; Chaos was evil because it was unbounded, while the divisions that marked Creation were good (Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 12ff). For Donne, such divisions are simply human. Chaos, like God, is beyond them.

the 'limit'; it is, in the full sense of the word, *indetermined*").[79] By escaping determination and hence definition in this way, by appearing "bottomlesse to any line, which we can sound it with, and endlesse to any discovery, that we can make of it" (II.14.306.696-8), such a world for Donne as for Cusanus (with whose thought, as we have seen, he felt in natural sympathy)[80] was the only fit expression of God.[81] In contrast, we can see how distinctly Donne differed from later poets of endless dilatation like Thomas Traherne, whom Carey describes as "temperamentally his polar opposite."[82] For Traherne, the new astronomy's 'proof' of an infinite universe was cause for celebration: "as the 'container' for the infinite God, only an infinite universe was fit - God could not 'dwell' in a less commodious dwelling".[83] In Traherne's expansive vision, "the old images of a contained infinity, the sphere, the circle, the globe, and the ring, would not do: his concept of infinity forced itself beyond the 'circle of perfection' to communicate to men the idea of a limitlessly abundant Deity",[84] moving "from Infinite God to Infinite Space to vast objects in the world and back again from the 'great' in external Nature through Space and infinite or indefinite worlds to Infinite God."[85] This was precisely the attitude that Donne mocked in "Upon Mr. Thomas Coryats Crudities", where he asked that explorer

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[79] Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 8 (Koyré discusses Cusanus's view of the universe from 6ff). Copernicus's word for it was *immensum*, immeasurable. Kepler opted for the empirical approach, designating it as *optically finite*, while Galileo probably subscribed to Cusanus's use of 'interminate' (*From the Closed World*, 30-3, 76-8, 95-9).

[80] See fn. 73, and pp. 23-5 above.

[81] Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 8-9.

[82] *Life, Mind and Art*, 117ff; see also Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 146ff. Marjorie Hope Nicolson gives an account of the aesthetics of the infinite in *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1959), 32-42, enlarging on this in her later study, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the 'New "Science" upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry*, rev. ed. (N.Y.: Columbia U.P., 1960); see 173-7, and chapter 5 generally.

[83] *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 162. The idea of God's dwelling in the known universe was suggested in 1576 by Thomas Digges, who expanded on Copernicus by making the fixed orb of stars extend infinitely upwards, and locating heaven within it (Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 35-9). For a general account of the growth of the new astronomy, see Koyré, *passim*.

[84] *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 167.

[85] Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom* 321.

> Oh to what height will love of greatnesse drive
> Thy leavened spirit, *Sesqui-superlative*?
> Venice vast lake thou hadst seen, and would seek then
> Some vaster thing, and found'st a Curtizan (1-4).

The metaphors of earlier poets like Donne and Herbert - "the sphere, the circle, the globe, and the ring" - were less influenced in this way by the new astronomy, since these 'classical poets'[86] distinguished between space and God's infiniteness - the first was not the dwelling place (or as it later became, *sensorium*) of the second.[87] Rather the cosmos reflected within itself perfect, enclosed images of its Creator. As Colie remarks, Herbert's metaphors are "tidy, his fullness always fits". Yet he was no more "afraid of the implications of infinity, neat though his imagery of closeness, rightness, fitness may be. The world for Herbert was a box 'where sweets compacted lie', but a metaphysical box, a box without dimensions",[88] without determination - less a simple container than a microcosm of microcosms, "*Natures nest of Boxes*" (10M: 51.1-3). If the world was Traherne's oyster, for Herbert the oyster was itself a world. Content did not exclude aspiration.[89] Donne, as I have argued, sided with Herbert in this preference for a contained infinity,[90] and it could be held that scientific theories of the universe have come 'full circle' to agree with both. The universe may indeed be a roundel, unending but circumscribed:

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[86] To borrow Nicolson's terminology (*The Breaking of the Circle*, 173).

[87] See Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle*, 175; and for an account of Herbert, 177-82. Koyré discusses Henry More's subsequent equation of God with absolute space, and the ensuing Newtonian discussion of space as an absolute, indiscerpible Attribute of the First Cause (*From the Closed World*, 125ff, 194ff, 253-9).

[88] *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 210.

[89] Cf. *The Breaking of the Circle*, 188; Nicolson's view is itself too post-Trahernian. Elsewhere, though, she implies that infinity may be compatible with the old belief in the Circle; that, for example, Donne's concentric "*nest of Boxes*" trace an infinitely receding God (167).

[90] Cf. Nicolson, whose interpretation of the two schools forces her to position him between the classicists (Herbert) and the romanticists (Traherne), poets of 'limitation' and 'expansion' (*The Breaking of the Circle*, 173ff.), though she also calls him a "modern" (169). Even in her terms, however, Nicolson's examples of Donne's response to the new philosophy tend to cast him psychologically and emotionally on the side of the classicists, although intellectually he incorporated the new knowledge into his patterns of thought. Cf. also Empson, who in pursuit of a separate planet associates Donne with Diggesian infinite space (*Essays on Renaissance Literature*, 216-19).

...There is no body nor no place,
Nor any wit that comprehends,
Where it begins, or where it ends:
And therefore all men doe agree,
That it purports eternity.
God above the heavens so hie
Is this Roundell, in world the skie,
Upon earth she, who beares the bell
Of maydes and Queenes, is this Roundell.[91]

Hence with hindsight, we can see that the New Philosophy did not break the Circle of Perfection; it merely pushed the boundary of its circumference beyond the contemporary field of vision.

Donne's images of boundlessness, then, reveal their finite and limited origins. No amount of continuous expansion can ever be seen by the mind's eye to get one jot nearer to positive infinity ($+\alpha$) -

> If I adde number to number, a span, a mile long ... what's that long number, but so many millions of millions of nothing? If my span of life becomes a mile of life, my penny a pound, my pint a gallon, my acre a sheere; yet if there be nothing of the

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[91] "A generall resemblance of the Roundell to God, the world and the Queene", quoted in Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 125-6, fn. 36. In 1920, Einstein concluded in favour of a finite but unbounded universe: "the universe will be quasi-spherical. But it will be necessarily finite" (*Relativity: The Special and General Theory*, trans. R. Lawson, London: Methuen, 1960, 108-114; cf. Kepler's description of the earth as existing within a quasi-circular vault of stars, in Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 76-8). The most recent populariser of this theory, Stephen Hawking, restated the case in his 'no-boundary proposal': "maybe time and space together formed a surface that was finite in size but did not have any boundary or edge" (*A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, 136). This yields a "closed surface without boundary" on the analogy of the surface of the earth i.e. roundel-shaped, in 4-D (140). Such a model invalidates Giordano Bruno's objection, that "if we insist on a finite universe, we cannot escape the void", and hence those of Descartes and Henry More (and indeed Aristotle), that for nothing to exist beyond the limits of something is inconceivable, since such a universe, though finite, leaves no room outside itself (Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 48, 120-3, 86-7, 235ff: so also Donne, I.1.165.525-6; II.17.337.82-5; V.18.365.26-30). Where "God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere," this universe (both contained and containing) is a far more appropriate reflection of the Deity than Traherne's or Bruno's, in Augustinian terms. And so far from so self-contained a model excluding an 'opening' for God as Hawking believes (the same argument was made by Henry More against Descartes's materialist universe: *From the Closed World*, 138), this would only be the case for visions like Traherne's, which looked literally within space for a place for God; for metaphysicals like Donne, Herbert and, for that matter, Kepler (see *From the Closed World*, 58ff) - for whom Donne expresses approval in *Ignatius His Conclave* (ed. T.S. Healy, S.J., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, 7) - this universe provides a perfect microcosm of the God who is both immanent within it *and* objective without it.

> next world at the end ... still all is but *nothing* multiplied, and that is still nothing at all (IV.6.171.293-301)[92]

- or to God: "there is no single sand in the sea, no single dust upon the earth, no single atome in the ayre, that is not likelyer to weigh down all the world, then all the world is to counterpose God" (III.3.95.158-61). Nothingness, however, occupies the other end of the scale, and "betweene nothing and something ... there is an infinite space" also (-α)[93]: "For the distance from nothing to a little, is ten thousand times more, than from it to the highest degree in this life" (II.11.247.444-5); "the disproportion between the least thing, and nothing, is more infinite then between the least thing and the whole world" (III.1.50.124-5). Due to what Cusanus saw as the "mathematical paradoxes involved in the infinitization of certain relations valid for finite objects," the search for an absolute minimum is equivalent to the search for an absolute maximum.[94] Pursuit of the infinite (God) in this direction, furthermore, has an imaginative advantage, insofar as the process of progressive refinement can be visualized.[95] Donne therefore rejects the futile process of multiplication - "how great a number soever a man expresse in many figures, yet when we come to number all, the very first figure is the greatest and most of all" (II.11.247.439-42) - and substitutes for it a technique of *infinite division.* There is visibly infinite possibility in an ever-dividing, ever-contracting space that borders on nothingness, which instead becomes the unreachable goal of infinity: "though it seem

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[92]As Carey notes, "Number is used to defeat numerability; quantity, to annihilate quantification" (*Life, Mind and Art*, 112-15).

[93] Sidney's translation of De Mornay, *A Worke Concerning the Trewnesse of Christian Religion* (1592), 4 (quoted in Jorgensen, "Much Ado About Nothing", 288).

[94]Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 9. As Cusanus argued, "compared with the infinite there is nothing that is greater or smaller than anything else. The absolute, infinite maximum does not, any more than the absolute, infinite minimum, belong to the series of the great and small. They are outside it, and therefore ... they coincide" (*From the Closed World*, 9-10).

[95] Cusanus's infinitely great circle, whose circumference coincides with its tangent, escapes the mind's eye, as his infinitely small one (whose circumference coincides with its centre) does not (see *From the Closed World*, 9).

humbleness, yet it is a work of as much almightiness to bring a thing to nothing as from nothing".[96] Two centuries later, Pascal followed the same pattern of reasoning:

> Tout ce monde visible n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n'en approche. Nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions, au delà des espaces imaginables, nous n'enfantons que des atomes au prix de la realité des choses.

Just as Herbert, Browne and Cowley preferred to trace God's reflection in "Nature's narrow Engines",[97] Pascal offers rather to explore "les choses les plus delicates"; "divisant encore ces dernieres choses", man

> pensera peut-être que c'est là l'extrême petitesse de la nature. Je veux lui faire voir là-dedans un abîme nouveau. Je veux lui peindre non seulement l'univers visible, mais l'immensité qu'on peut concevoir de la nature, dans l'enceinte de ce raccourci d'atome.[98]

In the result, annihilation becomes associated with transcendence.[99] But Donne had predecessors as well as followers in this tradition.[100] Essentially his was a reiteration of Aristotle's theory of matter as continuous, or "susceptible of division without

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[96] Gosse, I.181. Said characterizes the beginning mode as one which generally favours concentration over expansion (*Beginnings*, 73) - inevitable once the connection is made between beginning as time and place.

[97] See Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom*, 70-1. Her description of this school of thought as agoraphobic as opposed to claustrophobic (Traherne and his followers) (*The Breaking of the Circle*, 168) seems more successful than her attempts to distinguish poets of 'limitation' or 'content' from poets of 'expansion' and 'aspiration' (see fnn. 89-90). It is not the aspiration for God that separates the two groups, but the direction in which they aspire to find him.

[98] *Oeuvres Completes*, ed. Jacques Chevalier, (Paris, 1954), No. 84, 1105. "The whole world is only an imperceptible atom in the ample bosom of nature. No idea approaches it. We may enlarge our conceptions beyond all imaginable space; we only produce atoms in comparison with the reality of things ... (man) will think that here is the smallest point in nature. I will let him see therein a new abyss. I will paint for him not only the visible universe, but all he can conceive of nature's immensity in the womb of this abridged atom" (*Pensées*, trans. W.F. Trotter, N.Y., 1941, No. 72, 21ff). Interestingly, by 1702, Joseph Raphson was already describing space/God as that entity which was "first by nature and the very last to be obtained by continuous division and separation" (*De ento infinito*, London, 1702, Def. I).

[99] See Harvey Mitchell, "Reclaiming the Self: the Pascal-Rousseau Connection", *JHI* 54 (1993) 637-58, 639. Rousseau's rejection of Pascal's "world in which 'Being and Nothing should be convertible terms' ... as a 'palpable contradiction, an evident absurdity'" (653) corresponds to the Trahernian or 'romanticist' rejection of Donne, Herbert and the 'classicists'.

[100] For his anticipation, however, of ways of thinking associated with later writers, see the two articles by Anthony Low, "Love and Science: Cultural Change in Donne's *Songs and Sonets*", *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 22 (1989) 5-16, 8, and "Donne and the Reinvention of Love", *ELR* 20 (1990) 465-86, 482.

limit".[101] In the third book of the *Physics*, Aristotle had examined the infinite as that which had the "capacity for being multiplied indefinitely, or for being divided indefinitely, or both" (*Physics*, III.4.227). Like Donne, he considered theoretical multiplication futile, since "the imagination can always conceive a 'beyond' reaching out from any limit, so that the series of numbers seems to have no limit, nor mathematical magnitudes, nor the 'beyond the heavens'" (*Physics*, III.4.225); like Donne, he was concerned rather with a "visibly infinite possibility," or, as he put it, "unlimited 'sensible' magnitude" (*Physics*, III.4.227). Since his universe was finite and closed, he could naturally not find an "actual physical body or substance that is unlimited in expansion" (*Physics*, III.5.231-3: 233). However - to quote Aquinas's *Commentaria* - "(w)ith reference to the meaning, 'capable of unlimited division' ... he decides that the infinite does exist, 'potentially and by division,'"[102] since "a continuous magnitude can be divided beyond any given smallness," with each division being proportional to the previous one (*Physics*, III.7.259). Donne undertook the approach towards the Aristotelian infinite by approaching the transitive point of birth that demarcated, at one and the same time, nothing and the goal of the infinite, and made of it a religious search.

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[101] Aristotle, *The Physics*, trans. Philip Wicksteed and Francis Cornford (London: Heinemann, 1929), III.1.193; further references in the text.

[102] Quoted and discussed in Joseph Grennen, "Donne on the Growth and Infiniteness of Love", *JDJ* 3(2) (1984) 131-9, 132. For the relevant passages from Aristotle, see III.6.247ff. Bald considers it likely that Donne first encountered Aristotelian philosophy in the course of his wide-ranging university studies (*John Donne: A Life*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, 48), but certainly he was later familiar with "the Philosopher" (IV.7.194.530). Troy Reeves's *Index*, Vol.II, indicates 16 separate references (13), although much of Donne's knowledge was probably filtered through Aquinas (40 separate references in Reeves, II, 11-13: see also his Introduction in Vol. I). In any case, the implications of this particular theory received wide play through Zeno's paradoxes of the Tortoise and the Hare, and the Pile of Sand (Donne refers to Zeno once, at VIII. 14.328.588: Reeves, II, 148). Donne's favourite Father, Augustine, could not resist working through them in some detail: "no cutting away leads to nothing as such. For every part which remains is a body, and whatever is a body occupies a place in some space. Nor would this be possible unless it were to have parts into which it might be cut again and again. Therefore, it can be infinitely diminished through infinite division, and hence can suffer defection and tend toward nothing, although it can never reach nothing. Further, this can be said and understood of space itself and of any interval whatever. For by taking, let us say, a half part from the limits, and always a half part from what is left, the interval is diminished and approaches a limit which yet it can in no mode attain" (*De immortalitate animae*; in *Concerning the Teacher and On the Immortality of the Soul*, trans. George Leckie, N.Y.: Appleton-Century, 1938, VII, 70-1).

As the first part of my chapter has argued, this search for origins is open-ended, its goal permanently elusive. This too is implicit in Aristotle's discussion, for as Joseph Grennen points out, the Aristotelian infinite is by definition partial, incomplete and imperfect, in contrast with a whole that is "all". He cites Aquinas's *Commentaria*:

> For the infinite is not that outside of which there is nothing, but that outside of which there is always something else ... This therefore is the infinite: that of which, for those taking quantative parts of it, there is always something left to take. That outside of which there is nothing is a complete thing, a 'whole' ... that, however, which has outside of itself something absent, is not 'all', since something is missing.[103]

The infinite in this light can be fairly seen as a description of man's progress in life towards the "All' of God, and the very "art of ambition" - contained without containing, unknowable (since unlimited, and so material without form)[104] and having "more the character of a part than a whole, because matter stands in relation to the whole like a part."[105] Hence "the sphere, the circle, the globe and the ring", endless but visibly contained, become perfect images of this contained infinite.[106] If Traherne refuses such containment for his infinite universe, it is because in his understanding, "Infinite" is interchangeable with "All" (not simply a process that approaches it); the universe is God's *sensorium*, hence the Infinite contains the All (or merges with it) instead of being contained by it. Grennen argues that Donne was capable of applying Aristotle's more refined, technical interpretation of the "Infinite", as in "Loves Infiniteness": more

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[103]"Donne on the Growth", 133. The relevant Aristotelian passage is as follows: "The fact is that the unlimited is really the exact opposite of its usual description: for it is not that 'beyond which there is nothing', but that 'of which there is always more beyond' ... The unlimited, then, is that of which, however much you have taken, there is always more to take; that of which there is nothing more to take is not unlimited, but whole or completed ... whereas that from which something, no matter what, is missing and left outside is not 'All' (*Physics,* III.6.253-5).

[104]*Physics,* III.6. 255-61.

[105]The passage continues: "And rightly does the infinite have the status of a part, inasmuch as only a certain part of it can be taken in act" (Grennen, "Donne on the Growth", 133-4. See Aristotle, *Physics,* III.6.255).

[106]In their *self*-containment, they demonstrate not only Aristotle's thesis but his antithesis of the infinite: the All. See fn. 91 above.

properly, "Loves All", but titled after Donne's death by later anthologists, who, like Traherne, did not make the classical distinction.[107]

David Hedrich Hirsch in a recent article has argued for Donne's rejection of Aristotelian theories of continuous matter in favour of the opposing, Democritan theory of matter as grainy (atomic, indivisible).[108] Although this was associated with atheism in the seventeenth century,[109] Hirsch argues in effect that Donne's fear of utter dissolution outweighed his faith in the infinitely divisible:

> By anatomizing the representative body to the limits of material dissection, Donne attempts to discover a radical immutability of selfhood which could refute his fear of dissolving into nothingness. He would cease his anatomy once he cut to the material permanence of atoms, for the atom as the limit to the self's deconstruction might also serve as the origin of that self's reconstruction.[110]

For Hirsch, the anatomical search is finite and its goal, material. He begins by citing *The first Anniversary*, ll. 211-12, to demonstrate "Donne's decision to stop his anatomy at the level of atoms".[111] Closer attention to the text, however, makes it clear that Donne is describing the stance of the New Philosophers:

> And freely men confesse that this world's spent
> When in the Planets and the Firmament
> They seeke so many new; they see that this
> Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies (ll. 209-12)

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[107] "Donne on the Growth", 131-5; although he admits that in "Loves Growth", the infinite is used similarly in the poetic rather than technical sense to mean boundless and *incapable* of addition (136ff). Reeves, however, notes Donne's use of "accident" in both the technical, Thomistic and the more modern sense (I, 16-17). (Subsequently, it may be noted, as 'infinite' slipped irrevocably into its later meaning of 'all' and became associated with God, Descartes introduced 'indefinite' to take on the former meaning of 'infinite': "we must never dispute about the infinite, but only hold those things to which we do not find any limit, such as the extension of the world, the divisibility of the parts of matter ... to be indefinite" - *Principia philosophiae*, I. par. 26: see Koyré, *From the Closed World* , 100-9. This is also stated as the distinction between actual (positive, indivisible) and potential (endlessly divisible) infinity - *From the Closed World*, 107-8, 118. The still later blurring of the terms indefinite and infinite by Henry More and the Newtonians marked the end of the distinction between God and space - *From the Closed World*, 151, 165, 193ff, 221-8, 246-9, etc.).

[108] "Donne's Atomies and Anatomies: Deconstructed Bodies and the Resurrection of Atomic Theory", *SEL* 31 (1991) 69-94.

[109] Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 221-2, 330.

[110] "Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 71 and ff.

[111] "Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 75.

This atomic vision, moreover, presents a miserable picture of a world without faith. Donne himself is only implicated in ll. 156-7; "we strive, too,/ To bring ourselves to nothing back"; far from stopping "just short of the abyss... upon the material permanence of atoms", he actually describes a continuous dissolution beyond.[112] Hirsch's 'objection' to this, that "absolute nothingness" is never attained, is, as I have argued, as central to Aristotelian divisibility as the absence of ultimate matter.[113] Hirsch then cites another passage in the *Devotions* that traces man's progressive dissolution from snow to molten lead, iron, brass, and finally to "*Atomes*", where Donne "significantly stops once again"; once again, however, the passage shows rather an "accelerating towards ever-receding horizons", as the atoms yield to ashes and finally lime (2M: 11.9ff).[114]

The fact is that despite Hirsch's efforts at reconciliation, atomism was inherently alien to religious thought in its attribution to matter of properties reserved to deity: "In the atom, as in God", he asserts, "Donne finds a lost center, an invisible and indivisible source of immortality which strips death of any totalizing powers of destruction".[115] Yet even Galileo who formulated a "theory of indivisibles" arguably continued to uphold Aristotle's continuity of matter.[116] Major doctrinal problems must arise, as Hirsch admits, in the attempt to reconcile conservation of matter with individual resurrection.[117] Hirsch defines the danger throughout, however, chiefly in terms of the fear of physical "nullification." Thus while I find nothing to disagree with in his statement that "Donne is drawn to the scene of division and disintegration with a force

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[112]See pp. 23ff above.

[113]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 75.

[114]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 76. The salutary phrase is Carey's (*Life, Mind and Art*, 112).

[115]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 89.

[116]A. Mark Smith suggests that he managed this by arguing, like Aquinas and the 'classicist' poets, that the infinite must be "fully contained within determinate bounds" ("Galileo's Theory of Indivisibles: Revolution or Compromise?" *JHI* 37 (1976) 571-88, 576; see pp. 33-5 above). As also did Donne, Galileo maintained the endlessness of the search; "any process aiming at infinity will only guarantee its own deflection from the target ... The very *act* of approach vitiates its own purpose, rendering its object - infinity - a potential rather than an actual quantity" (577).

[117]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 87.

equal to, if not exceeding, that force which repels him from the anatomical table," his explanation - attraction to the immortal, immutable particle, in spite of fear of being "stranded in the nothingness of deconstructed *aporia*"[118] - is almost precisely the opposite of my own. Hirsch's controversial theory of Donne as atomist, in other words, turns out to rest less upon specific evidence than on a familiar and over-simplified reading of Donne as anti-nihilist.

The definition of terms nonetheless raises some questions. Lucretius defined an atom as "one of the particles of dust which are rendered visible by light", but it is not clear in what sense Hirsch is using it.[119] At times he appears to be taking it in Lucretius's sense, "As a link between the visible and invisible, time and timelessness, and the embodied self's presence and absence";[120] on these occasions it serves to demarcate nothingness, and I would agree that it represents for Donne the visible limits to which the divisibility process can go (although beyond we may still *imagine* Pascal entering "*dans l'enceinte de ce raccourci d'atome*").[121] For the most part, however, Hirsch seems to have in mind a more modern definition, of "*atomic* pieces ... which are by definition immortal and which retain their integrity regardless of the dissolution of their molecular or superstructural arrangement in form".[122] In the seventeenth century, of course, these required

> *faith in the invisible* not dissimilar to religious Faith. In this sense, even empirical analysis could not prove the necessary existence of an indivisible material part, and anatomical searches for permanence might even conclude, based on visual evidence, that there is no limit to physical divisibility and decay.[123]

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[118]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 88.

[119]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 82.

[120]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 69.

[121]See fn. 98 above.

[122]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 75.

[123]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 88-9; thus Galileo's "indivisibles" could never materially be arrived at (see fn. 116 above). Ironically again, modern science has confirmed classical belief, that there *is* no such ascertainable limit; the atom is not indivisible, and one could argue for a reinstatement of Aristotle's theory. In fact, the history of physics parallels Donne's process of contraction. As Hawking puts it, "the possibility, that there is an infinite sequence of more and more refined theories, is in agreement with all our theories so far" (*A Brief History of Time,* 166). Successively more elementary particles too are being

Once the mind conceives of a physical limit, it can always conceive of one beyond;[124] presented with the "atom", we find, like Pascal, a world within that atom, "infinitely lesse then a Mathematicall point, then an imaginary Atome" (X.5.134.576-7).[125] But setting aside Hirsch's central thesis, that such invisible atoms represented "material permanence",[126] we might well accept the seventeenth-century atom as pure concept: indefinable since invisible, asymptotal, projected indeed beyond anatomical division. In the end, though, this is only to substitute one name for another, a replacement of God by the atom that depends equally on "Taking a leap of faith into the invisible realm ... the gap between form, formlessness and reformation".[127] Such a blasphemy could not be entertained by Donne, any more than the idea that he proceed to the atom but stop short of God beyond.

Infinite divisibility thus must characterize the religious search; the roundel becomes smaller and smaller. Donne's search to define or measure O (God, nothingness)[128] becomes a self-consciously endless attempt to square the circle, "technically immeasurable, however small".[129] Colie describes how "efforts to arrive at the correct area of the circle have resulted only in infinite approximation"; a precise

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discovered as perception is refined (Hawking's belief that eventually an elementary particle will be arrived at, resulting in an ultimate theory of the universe (167) remains, as he points out, inconsistent with religious belief, since it leaves no room for God who must lie always beyond the elementary (141)).

[124]See pp. 25ff above.

[125] That God should create an atom only to divide it Descartes was later to describe as nonsensical (*From the Closed World*, 110ff).

[126] "Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 71.

[127] Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 89.

[128] Thus Margaret Maurer in "The Circular Argument of Donne's 'La Corona'": The circle not only symbolizes perfection; it stands in mathematics for nothing" (*SEL* 22 (1982) 51-68, 54) - i.e. for both completion and origin.

[129] Thus his opening address in "Upon the Translation of the Psalmes by Sir Philip Sydney and the Countesse of Pembroke his Sister", to "Eternall God, (for whom whoever dare/ Seeke new expressions, doe the Circle square,/And thrust into strait corners of poore wit/ Thee, who art cornerlesse and infinite)" (ll. 1-4). Donne also later uses the attempt to square the circle as a metaphor for man's attempt to reduce God to human terms in VI.8.175.252-5 (Christmas Day, 1624). Elsewhere the phrase epitomizes foolish and false presumptuousness; thus *Ignatius His Conclave* includes applications to hell from "those, which pretended that they had *squared the circle*, the number was infinite" (65 ll. 25-6). It is not simply the number of pretenders which is infinite, but the numerical approximation of area.

figure is only possible when the area of the circle equals zero, and the sign, like God, becomes its own signification. A hieroglyph of nothing, however, is impossible; the imagination cannot turn itself inside out, and we are forced to stop at the point where the centre of the circle - also immeasurable as "the single center of a line of infinite points"[130] - becomes its circumference. This point, despised by Richard Rolle as the extent of our life and "the least thing that may be",[131] Donne calls "the most indivisible and unique thing which art can present", and hence (with that qualification) a fitting image for "God Himself, who only is One".[132] This is the true Lucretian atom, the final link between the visible and invisible;[133] no longer simply a roundel, but the roundel reduced to a mathematical point, whose centre and circumference, being technically immeasurable, can truly be said from our perspective to be everywhere and nowhere.

Donne's fascination with a division that could approach nothingness appears in many of his images. Occasionally, it leads him to imagine arrival at the final end-product: 'whatsover may be broken and divided may come to nothing ... whatsoever may be broken, may be annihilated" (II.18.352.153-64). A kingdom, for example, could be "broken in pieces, and canton'd into petty Seigniories, and so left no Kingdom" (I.4.229.217-18). But the most obvious image associated with such attenuation is that of gold. Edward Dyer tells us that "Gold (being made of nothing, reteineth his naturall propertie, and substance) neither yeelding to the moistness of the water, or consuming by the extreme furie of the fire, is the type of those, who despysing all things, are

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130 *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 319ff. Cusanus, too, observed that it was impossible to calculate the exact centre of any circle without subsequently finding a more exact one (Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 11-13).

131 *The Forme of Living*, in *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, ed. Frances Comper (London: Longmans, 1917), 132.

132 Gosse, I.223. Indivisibility, as we have seen from Aristotle, was the hallmark of the all: "separation/ Falls not on such things as are infinite" ("Epithalamion on the Lady Elizabeth and Count Palatine being married on St Valentine's Day", ll. 47-8; see pp. 34-5 above. Donne is here clearly using "infinite" in the poetic sense to mean "all"- see fn. 107 above). Not surprisingly, it is the "so-called Arabic *Theology of Aristotle*" that cites God as the *point* on which all nature depends (see John Freccero, "Donne's 'Valediction: Forbidding Mourning'", ELH 30 (1963) 335-76, 369, fn. 84).

133 See fn. 120 above; it is thus also Donne's representation of Cusanus's God, the metaphysical centrum of an infinitely small circle (Koyré, *From the Closed World*, 11-13; see fn. 95 above).

afflicted for vertue"[134] - afflicted, in short, for the impalpable. Donne speaks too of the pure formation of gold: God "purges us by his sunshine, by his temporal blessings; for ... the greatest globes of gold lye nearest the face and top of the earth, where they have received the best concoction from the heat of the sun ... the purer, and the more refined mettall" (I.1.163.459-66). In I.7, Jacob in his unworthiness yet came "not to such a *nihil sum*, such an extenuation of thy self, as to think, that grace works thee, as the sun does upon gold, or precious stones, to purifie them to that concoction, without any sense in themselves" (I.7.272.150-3). This initial origin of gold makes the metal an ideal focus for the attempt to return to the womb,[135] or "bring ourselves to nothing back", in its convenient form of "gold to aery thinnesse beat". In V.5, a juxtaposition equates the division or breaking up of money "into small pieces" with "gold that is beat out into leaf-gold"; both seem "easily lost" to nothing (V.5.124.391). The alchemical symbol for gold, ☉, itself evokes the zeroing in of the roundel. And since it is also the symbol of the sun, it connects Christ (the Son/sun) and resurrection with the recovery of this nought (O > · > origin). A. B. Chambers uses this equation to explain the last lines of the "Valediction" in his ingenious article, "Glorified Bodies and the 'Valediction: forbidding Mourning.'" The alchemist sought to kill normal metals by division into their constituent parts; after thus returning them toward nothingness, he would "resurrect" them into gold.[136] Gold itself when 'killed' to its purest form was thought to be resurrected as the Philosopher's Stone, capable of transmuting everything into "a 'gold' more perfect even than gold".[137] Chambers argues for the divinity of this ultimately 'fine gold', the Philosopher's Stone being Christ; in the poem, the lovers, already refined once to gold ("to aery thinnesse beat"), undergo a subsequent death of parting only to be resurrected to divinity in the

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[134] *The Prayse of Nothing*, B_{ii}^{r}.

[135] As Carey remarks, Donne more than once associates gold with wombs (*Life, Mind and Art*, xii, and see 170-2).

[136] "Glorified Bodies", 3.

[137] "Glorified Bodies", 12.

image of the compass circle: ⊙.[138] The movement of the compasses whereby Donne both makes his circle 'just' and comes home to his centre mirrors the contraction to a golden nothing, where the double movement becomes one. At the end of the poem, further refinement is visually impossible; we are left with the most perfect circle "which art can present", with a centre that overlaps its circumference - the "roundel reduced to a point" or the image of God, with whom the lovers finally merge.[139]

Still, even as a compass-point is subject to the human eye, "fine gold" defined the limits of the alchemist's art. "Nothing comes to nothing quite", and "As light a thing as a Spangle is, a Spangle is silver; and Leafe-gold, that is blowne away, is gold" still (VI.1.57.675-7). Only God truly possesses vacuity. Thus the Gentiles "broke God in pieces, and changed God into single money, and made a fragmentarie God of every Power, and Attribute in God" (V.16.325.263-5). The effect of such division was that they "scattered him, and evacuated him, to an utter vanishing" (V.5.124.394-5). Similarly, heresies of schism between Christ's dual nature led to "a dissolving of Jesus, a taking of Jesus in peeces, a dividing of his *Natures*, or of his *Offices*, which overthrowes all" (V.6.134.131-3). Like gold-leaf, Jesus undergoes an expansive change of state, "where men will melt him, and powre him out, and mold him up in a wafer Cake", but unlike mere metal, there may be "annihilations of Jesus when Men will make him, and his Sacraments, to be nothing but bare signs" (V.6.135.174-7).

C. Dissolving Self (Mind)

Donne's attempts to trace God to a beginning ended in linguistic tautology.[140] Evoking God's return to his beginning here depends on a similar gift of language; it is not simply

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[138] Which, as W.A. Murray pointed out in 1958, is what connects the gold and compass images ("Donne's Gold-Leaf and his Compasses", *MLN* 73, 329-30).

[139] "Glorified Bodies", 14-17 (see p. 39 above).

[140] See p. 16 above.

as, but *through* "bare signs" that Jesus can be perceived to be nothing. Donne suggests that language alone may image the emptiness from which it stems, when the word is drained of all referentiality. Mind transcends matter: "To prove a beginning of the world, I need not the Scriptures; *reason* will evict it forcibly enough against all the world" (V.4.102.225-6). Yet if Donne's prose manifests a desire to empty itself, it evicts a beginning less through reason than unreason. Paradoxes, in Donne's words, are "nothings",[141] and it is through paradox, where "We shall see the death of Death it self in the death of Christ"(II.9.202.208),[142] or find out "the bottomlesse bottome of Hell" (V.10.202.167-8), that content is removed and reason annihilated. In the process of unfolding, paradoxical language revokes itself: Donne traces the cause of his sickness in II.2 back through God's anger to the face of that anger, and then to a warning of possible anger, only to determine finally that "there is not a dramme of anger in the anger" (II.2.87.565-6). The head of the causal chain vanishes. More effectively still, language can revoke itself *before* unfolding. Not even the trace of a chain then remains; the term pre-cancels itself, as with "the death of Death" and "the bottomlesse bottome" - what we might term a logical form of the negative cataphoric.[143]

Yet despite this, the printed words on the page remain. As Donne recognizes, only spoken words truly tend toward evaporation: "as a word vanisheth, so doth any power in me to serve you; things that are written are fitter testimonies, because they remain and are permanent" (I.8. "Address to the Countess of Montgomery"). These latter body forth a material essence ("I know what dead carkasses things written are in respect of things spoken" [*ibid.*]), which even paradoxes cannot avoid: "As arguments they do not exist at all; they are deliberate perversions of arguments. But as statements

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[141] Simpson, *A Study* , 316.

[142] Cf. Holy Sonnet X, "Death be not proud" (l. 14).

[143] Cf. "there is not a dramme of anger in the anger" with the more consecutive negative anaphoric which circumscribes (and concludes) the second part of Beckett's *Molloy:* "It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining" (London: Picador, 1979), 162; or again, that which circumscribes Borges's "The Secret Miracle": "The drama observed ... The drama has never taken place" (*Labyrinths*, edd. Donald Yates and James Irby, Penguin, 1970, 118-24, 121).

of arguments (however perverse) they do exist."[144] Therefore, Donne warns, "take heed of allowing any of them least y^{o} make another"[145] - that is, "That Nothing Is."[146] Elaine Scarry has noted how frequently in Donne "the verbal unit (word, sentence) is reconceived as a material unit, the page", to reify what she calls "the problematic immateriality of language":

> Rather than conceiving of fitting an object inside a word, or wrapping a sentence around the human body, he reformulates the issue in terms of the page, something that because it is cloth or paper or rag or leaf or vellum itself has sensuous properties.[147]

Neither can the nature of Donne's language be described as etiolated, in the sense that he attributes it, unfavourably, to over-scholastic discussions:

> (as the Word of God hath that precious Nature of Gold, that a little quantity thereof, by reason of a ... tenacity and ductilenes, will be brought to cover 10,000 tymes as much of any other Mettall) they extend it so farre, and labor, and beat it to such a thinnesse, as it is scarse any longer the Word of God, onely to give theyr other Reasons, a litle tincture and colour of Gold, though they have lost all the waight and estimation.[148]

Rather with Donne does reason seek to evict a beginning "forcibly," and the vigorous drive of his written words towards nothingness only asserts more strongly the positive force of rhetoric to "make absent and remote things present to your understanding" (IV.2.87.900-901). Donne strives for a vision of nullification in "a tottering, dejected soule, an overthrowne, a bruised, a broken, a troden, a ground, a battered, an evaporated, an annihilated spirit" (III.12.270.536-8); but the force of the adjectival pile-

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144 A.E. Malloch, "The Technique and Function of the Renaissance Paradox", *SP* 53 (1956) 191-203, 193.

145 Simpson, *A Study*, 316.

146 Malloch's gloss ("The Technique and Function", 192). As Helgerson comments, "a negative term, once endowed with an existential predicate, assumes the character and functions of a positive entity. It becomes an object of thought ... It opens a space that the mind can then furnish" ("Inventing Noplace", 101). So Augustine, to the quibble that "nihil" cannot be a sign, since a sign must signify something, answered that "A certain affection of the mind is signified rather than a thing which is not" (*De magistro*, in *Concerning the Teacher*, II, 7).

147"Donne: 'But yet the body is his booke'", in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1988, 70-105, 75-6.

148 *Biathanatos*, ed. Ernest Sullivan (London and Toronto: Assoc. University Presses, 1984), 110.

up quite defeats the opposing movement towards evaporation. Nothingness is held at bay with a bouldered language.

Neither is this vigour contained within the unbroken hour of one sermon. Donne's frequent modification of his stand on dissolution sets up a running debate that overrides even the silences that separate his deliveries. The subject of the last day's dissolution, for instance, evokes a corresponding fragmentation of opinion as to the exact nature of the change involved. In the Spring/Summer of 1618, Donne asserts that there will be change, but no dissolution: "those bodies, which shall be alive at the last day, and shall be but changed, and not dissolved in the dust, must receive a glorification there, besides that preservation from dissolution" (II.2.82.379-82). On March 28, 1619, he says that these bodies may undergo change and dissolution (instant disunion and union), but is unwilling to call this death (II.9.204.263-315). By Easter Term, 1620, he is acknowledging change, dissolution and death: "sudden dissolution of body and soul, which is death, and a sudden reuniting of both, which is resurrection, in that instant" (III.3.103.436-8, and ff.). As time passes, he seems to approach increasingly extreme visions of non-being, but just as "this death, this dissolution, this change, is a new creation" (I.4.231.318),[149] so the obsession with it as a topic for debate is directly opposed to the desire for linguistic attenuation.

D. Dissolving World (Matter)

The same ambivalence appears in Donne's well-documented obsession with contemporary dissolution. The world is generally in a state of decay, bound by inferior mortars (V.8.169.44ff). Scarry's material page itself crumbles away to dust, like the human body it emulates:

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[149] See also V.8.169.25-44.

> wet mud walls, that waste away faster, then God meant at first, they should ... this flesh, that is but the loame and plaster of thy Tabernacle ... diseased ... *searcloth* ... dust held together by plaisters; Dissolution and putrefaction is gone over thee alive (II.2.83.396-409).

Flesh returns to dust, its beginning:

> Thy *skinne,* and thy *body* shall be *ground* away, trod away upon the ground ... iron ... ground off of a knife, or axe; ... marble ... worn off of the threshold in the Church-porch by continuall treading ... who knows the revolutions of dust (III.3.105.534-41).

With this dust, we arrive, at last, at nothingness, for "it is the union that makes the man: And therefore when he is disunited, dead, he is none of us, he is no man" (IV.13.332.295-7). Despite the disgust that the process of decay arouses, its end-product is by no means inglorious; dust, sand and ashes become for Donne physical metaphors for the infinite, greatness, and the finally indivisible.[150]

One can never guarantee absolute irreversibility of movement, however; such dusty nothingness can "be recompact again" to solidity (III.3.109.688). Matter passes through states mainly to, but also occasionally from nothingness in Donne's imagery.[151] Solid matter becomes liquid: either by implication, with a body vomiting (III.10.237.457ff) or bleeding itself forth (III.6.163.250ff),[152] or directly, with Christ "dissolved ... into a gelly of blood in thine agony" (II.1.70.793-4); but against this Christly dissolution, liquid may also cede to solidity through worldly experience: "that melting ... that thawing, that resolving of the bowels" come to "a spunge dried up into a Pumice stone; the lightnesse, the hollownesse of a spunge is there still, but ... dried in the

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[150] I.9.315.520-34; III.1.57.381-3; IV.2.66-7 - so Blake's "heaven in a grain of sand". Cf. Guibbory, who sees dissolution as "a loss of original wholeness or unity" (*The Map of Time,* 74), rather than the regaining of an original non-being (*Genesis* 2.7). The deduction that Donne's "concern with ... the continual disintegration in time" - Guibbory's thesis - explains his "seemingly obsessive detailing of the process of the body's decay in the grave" (75) is circular; ironically, since it rests on the theory that Donne's view of history is non-cyclical and linear.

[151] See Carey, *Life, Mind and Art,* on the volatility of Donne's matter (160ff).

[152] Cf. Henry King's *Sermon of Deliverance, Preached at the Spittle on Easter Monday, 1626* (London, 1626): Christ "was not only Exinanitus, emptied and devested of his divine Attributes, but Evacuated in a literall, corporeal sense, Evacuated and Poured out" (22).

Aetnaes of lust, of ambition, of other flames in this world" (IV.13.339.556-61). Through the familiar figure of gold (God), solid becomes "aery"; "whilest it is in the mine, in the bowels of the earth, is good for nothing, and when it is out, and beaten to the thinnesse of leaf-gold, it is wasted, and blown away, and quickly comes to nothing" (III.5.148.536-8). Indeed, it is presented as metals' natural tendency in the progress towards purification to evaporate:

> in transmutation of metals, it is not enough to come to a calcination, or a liquefacion of the metall, (that must be done) nor to an Ablution, to sever drosse from pure, nor to a Transmutation, to make it a better metall, but there must be a Fixion, a settling thereof, so that it shall not evaporate into nothing (V.15.314.678-82).

However, air also becomes solid, via liquid: "ayre condensed into water, and that into earth" (III.10.227.88). And, as we have seen, words too can acquire solidity.

In these contradictory tendencies, one can trace Donne's natural fear of all that nothingness represents: the battle that swings between language and its non-linguistic goal, between text and silence, the originating obligation to express and the destined nothing to be expressed (God, the empty scream in Beckett). As Helen Gardner saw, "Donne was a man of strong passions, in whom an appetite for life was crossed by a deep distaste for it".[153] Of course there are the negative comments on nothingness, the attempts to convert air into solidity, and the perception of it as a real threat remarked upon by the generality of critics. As Donne later quoted Plato:

> Man had an eternall not beeing before the Creation; so he would have another eternall not-being after his dissolution by death, in soule, as well as in body, if God did not preserve that beeing ... for that beeing which he seemes to have here now, it is a continuall declination into a not being, because he is in continuall change, and mutation ... Every change and mutation bends to a not beeing, because in every change, it comes to a not being that which it was before; onely the name of God is *I am* (VIII.5.144.523ff: 144.537-145.547).[154]

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153 "The Religious Poetry of John Donne", in *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Helen Gardner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1962), 123-36, 134.

154See Smith, "Moments of Being", 7-8, and Robert Watson generally on the Renaissance fear of annihilation (*"The Rest is Silence": Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance*, Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1994; ch. 5 on Donne).

But if change is the nursery of this sort of eternity, an "eternall not beeing", it is also associated with "musicke, joy, life" ("Elegie III", ll. 35-6).[155] Besides, as Carey points out, Donne need not have subscribed at all to this less orthodox view of the soul's dependence on God for its being; his situation of it on the constant brink of extinction rather reveals "the appeal of annihilation".[156] Donne's stand against nothingness is inconsistent, and the reason it cannot be integrated is that even his ground for rejection contains seeds of ambiguity. In some places, he denies Plato's premise altogether, announcing that a return to not being is impossible[157] - either logically ("since Nothing was not a pre-existent matter, nor mother of this All, but onely a limitation when any thing began to be; how impossible is it to return to that first point of time")[158] - or faithfully ("There was a time when I was nothing; but there never shall be any time, when I shall be nothing" [VI.11.227.151-3]). Certainly, he asserts, it is impossible for anyone to *desire* it: "It is a state (if a man may call it a state) that the Devil himself in the midst of his torments, cannot wish. No man can, the Devil himself cannot, advisedly, deliberately wish himself to be nothing" (IV.3.101.433-5).[159] Yet having said this, he speaks of people who do: "That Man chusing his own destruction" in *Genesis*, who "did what he could to annihilate himself again, and yet received a ... Redeemer";[160] and we ourselves, who

> seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
> Of nothing hee made us, and we strive too,
> To bring our selves to nothing backe.[161]

When it comes down to it, though no-one can wish it, everyone does; like gold itself, we are

> All trying by a love of littlenesse

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[155]And see Carey generally on "Change" (chapter 6 of *Life, Mind and Art*).

[156]*Life, Mind and Art*, 158.

[157]II.11.247.449-248.474; II.11.236.35-7.

[158]*Essays*, 31.37-32.40.

[159]See also IV.2.85.828-86.841, and *Essays*, 30.33ff.

[160]*Essays*, 14 .29-31.

[161]*The first Anniversary*, ll. 155-7 (see p. 21 above).

To make abridgements, and to draw to lesse,
Even that nothing, which at first we were.[162]

This all-embracing generalization, just as much as its all-excluding obverse, must be read alongside the doctrine that man's natural inclination is to God; not least in the light of Donne's approval of Tertullian: "Thou that wast once nothing, wast made this that thou art now; and when thou shalt be nothing againe, thou shalt be made better then thou art yet" (III.3.97.225-8). According to this, the return to nothing is both certain and welcome, whether one take the last two clauses as marking the same future state (nothing, which will be better than present substance), or as Tertullian meant it, a successive process (from present substance to nothing to something better than present substance); but however we read it, nothing is either an apotheosis or the means to it.

It is the engagement of the two tendencies in Donne's thought, the attraction to both air and solid, material and immaterial, which determines the metaphysical struggle to incarnate thought and make God visible, and which justifies itself by reference to Aquinas's argument that "men come to understand even non-corporeal truths only through a process of abstraction from corporeal images".[163] Donne's attempts to incorporate the definitively incorporeal, to contain infinity within a physically bounded text by progressively compressing and reducing space, are a case in point. Since a state of infinite expansion cannot be visualized by the mind, Donne instead zeroes in on its infinitesimal obverse. Less is more, and the smallest unit becomes the greatest, a point being both visible and yet infinitely immeasurable.[164] Numerology provides a similar

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[162]"To the Countesse of Salisbury", ll. 19-21. See also Carey on "A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day" (*Life, Mind and Art*, 158); for his discussion of Donne's confusion on this issue, see pp. 159-160, and for an association of it with Donne's suicidal tendencies, pp. 190-200.

[163] Compare III.3.110.724-8 and see Noralyn Masselink, "Donne's Epistemology and the Appeal to Memory," *JDJ* 8 (1989) 57-88, 58: pp. 61-75 discuss Donne's sense-orientated epistemology. Masselink ranks Donne with Aristotle-Aquinas (as we would expect from the similar notion of visible infinities they hold; see pp. 33ff above) and against Augustine, who holds man to be capable of imageless thought.

[164] Its substance, that is to say, remains infinite while its dimensions are apprehensible, thus fitting it to human sight: "our mortal eyes do not see bodies here; they see no *substance*, they see onely *quantities*, and dimensions" (IV.6.168.184-5).

way of embodying inconceivable abstracts, and Donne frequently uses the number seven to encapsulate the uncountable.[165]

More strongly still, God is to be rendered 'sensible to feeling, as to sight'.[166] To portray God as angry, jealous or inebriated provides no insight into his nature, but such metaphors do provide what Laurence Stapleton calls, "the pleasure of concreteness in an otherwise abstract discourse".[167] The ultimate concreteness is the Word made flesh:

> God evermore supplies his Church with visible and sensible meanes, and knowing the naturall inclination of man, when he cannot have, and cannot comprehend the originall, and prototype, to satisfie, and refresh himself with a picture, or representation; So ... hee hath afforded us his Sonne, who is the image of the invisible God, and so more proportionall unto us, more apprehensible by us (II.15.320.331-8).[168]

Donne keeps the incarnation before our reading eyes in the extraordinarily visceral nature of his imagery.[169] As with the "negative or destructive conception of nothing" that David Willbern discerns in Shakespeare's plays, where "the sheer fact of their existence as dramatic works that re-present negation is an assertion of potency", so "the image-making power" of Donne's descriptions of evacuation "provides a positive balance to the images of negation they construct".[170] Lazarus, "long dead, and buried, and in probability, putrefied after foure daies" (IV.13.326.92-3), is an excuse for detailed (or itself fragmented) discussion of bodily dissolution - "a sinner putrefied in his owne earth, resolv'd in his owne dung" and stinking at some length (IV.13.326.103-4). To this, we may add the gruesome account of the drained martyr, "pickled, nay embalmed in bloud, salted with fire, and preserved in his owne ashes ... his body is upon the rack, when the rags are in his throat, when the boots are upon his legs, when

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165 II.3.108.494-5; II.4.127.304-7; II.6.146.75-80; IV.11.295.437-57; V.14.271.114-19.

166 See II.15.319.311-330.340.

167 *The Elected Circle*, 27.

168 See also V.8.176.311-13; III.17.356.319-20.

169 See Carey on "Bodies" in *Life, Mind and Art* (121ff).

170 Willbern, "Shakespeare's Nothing," 257. Dirt, in a sense, is the only positive evidence against nothingness of life ever having existed: "thou passest out of the world, as thy hand passes out of a basin of water, which may bee somewhat the fouler for thy washing in it, but retaines no other impression of thy having been there" (IV.5.149.139-42).

the splinters are under his nailes" (V.2.66.316-20); and the still revolting "vomit in a bason" passage, where blood vessels break under pressure to leave the body spewing forth blood as well as vomit (III.10.237.457ff). In all these descriptions, the body is broken down and dissolved; yet, as Carey says, Donne is "so repelled by death and its nothingness, that he persistently and ingeniously animates it in his art".[171] Words are made flesh over and over again, as the body intrudes insistently into argument:

> Here a bullet will aske a man, where's your arme; and a Wolf wil ask a woman, where's your breast? A sentence in the Star-chamber will aske him, where's your ear, and a months close prison wil aske him, where's your flesh? (III.3.113.814-17)

Besides these verbal pictures, there is specific *ut pictura poesis* (II.11.237.90-95).[172] Here a fine line must be drawn between the convenience and blasphemy of "a counterfait Creation" (IV.2.87.902). "Refreshing oneself with a picture or representation" is also the definition of idolatry - and this accusation could be levelled not only at Donne's textual pictures, but the underlying incarnation.[173] If God cannot be concrete man, then Christ is an Idol of flesh. Donne shows his awareness of the dangers of this logic; despite "that slippery, and frivolous, and dangerous use of graven Images, *yet* hee hath afforded us his Sonne, who is the image of the invisible God" (II.15.320.335-7). To guard against such accusations, he often reminds us of the limits on what can be represented: "No pencil can present to us"

> that excrementall jelly that thy body is made of at first, and that jelly which thy body dissolves to at last; there is not so noysome, so putrid a thing in nature" (III.3.105.521-4).

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[171]Carey, *Life, Mind and Art,* 215 (and see chapter 7 on "Death"); also Watson on this feature of Renaissance thought generally (*"The Rest is Silence"*, 40-3).

[172] For preachers' use of emblems to make the abstract concrete, see Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), 62; on Donne, see Josef Lederer, "John Donne and the Emblematic Practice", *RES* 22 (1946) 182-200. So widespread was the practice of rendering religious principles in visual terms, that in 1626, *The Soules Solace or Thirtie and One Spiritual Emblems* was published, consisting of pictures based on descriptions drawn from sermons (Freeman, *English Emblem Books,* 87).

[173]As Paul Harland remarks, "The question of idolatry, is, of course, a question of what is the appropriate image by which man may respond to God" ("Imagination and Affections in Donne's Preaching", *JDJ* 6 (1) (1987) 33-50, 37). He goes on to discuss, not only the dangers of the imagination, but the useful purposes to which Donne puts it.

E. "Things Which Are Not"

> For I am every dead thing,
> In whom love wrought new Alchimie.
> For his art did expresse
> A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
> From dull privations, and lean emptinesse:
> He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
> Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not.
>
> ("Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies Day", ll. 12-18)

The sensible, the visible, the written image - the written word itself - thus counteract and define the search for the nothingness. Within his writing, Donne considers those senseless states which manage to abjure these worldly signs. Darkness hides the written word, so it is associated with silence which excludes the spoken word: "light out of darkness, is Musick out of silence" (IV.3.103.515-16).[174] Darkness also erases physical presence, and so can relate to departure, or perceived absence - thus the soul "hath no light but lightnings; a sodain flash of horror first, and then he goes into fire without life" (II.11.239.166-7). This image comes from Donne's 'valediction' sermon, preached before his sailing to Germany in 1619, and in it, he further connects loss of physical presence with death: "In my long absence, and far distance from hence, remember me ... remember me, not my abilities ... That if I never meet you again till we have all passed the gate of death, yet in the gates of heaven, I may meet you all ..." (II.11.248.477-500).[175] The final line of the sermon ends on an absence: strikingly imminent in the original - "we shall meet and never part. But here we must" - but only implicit in the emended, printed version's silent omission of the last four words.

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[174]Conversely, light and noise, are compared with one another: "A sodain *light* brought into a room doth awaken some men; but yet a *noise* does it better, and a *shaking*, and a *pinching*" (IV.8.211.40-2) cf. "As lightning or a Tapers light,/Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd mee" ("The Dreame", ll. 11-12).

[175] See also Gosse, I.290: "there is a Religion in friendship, and a death in absence"; and the "Valedictions" generally.

Behind all these absences is the worst of all: the horror of Hell, which is "the everlasting absence of God, and the everlasting impossibility of returning to his presence" (V.13.266.773-4). Yet this is not the same as nothingness; Hell is not another way of saying Heaven, and the absence of God is not God. On the one hand, complete loss of the senses may be termed a fearful nothing:

> *sicknesse* is nothing, and *death* is nothing: for, death hath no reality, no creation, death is but a privation, and *damnation*, as it is the everlasting losse of the sight and presence of God, is but a privation. And therefore as we fear death, and fear damnation, though in discourse, and in disputation, we can make a school-shift, to call them *nothing*, and but privations, so let us fear sin too, for all this imaginary *nothingnesse*, which the heat of the School hath smoak'd it withall (II.3.99.166-173).

On the other hand, sin is only an "imaginary *nothingnesse*" that in reality is everywhere, that called forth a bloody sacrifice (V.3.80.95ff) and that threatens if so dismissed to call forth another.[176] For it is essential to Donne's belief that so-called "senseless states", damnation and death - the Death that is final - are *not* emblems of nothing, that they in fact have what he calls "a sensible addition" (III.1.51.148). For all the negative (but as Carey points out, irresistible)[177] images of gold, "wasted, and blowne away, and quickly come[ ] to nothing" (III.5.148.538), for all the threat of impending annihilation, Donne admits finally that "men are not so much affrighted with this returning to nothing, for they could be content to vanish at last and turn to nothing ... there appears an ease to them, if their souls might come to nothing" (III.1.51.131-5).[178] Hell therefore is rather to present "not onely vanity, but affliction, vexation, too. It will be nothing at last, it ends; but it is vexation too, that shall never end" (III.1.51.150-2). The state of impenitibleness it embodies is one of "immortal torment" (II.11.247.449ff: 455) -

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[176] As Reeves comments of this passage,"this nothing is to be feared in that it does have a place in the hierarchy of being" (*Index*, I, 22-3). See also Itrat Husain on Donne's sin as privation, but not negation (*The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne*, London and N.Y.: Macmillan, 1938, 87-91).

[177] *Life, Mind and Art*, 172.

[178] Cf. *Richard II*: "But what'er I be, /Nor I, nor any man that but man is,/ With nothing shall be pleas'd till he be eas'd/ With being nothing" (V.5.38-41) - and see Carey, *Life, Mind and Art*, 160.

indefinable, but indefinably sensible: "In that State, (it is not a State) in that Exinanition, in that annihilation of the soule, (it is not an annihilation, the soule is not so happy as to come to nothing) but in that misery, which can no more receive a name, then an end" (V.16.336.669-72).[179]

"The soule is not so happy as to come to nothing", although from time to time Donne does situate this event in Heaven - "betwixt us and heaven, there is nothing that *rests* ... and so the Joyes of heaven are express'd unto us, in that name of *Rest*" (V.9.193.319ff: 319-22): that is, in the name of that nothing . Life admits of no rest, being "fluid, and transitory, and moveable" (V.10.209.395-6); Donne must begin, and begin again. Neither can the soul rest in the grave, "because it is not sensible of that lying still; in heaven the body shall rest, rest in the sense of that glory" (V.10.213.571-3). Paradoxically, true nothingness must be essentially felt. In the meantime, this is "a rest, a Sabbath, for which we must labor" (II.12.268.650-1). The text is linear and end-focussed; words speak for and towards silence, and "all Motion is for Rest" (V.17.363.920). That is, to reach "our true Rest" *requires* the contradiction of service and activity. Thus Donne distinguishes Tertullian's praise of rest:

> he speakes not onely of the things of this world, they must necessarily be car'd for, in their proportion; we must not decline the businesses of this life, and the offices of society, out of an aery, and imaginary affection of *rest*; our principall rest is, in the testimony of our *Conscience*, and in doing that which we were sent to doe (V.9.193.365-70; also I.10.227.511-37).

By writing and by surviving to write, by writing towards nothing but never quite into it, Donne claims to "have earned bread in the sweat of my browes, in the labor of my calling".[180] Life and the instinctive fear of death are thus justified.[181]

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[179] With the postmodernist loss of a distinctive afterlife, this hell is displaced into life, into the unceasing Sartrean labour of self-creation. Beckett's torment is the inability to end, his condemnation to "dye an everlasting life, and live an everlasting death" (V.13.267.806). (Watson notes too the insistence on a sensible as opposed to insensible damnation, but in line with his thesis that annihilation is the true unequivocal threat (rather than a *goal* to be distinguished), sees such a Hell as a form of reassurance: *"The Rest is Silence"*, 40-3).

[180] 2M: 12.2-5.

[181] Interestingly, Gosse describes Donne's condition during the illness of the *Devotions* as "a morbid cerebral activity; the patient cannot rest, cannot 'think of nothing.'" Instead, he is

The difference between robustly pursuing the "blessed nullification" of Heaven through this sort of labour and merely presenting an inactive earthly image of it can be clarified by examining Donne's attitude to monasticism. Essentially, the failure to labour is seen as critical: "he may be as inexcusable at the last day, that hath done *Nothing* in the world, as hee that hath done *some ill"* (V.10.206.305-6). Not only do monks do nothing, "God shal make them in the world to come, *nullanos*, nothing at all" (I.3.209.977-8).[182] This *nullanos* is no longer "some lovely glorious nothing" ("Aire and Angels", l. 6), the Godlike object of the "desire to be *Nothing* at all" (II.1.53.154) shared by the monks and Donne himself. Instead it becomes a term of abuse, as Donne accuses monks of ingratitude (II.1.53.153-4) and even allegorical suicide (I.3.210.986-7) in their premature assumption of the "Joyes of heaven." Yet the path towards annihilation undertaken by the monks is very similar to Donne's own. He describes how the Ignorantes gave way to the Minorites, and how these gave way to the Minimes; finally, "another Sect went beyond all ... and called themselves, *Nullanos*, Nothings. But yet, even these Diminutives ... as little, as lesse, as least, as very nothing as they professe themselves, lie under this disease [of contentiousness]" (II.14. 298.401-6). Like Donne, the monks attempt to shrink themselves progressively into the infinite, but in them, it is a blasphemous reversal of Creation to implode back thus into Chaos and womb: "whereas he produced every thing out of nothing, to be something, thou wilt go so far back, towards nothing againe, as to be good for nothing" (III.15.329.594-6).[183] Like Donne, they seek to divide themselves piecemeal, "These chippings of the world, these fragmentary and incoherent men" (III.15.329.602-3). But their attempts fail, like Donne's, even for the same reason. Although Donne accuses them of a "damnable humility" in undervaluing themselves as goods (I.1.158.260), this humility is also a form of pride; in their very name, a definition by relation, the *nullanos* contentiously elevate themselves above the Minorites and

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"acutely conscious of his condition and anxious to be talking or writing," in what Gosse calls a state of "diseased vivacity" (II.182) - clinging feverishly to life against all prospect of the annihilation to come.

[182] See also IV.3.120.1131ff.

[183] Cf. pp. 47-8 above.

Minims (III.4.115.33-41). The assertion of nothingness is the same expression of ego we find in Donne's language.

The significant difference, as I have indicated, is the *premature* assumption of the Origin; "Our soul is not sent hither, only to go back again: we have some errand to do here"[184] in the sweat of our brows, some labour "in the world".[185] In Arendt's critique of early Christian worldlessness, "the potentiality of human beginnings is directed towards the world ... Thus, natality is disclosed as an entirely world-oriented (that is, worldly) phenomenon whose capacity for beginning anew ideally is for the sake or the durability and futurity of the world we hold in common".[186] One has a duty to the world, and withdrawal from it, even for God, leads to a nothingness that is vain: "I devest my selfe of all worldly thoughts, and I bend all my powers, and faculties upon God, as I think, and suddenly I finde my selfe scattered, melted, fallen into vaine thoughts, into no thoughts; I am upon my knees, and I talke, and thinke nothing" (V.13.249.168-71). It is this nothingness that Donne rails against when he asserts, "There is nothing more contrary to God, and his proceedings, then annihilation, to Bee nothing, Do nothing, Think nothing" (IV.2.85.818-20); this nothingness he calls "*less then nothing*" (III.1.50.126), and a debased insensibility: "indolencie, absence, emptinesse, privation of affections, make any man at all times, like stones, like dirt" (IV.13.330.211-13). Donne's own period of enforced inactivity at Mitcham shows his frustration with this kind of withdrawal, and may well have led him to distinguish between ideal Rest with God and its foolish human anticipation. On September 7, 1608, he wrote to Sir Henry Goodyer:

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184 Gosse, II.9.

185 See, for example, I.3.209.981-210.297; II.10.227.514-9; III.6.169.473-6 . This labour need not be physical, so long as it is *useful*; thus Donne criticizes actions that amount to nothing (III.8.200.504-201.509), while approving of the acquisition of knowledge (V.16.323.194-7). We might compare here St Augustine's condemnation of curiosity and yet his speculations on the divine, with Donne's search for a knowledge of origins while criticizing curiosity. Sister M. Geraldine distinguishes in Donne's work between knowledge that is useful, and knowledge that is misdirected, in "John Donne and the Mindes Indeavours" (*SEL* 5 (1965) 115-31). Schwartz suggests similarly that it depends on the speaker's attitude; a search for origins for the purpose of praise (rather than mastery) is laudable wisdom, and not idle curiosity (*Remembering and Repeating*, 40-59; Hirsch applies a similar argument to reason in "Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 88).

186 Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality*, 2.

> to choose is to do; but to be no part of any body is to be nothing. At most the greatest persons are but great wens and excrescences; men of wit and delightful conversation but as moles for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world that they contribute something to the sustenation of the whole ... for to this hour I am nothing, or so little that I am scarce subject and argument good enough for one of mine own letters.[187]

Donne believed that God lay in a nothingness that must nonetheless be asserted, the inexpressible he had still to attempt to express. For nothingness in Donne's terms comes to include its opposite in that, through the contradiction (and duty) of language, it emerges as a positive concept: "even chimeras have some name and titles".[188] In a very literal sense, "Poetry ... makes things that are not, as though they were" (IV.2.87.902-3). Nothingness, in Donne's terms that are no terms, is indefinable only through definition - it "is not enough to receive a definition; it is so absolutely nothing, as that we cannot tell you, what it is" (III.1.49.56-8) - and it is precisely what is lost in dutiful discussion; to be "subject and argument" of one of his letters is still to be something. The attempt to begin, to return to nothingness, that defeats itself and so creates the possibility of realization, requires an active engagement with the world on all levels. To quote Arendt again,

> action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting. In this sense of initiative, an element of action, and therefore of natality, is inherent in all human activities. Moreover, since action is the political activity par excellence, natality ... may be the central category of political, as distinguished from metaphysical, thought.[189]

My next chapter will look at Donne's attempt to incorporate his nothingness into "the body of the world", and flesh out an active, public role for himself: to begin, not only in the elusive, metaphysical sense but in an equally fluid political arena. The search for a natural origin finds its corollary in Donne's search for the source of authority.

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[187] Gosse, I.191. Such is Donne's self-disgust, he prefaces the letter with a rare excuse for monasticism; compared to himself, "The primitive monks were excusable in their retirings and enclosures of themselves ... they ought the world no more since they consumed none of her sweetness" (190).

[188] Gosse, I.171.

[189] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

CHAPTER TWO

The Art of Politics

In Chapter 1, Donne's approach to the Ministry provided a clue to his attitude to beginnings generally. However, this birth into the Church is more than just a metaphorical index. In its own specific context, it represented for Donne a significant emergence from the nothingness of retirement into "the businesses of this life, and the offices of society ... in doing that which we were sent to doe" (V.9.194.367-71) - a birth, in other words, at once into religious vocation and the public world of duty and responsibility emphasized by Hannah Arendt.[1] That Donne associated Church and State in this way clearly appears from his characteristic attribution of his ordination to the King; as the *Devotions* proclaims, entry into the Ministry is both "Supernatural", and yet sustained and instigated by the Prince's "Royall Father".[2] The conservative argument that 1615 marked Donne's withdrawal from active participation in political life in order to embed himself in the massive and self-contained edifice of Christian doctrine is therefore ill-founded.

This is not to deny the sermons' awareness of conflict between Church and State, of the need to work out a balance between Word and world. Having arrived in Nature, we choose a particular governing system in which to insert ourselves. The passage out is begun, and we must consider the navigation of the course ahead, aligning our journey with chosen stars, locating a guiding authority that will lead and sustain us in the winding search for Truth. Donne had two basic alternatives: he could turn inward for this authority to his own interpretation of the Logos, or he could vest it in the dominant interpretation of the external world. Insofar as he was a writer, his words would

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1 See Chapter 1, pp. 55-6.

2 See I.111, fn. 4, for other references.

consequently either turn in on themselves, or gesture outward to a surrounding context; presenting in the first case, the individual in pursuit of art (the aesthetic text), and in the second, the individual in pursuit of reality (the referential text).

Where in Donne's sermons was authority placed? Since the sermon deals with the communication and not the meditation of truth, we might expect to find in Donne's exhortations a prevailing movement from inner to outer, from the preacher to the public; an unambigous picking out of 'truth' against the complex political fabric of society. But in the reign of a "Royall Father" who was himself styled both James I and VI, the clarities of the Heavenly Father the King represented were frequently compromised. Faced with conflicting realities, Donne was forced to fall back on his own creative resources.

In this chapter, I would like to examine the two directions in which Donne was drawn, and the way in which his exploration of the relationship between word and world, art and truth, was fuelled by, and ultimately fuelled his search for authority.

A. The Bible As Art

> The surface bootlessness of talking about art seems matched by the depth necessity to talk about it endlessly.
>
> Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System", p.1474

The most important work of art Donne discusses in the sermons is the Bible; but what is interesting is that he often tends to discuss it as just precisely that. In the same way that his own poems have been celebrated as self-contained artistic constructs, he proposes a view of "this various, this mingled work" as an architecturally plotted unity; "in the word of God are the words of other men, other authors, inlaid and inserted".

From the diverse "words of prophane Poets" (I.6.253.45) rises one glorious and "*Mosaick* work" (I.6.252.25). Its specific characteristics too, he exalts in artistic or poetic terms:

> There are not so eloquent books in the world, as the Scriptures: Accept those names of Tropes and Figures, which the Grammarians and Rhetoricians put upon us, and we may be bold to say, that in all their Authors, Greek and Latin, we cannot finde so high, and so lively examples, of those Tropes, and those Figures, as we may in the Scriptures; whatsoever hath justly delighted any man in any mans writings, is exceeded in the Scriptures. The style of the Scriptures is a diligent, and an artificial style; and a great part thereof in a musical, in a metrical, in a measured composition, in verse (II.7.170.241-9).[3]

If Virgil was "the King of the Poets" (IV.6.167.133), yet "*David* is a better *Poet*" (IV.6.167.140).[4] It is, moreover, the artistic *process* that again fascinates Donne, the way in which writers (like himself) are "ever inserting into their writing some phrases, some metaphors, some allusions, taken from that profession which they had exercised before" (I.5.236.6-8). So in "Elegie XV", ll. 57-8, he compares himself to "Painters that do take/Delight, not in made worke, but whiles they make". Besides, as Dennis Quinn notes, the sacramental nature of Biblical language favours sublime emphasis on form, construction and style, since discussions of content and theme were limited to grammar, logic, rhetoric and ethics.[5]

Form, firstly, is of primary importance to Donne. He approves of songs, for instance, since their form assists memory,[6] and his favourite texts are David's *Psalms* and Paul's *Epistles*, "written in such forms, as I have been most accustomed to ... Letters, and ... Poems" (II.1.49.21-2). In fact, it is not their familiarity that attracts Donne as much as the purely aesthetic appeal of their

> limited, and ... restrained form ... such a form as is both curious, and requires diligence in the making, and then when it is made, can have nothing, no syllable taken from it, nor added to it ... all the words are numbred, and measured, and weighed (II.1.50.27-34).

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3 See also V.8.177.341-4.

4 A view commonly held: see Regina Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in* Paradise Lost (Cambridge: U.P., 1988), 86-7.

5 "Donne's Christian Eloquence", *ELH* 27 (1960) 276-97, 286.

6 II.7.171.257-67; IV.7.179.9-11; V.8.169.39-40.

Donne's approval of psalms, in other words, is expressed through an appreciation of their closely defined and diligently fashioned form, the metrical exactness he also admires in the "style of the Scriptures" generally.[7] Such formal perfection testifies to the holy integrity of the text, confusing the boundaries between art and religion. To consummate this confusion, Donne also notes the psalm's circular movement from prayer to reasons and back to prayer, the circle being at once form and God.[8]

Style, too, is associated with the message of God. The Bible is both musical "in matter and in manner" (II.7.167.103-4) and ambiguous, rich meanings residing in a "*single word*" (III.8.189.68 and ff). Like assonance, "a musicall and harmonious sound, and agnomination ... a propriety, but with a delicacy, and harmony, and melody of language; with height of Metaphors, and other figures", these qualities "work greater impressions upon the Readers" than "barbarous, or triviall, or market, or homely language" (VI.1.55.599-605).

Although in direct discussion Donne takes care to rank matter above form or style like Augustine before him,[9] his admiration for the artistry of the Bible slips all too easily into interpreting or judging other aspects of it according to artistic criteria, particularly where the matter is by no means clear. This movement can be traced in Donne's attitude towards a minor controversy, the theory of the Fortunate Fall. He begins one discussion of this with his usual disclaimer: it is a "frivolous interogatory, a lost question, an impertinent article, to enquire what God would have done if *Adam* had

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7 Cf. the old view of Donne's carelessness of metre.

8 Pure form can be equated with God, since both exist without content. Paradoxes constitute a logical equivalent, as statements of arguments not themselves arguments: "The argument resists paraphrase because its articulations are verbal and not conceptual. The argument lies only in the particular words of the author". As with the formal perfection of the psalm that guarantees it as the unmediated word of God, " Remove or change those words and the argument vanishes" (A.E. Malloch, "The Techniques and Function of the Renaissance Paradox", *SP* 53 (1956) 191-203, 194). For Rosalie Colie, these are logical rather than simply rhetorical paradoxes (*Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox*, Princeton: U.P., 1966, 6), depending on manner of presentation and self-contradictory ordering to unfold: "no one of its statements could be extracted from its contradictory context" (35). Both paradox and psalm thus acquire the sacred untouchability of Revelation (22: 18-19).

9 See Robert Hickey, "Donne's Art of Preaching", *Tennessee Studies In Literature* 1 (1956) 65-74, 68ff; or Lynette McGrath, "John Donne's Apology for Poetry", *SEL* 20 (1980) 73-89.

stood" (I.9.304.119-21). He then dutifully follows Augustine in regretting the Fall, but there is already a hint of exultation in the assertion that "Christ had not come, if our sins had not occasioned his comming" (I.9.304.103). Eventually he cannot forebear an expression of triumph at so artistically satisfying a consummation: "Let us change all our disputation into thanksgiving ... *Benedictus*, and *Alelujahs* and *Osanna's*" (I.9.304.126-8). Elsewhere he approaches the case more openly: "If man had been made *impeccable* ... he had not been so happy; for then, he could onely have enjoyed that state, in which he was created, and not risen to any *better*" (II.4.123.149-52). He quotes here Augustine's own dictum that "many a man hath been the better for some sin" (II.8.196.598-9), and elsewhere extends the argument: "we may be so much more bold, as to say further, That that man had been damn'd, if he had not sinn'd that sin" (I.2.180.441-3). A Fortunate Fall was more Scripturally just (that is, consistent), more glorious to God and more satisfyingly balanced in structure. It was therefore on these formalist criteria - unity, integrity, balance - that Donne inclined toward it as the best interpretation. But the Bible became thereby its own internally-locked judge; if it could be discussed endlessly, this was because any discussion of it was necessarily circular.

B. The Bible As Truth

> It is a myth that criticism is a disinterested or objective act ... Truth is not our domain.
>
> Jonathan Goldberg, "Recent Studies", p.157

Nonetheless, if the Bible was argued by some to be of considerable literary merit (at least in its later translations), it was also incontrovertibly the source of Christian truth;[10] and, as Donne argued in other contexts, art and truth, art and belief were traditionally

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[10] Therefore we should consider matter over form (VI.1.55.609).

perceived as antithetical. Thus the sermons declared that there was no passage forward from art to truth: "Art is suspicious, and from them who are able to prove anything, we beleeve nothing" (V.2.69.402-3). Nor was there a passage back from truth to art: who could avoid "a suspition, that that is not so absolutely, so undeniably true, that needs so much art, and curiosity, and vehemence to prove it"? (V.14.270.68-70). Poetry lied; its very implications as "a counterfait Creation [that] .... makes things that are not, as though they were" were blasphemous (IV.2.87.902-3).

This attitude has guided many anti-historical analyses of Donne's poetry, which usually justify themselves by referring to Donne's reply to Ker's suggestion that he compose an elegy to the Marquis Hamilton; "I did best when I had least truth for my subjects. In this present case there is so much truth as it defeats all poetry".[11] These proponents of undifferentiated textual play would, however, do better to heed the warning of their deconstructionist heirs: no relation should be allowed to exist in simple opposition. Truth need neither defeat nor exclude poetry, and Donne did actually write "A Hymn to the Saints and to Marquis Hamilton". His disclaimer should be viewed in the same light as the royal commendation of "plainness and sincerity" over eloquence - all couched by that most pedantic of rhetoricians, James I, in the most approved oratorical style.[12] For when he directly addressed the question of the Bible's combination of art and truth, Donne saw no difficulty in imaginatively resolving the two:

> even by the Saints of God, civill behaviour, and faire language is conveniently exercised: A man does not therefore meane ill, because he speakes well ... Harshnesse, and morosity in behaviour, rusticity, and coorsenesse of language, are no arguments in themselves, of a plaine, and a direct meaning, and of a simple heart (III.5.136.81-94).

In fact, the formal perfection of the Gospel to and from which no words could be added or subtracted was, as we have seen, partly what guaranteed it as the "uniforme, and irrepugnant, and indivisible" source of truth.

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[11] Gosse, II.215.

[12] See Arthur Wilson, *The History of Great Britain, being the life and reign of King James I* (1603) (London, 1653), 25 .

But the main objective argument for Biblical truth was typological,[13] founded "not upon imaginations of thine owne, not upon fancies of others, nor pretended inspirations, nor obtruded Miracles, but upon the word" (I.8.294.336-8). Further examination, however, undermines the distinction. Meaning could still not be guaranteed, because in the event it depended on the word as humanly translated.[14] This gave rise to a plethora of different 'truths' (e.g. I.1.151ff) - in the Psalms, for instance, Donne noted "6000 places, in which ... translation differs from the Originall" (II.5.131.22-3). Such variants could sometimes be ingeniously reconciled,[15] but often it was impossible to distinguish error from truth.

To counter this, Donne argued that such errors might be useful.[16] They might even lead, for St Augustine, to greater truth: "yet that which he collected even by that errour, was true" (III.1.49.85).[17] Alternatively, an obviously inaccurate statement in the Bible could still be "formally true" (I.9.316.571) if it was uttered in good faith - thus Paul was right to call himself the "greatest sinner" (I.9.316.548), since he at least believed this to be true. Here it is not only Paul who abandons "conscious deliberation",[18] but Donne. We are threatened with the dangers of relativity, where truth is merely the function of an individual's subjective judgment.

Nor is this an occasional lapse, inspired by the desire to justify Paul. Throughout the early sermons runs the implicit conviction that truth in the Bible can be decided through artistic licence.[19] Such artistry may express itself through neatness of epigrammatical wit, or in terms of practical convenience that gratify the aesthetic desire

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13 See I.8.289-91, on its "infallible marks" (I.8.291.228).

14 See III.15.314.59-316.129 for Donne's keen awareness of the slipperiness of translation.

15 *Job* 13.15, for instance, could be translated conflictingly; Donne supplies a missing interrogative which bridges the gap, and brings the variants to agree (III.8.189.64-90).

16 III.6.166.373-5; II.3.110.555-6.

17 This procedure was well-attested in the *quaestio disputata* -- see Malloch for this form's relation to Donne's paradoxicality ("The Techniques and Function", 196ff).

18 Potter and Simpson, I, 146.

19 See Laurence Stapleton, *The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose* (Princeton: U.P.,1973), 18.

for holism. Thus with the Evangelists' conflicting accounts of the Crucifixion, it is "truer" to assume one thief guilty and pardoned than not guilty at all, firstly because we thus "leave him to the mercy of God, rather then the wit of Man", and secondly, because "perchance, we shall lack an example of a notorious Blasphemer, and reviler of Christ, to be effectually converted to salvation ... except this thief be our example" (I.6.258.238-44). Then again artistry may inhere purely in style, as where Irenaeus thought one Angel to be Christ, and "expressed it so elegantly, as it is almost pity, if it be not true" (III.5.140.239-40).

Truth is thus rendered openly flexible or "ductile": "Gods mercy ... yeelds almost any forme of words, any words seeme to fit it" (V.18.369.189-90). Deprived of its objective status, it becomes subject to the "mercy" of verbal and thematic needs that may change - "so are wee ... to fit our Doctrine to the apprehension, and capacity, and digestion of the hearers" (II.13.276.267-9) - or even conflict (for example, Donne's widely varying interpretations of the Last Day). Fact in other words is dependent on context, and our external referent is again subsumed by the text (the context in the case of the Bible being textual). The loss of this implied defining frame results again in confusion; coherence and sequence lose all relevance, origins and conclusions cannot be found and the 'end' result is that terms invert as easily as otherwise: truth becomes a function of literary power. Having claimed that because the Bible is truer than other religious sources, its language is more powerful (VI.1.56.632-45), Donne is just as ready to claim elsewhere that the Bible's superior literary strength to "other pretended Scriptures, Alcoran or Talmud" is evidence for its likelier truth (I.8.298.493-4). "Beauty is truth" succeeds "truth, beauty", and we are left, after all, with an inescapable and isolated circle of art that is self-regarding, self-referential and self-justifying.[20] The word once more swallows up the world.

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[20] Returning us to the bare circumference of a paradox; cf. the crisis facing intellectual history today. Greenblatt's forebears have so successfully ungrounded the field as to make "historical truth an instance of rhetorical *figuration*", depriving the discipline of its coherence and identity (Hans Kellner, "Triangular Anxieties: The Present State of European Intellectual History", in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New*

That Donne recognizes the dangers of solipsism is clear. He sums up its incongruities in the absurd image of Antipodeans falling upwards to Heaven.[21] In this vision of judgment, the imposition of his own, immovable perspective as a measure of all results in his re-placing God; rooting himself at an absolute centre without absolutes, he has moved heaven rather than earth.[22] The correct attitude is to move in relation to the constant point of God above and adopt a changing perspective of self [23]- which brings us back to a rule of art: "as a well made, and well-plac'd picture, looks alwayes upon him that lookes upon it; so shall thy God look upon thee" (II.11.237.93-5). How is this? As "a well made, and well placed Picture in a Gallery looks upon all that stand in severall places of the Gallery, in severall lines, in severall angles" (V.15.299.115-17). Paradoxically, God can be seen only from many different positions, where none are uniquely privileged.[24] Self-flexibility and an empathy with Antipodean perspectives - extending even to doubt amidst belief - are actually necessary to establish an unchanging and objective point of reference in God's absolute. One might argue further that for God

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Perspectives, edd. Dominick LaCapra and Steven Kaplan, Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1982, 111-36, 114 and *passim*).

[21] Compare Donne - "those men that hang upon the other cheek of the face of the earth, those Antipodes, whose feet are directly against ours ... that walk with feet opposed in wayes, contrary to the ways of men"(IV.1.59.510-16) - with Robert Horne's more sententious version: "where the wicked as *Antipodes* goe against the footings of it, to walke with it in a right path" (*Of the Rich Man and Lazarus*, London, 1619, $S4^{v}$). Donne may have borrowed the image in March 1621/22, since Horne's account of toothache ($L4^{r}$) also appears in the *Devotions* (23M: 17-18).

[22] Cf. Goldberg's description of Coriolanus, "as absolute as the State" - "alone and solitary, silent, self-banished, sealed up in himself" - he is "the ultimate solipsist" who consumes the world (*James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and Their Contemporaries*, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1983, 186-93).

[23] Cusanus insisted in *De docta ignorantia* on the relativity of perspective, with God alone at a metaphysical centrum. He used a similar example to warn against human arrogance: "as the antipodes have, like ourselves, the sky above them, so to those who are in the poles ... the earth will appear to be in the zenith, and wherever the observer be he will believe himself to be in the center" (Alexander Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1957, 16ff). Plato, too, cited the Antipodes to show the relativity of 'above' and 'below' (*Timaeus*, trans. Desmond Lee, Penguin, 1977), 88-90.

[24] So "The Church is a Hill, and that is conspicuous naturally; but the Church is such a Hill, as may be seene every where" (V.13.251.214-6); or from "Satire III", "hee that will/ Reach her, about must, and about must goe" (ll. 80-1). Hannah Arendt replaces God with the ideal "reality of the public realm"; this also "relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself and for which no common measurement or denominator can ever be devised" (*The Human Condition*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958, 57). Elsewhere, Arendt confesses that modern relativism, with its flexible points of reference, has its origins in seventeenth-century theory (262-4).

to be absolute, man must perforce run the risk of constant doubt. This is the justification for the Christian paradox of unfixing "truth" for Truth: "Onely in this way, I am a holy lier, and in this the God of truth will reward my lie; for, if I say my sins are mine own, they are none of mine" (II.3.102.259-61). "Real" Truth exists only beyond the lapsed world, sensed as the silence outside the locked, circular structure of the text (man's subjective truth) that gives it definition and value.

So how futile are our attempts to distinguish truth in terms other than artistic? *Is* this all we know on earth and all we need to know? In some ways, Donne seems to subscribe to Hobbes's restriction of "true" and "false" to attributes of speech; "things that are not" are, like mistranslations, merely (and possibly usefully) errors.[25] Even Spanish theologians, "though they do not show us the best way to heaven, yet they think they do. And so, though they say not true, yet they do not lie, because they speak their conscience".[26] This justification of untrue speech as genuine error and so "correctly" in line with the dictates of individual conscience plunges Donne into the thick of the private reason argument.

The position he takes here towards the Catholics in Spain is interestingly the same as that taken by the Catholics in England, in defence of their refusal to take the Oath of Allegiance.[27] The Jesuit leader Robert Persons insisted on the principle that "Schismatiks and heretiks though they be bound both to informe and reforme their conscience that be erroneous; yet so long as that repugnancy indureth they should sinne in doing contrary to the *dictamen* thereof".[28] Donne writes similarly: "it is sin to do against the conscience, though that err".[29] 'Personal' truth came thus from individual conscience - as Donne put it, "Let thine owne conscience be thine evidence, and thy

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[25] *Leviathan*, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge: U.P., 1904), I.4 (17) .

[26] Gosse, II. 176.

[27] See Thomas Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers: The Allen-Persons Party and the Political Thought of the Counter-Reformation in England, 1572-1615* (Chicago: Loyola U.P., 1964), 142-7.

[28] *Papist Pamphleteers*, 157.

[29] Gosse, I.171.

Rolls, and not the opinion of others" (IV.12.322.723-4). The dangerous subjectivism inherent in this stance was attacked by La Boétie,[30] and Donne too, on occasion, chose rather to highlight the implications of his Antipodean image: "It is a dangerous preterition, not to bring a mans self into Consideration; but to consider no man but himself, to make himself the measure of all, is as dangerous" (I.4.228.208-229.211). He was aware, therefore, of the difficulties and inconsistencies involved in upholding private reason. Although the thesis of *Biathanatos* insists that "a private man is Emperour of himselfe",[31] and although it inspired a lengthy attack from John Adams in 1700 for its flawed relativistic reasoning (to live according to nature, "A Man cannot *do so safely, without some Rule*, and that Rule must be *universal publick Reason*; and unless every private Man's Reason be squar'd accordingly, it can never be right")[32] - Donne had never actually denied the "false thread" that bound his thesis, and there is a good case to argue for his deliberate perversity.

In another early work, too, he had argued officially against the Catholic position on the Oath of Allegiance, but still using techniques associated with casuistical literature. As A. E. Malloch shows, Donne was fascinated by legal casebooks and their suggestion that it was possible to assent to several mutually exclusive courses of action at once.[33] This allowed a moral agent to assume multiple masks and roles, and thus offered the individual a freedom and diversity Donne must have found appealing.[34] Release from personal judgment was granted - Malloch defines the doctrine of the probable opinion as "a banishing of the self from moral action, and a substituting of extrinsic and non-personal modes of judgment".[35] Departing from the notion of a single,

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30 *Papist Pamphleteers,* 156.

31 Its "emotional heart" resides, as John Carey says, in Donne's "defiance of law and his assertion of individual autonomy" (*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber, 1981, 191).

32 Adams, *An Essay Concerning Self-murther* (1700), 90; see George Williamson, "The Libertine Donne", *PQ* 13 (1934) 276-91, 280ff.

33 "John Donne and the Casuists", *SEL* 2 (1961) 57-76, 74-6.

34 "John Donne and the Casuists", 67.

35 "John Donne and the Casuists", 68.

incontrovertible truth gave rise to the reassurance of multiple, infinitely adjusted truths, which in each case seemed objectively determined.

Nonetheless, the probable opinion for all its fascination derived this apparent status merely from multiplied subjectivity. If one person's belief was as likely to be right as wrong, the probability of a group of people's belief being true remained the same. Original sin tainted all mankind, and Donne had equal difficulty in believing one opinion as another.[36] Formal truth again raised its dubious head. In one place, Donne cites Tertullian's condemnation of the double perspective of secular philosophers, who deny the evidence of their own poets as to the frivolousness of their gods, calling them "but vaine, and frivolous Poets" in such cases, "But when those Authors speake anything which sound against our Religion, then they are Philosophers, and reverend and classique Authors" (V.2.68.384-6). Tertullian concludes, they are "beleeved when they lye, better then when they say true" (V.2.68.389-90).

This in turn, however, is given only as Tertullian's perspective. Donne as impersonal author remains aloof. There is no certain, firm ground from which to judge. Truth and lies might as easily be inverted, and it is the Christian insight to *recognize* this; the very nature of Christianity requires this slipperiness of perspective, though adaptibility must be based on individual uncertainty and not public, or indeed critical opinion masquerading as some God-given probability. Donne's solution in this passage is to call in "a new witnesse ... the intimation of mine owne soule" (V.2.68.391-3), which he makes a point of distinguishing from certain knowledge.[37] For the doctrine of the probable must be rejected for its very God-like attraction: the certainty it offers. Essentially Donne is more probabiliorist than probabilist, emphasizing the importance of a personal search which precludes mere acceptance, combining externally derived public

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[36] Classically, too, opinion was regarded as antithetical to truth (see Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, New York: Viking Press, 1954, 233).

[37] Cf. Augustine's solution to the gap between opinion and right cognition - that inner truth teaches irrefutably (*De magister*, X-XIV, 39-56). Donne, by contrast, criticizes the Jesuits for asserting "that we may know our selves to be the children of God, with as good a knowledge, as that there is a Roome, or Constantinople" (V.2.73.553-5).

knowledge with private conscience.[38] The combination allowed him to weight the balance now one way, now another, so that he could borrow aspects of casuistry even while criticizing most strongly the Catholic position on conscience:

> as long as thy selfe onely art in one balance, and other men in the other... let the opinion of other men waigh downe thine owne opinion of thy selfe ... though the conscience be in an error, yet it is sin to do aright against the conscience; but ... a greater sin, not to labour to recover the conscience ... by *their* advise, whom God hath indued with knowledg, and power, for that purpose (IV.8.222.443-57).

That is, one had to follow one's own conscience, but ideally it would bear the shape of authoritative opinion.[39] Conscience as well as reason was to be rectified by what became the reflected light of the conformist majority ("other men").[40]

The centrality of a relativistic conscience in the search, furthermore, ensured the ceaselessness of the "labour". Without the 'ex', external becomes eternal; what is only 'more probable' now, may in the light of future discovery be superceded by that which is more probable still. Truth is the daughter of time, and no less mutable. Thus Malloch in his discussion of the changing form of the *quaestio disputata* associates Donne with Aquinas and More rather than Suàrez, in his belief that though "Truth is one", yet "truth is always relative to historical situation".[41] Where it became enshrined as the universal Stoic Law of Nature that claimed to override this very "changing form", Donne like the Sceptics saw its precepts, too, as "relative to the deficiencies of man".[42] The laws of government that were supposedly based upon it varied, according to country, time and

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[38]Camille Slights describes 'Satire III' thus as the dramatization of a case of conscience; though, perhaps simplistically, she associates the "more probable opinion" with Anglicanism's search for truth, and the preference for simple probabilism with Romanist submission to an external authority ("'To Stand Inquiring Right': The Casuistry of Donne's 'Satyre III'", *SEL* 12 (1972) 85-101).

[39] As Malloch shows, the probable opinion must be subsumed as personal truth ("John Donne and the Casuists", 71-3).

[40] III.4.120.220-1.

[41] See "The Techniques and Function", 201 and ff. Aquinas began with doubts that were subsequently answered, implying only a particular application, subject to certain satisfactions; Suàrez opened with an assertion and subsequently answered doubts, implying a universal principle that overrode any objections - the difference between a given *manner* of knowing, and given *principles*: between the relativist and the universalist.

[42] Williamson, "The Libertine Donne", 286.

specific situation (II.15.314.109ff). Yet if he disagreed with the Stoics, Donne also opposed the Sceptics.[43] He did not, like them, wholeheartedly reject the use of reason and the possibility of a predominantly just political government through man-made laws,[44] did not throw himself whole-heartedly into a world of fantasy. Reason also could be rectified (V.2.68.380ff), and if faith was certainly a leap beyond it (I.2.169.54ff), yet "faith without a *root*, without *reason*, is no faith, but an *opinion*", no faith but a fantasy (V.4.102.214-5). There is, as always, no correct perspective in this endless exchange. Rather the emphasis falls again on the necessary coalescence of the two spheres of private (faith) and public (rectified reason), of one's own inner conscience with the outwardly expressed opinions of others. The individual was to conform, as far as he *could*, to the state that he shared. The Biblical types Donne chooses tend to exemplify this procedure, as Jeanne Shami points out, "above nature and below grace, making difficult decisions". As she notes, their cases are separately, casuistically, considered, and no externally applied law applies absolutely. But to avoid anarchically individual moral choice,[45] Donne makes his cases of conscience historical rather than hypothetical, so that procedures for choosing are exemplary - that is, publicly defining and defined blueprints.[46]

Robert Ornstein, in an attempt to prove Donne's primary pursuit of reason and discount evidence to the contrary, argues that he was simply against absolutes (as reason would dictate).[47] But this argument also faces evidence to the contrary; elsewhere Donne insists that all must mean *all* - only the absolute yields absolution (V.1.53.665-73). I would argue instead that Donne was only against the *perception* of absolutes on earth, the notion that one could observe the immutable Stoic Law of Nature

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[43] See I.7.271.103-10, 278.363-87.

[44] Cf. for instance, Thomas Fitzherbert's response in 1606 to Macchiavelli that found reason full of error, and politics fruitless (Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers*, 181-7).

[45] As in *Metempsychosis* (Janel Mueller, "Donne's Epic Venture in the *Metempsychosis*", *MP* 70 (1972-3) 109-37) - and possibly, *Biathanatos*, an "alarum to truth" (see Ronald Corthell, "Donne's *Metempsychosis*: An 'Alarum to Truth'", *SEL* 21 (1981) 97-110, 109-10).

[46] Jeanne Shami, "Donne's Protestant Casuistry: Cases of Conscience in the *Sermons*", *SP* 80 (1983) 53-66, 66.

[47] "Donne, Montaigne, and Natural Law", *JEGP* 55 (1956) 213-29, 214ff.

(or any other objective rule of behaviour) in operation.[48] Though naturally universal and unchanging, God's truth could never be *apprehended* as such, since man could never know conclusively. This returns us full-circle to the Antipodean image, whereby God's fixedness is conditioned by man's changeability. If man's *per*ception is, like Aquinas's procedure, relativistic, his *con*ception can nonetheless be universalist like Suàrez's.[49] Not surprisingly, therefore, Suàrez's explanation of the only apparent mutability of natural law closely resembles Donne's account of the Antipodean view of God: natural law

> discerns the mutability in the subject-matter itself, and adapts its own precepts to this mutability, prescribing in regard to such subject-matter a certain sort of conduct for one condition, and another sort of conduct for another condition: so that the law in itself remains at all times unchanged, although, according to our manner of speaking and by an extrinsic attribution, it would seem, after a fashion, to undergo change.[50]

Truth exists in God, therefore, and man's duty is to pursue it, often perversely: to invoke it in art, only to lose it in the very compromise of invocation.

C. The Sermons As Art

> Only by acknowledging one's place in an already given interpretive context, the so-called hermeneutic circle in which parts illuminate wholes and vice versa, can one correctly approach truth.
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> Martin Jay in LaCapra (1982), p. 94

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[48] As a 'right' reasoner, he rejects the 'natural' reasoner's association of "objectivity towards the Truth" with empirical observation - a distinction drawn by Thomas Merrill between Christian and non-Christian argument (*Christian Criticism: A Study of Literary God-Talk*, Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V., 1976, 139). See Louis Bredvold, "The Naturalism of Donne in Relation to Some Renaissance Traditions", *JEGP* 22 (1923) 471-502, for an historical account of natural law theories. My invocation of the Stoic Law of Nature is based on Cicero's formulation. As Ornstein points out, the original Stoic stance was characterized by inwardness; far from purporting to be objective, ethical decisions were based on personal reason rather than opinion ("Donne, Montaigne, and Natural Law", 216).

[49] Thus Corthell, arguing that relativity of opinion in *Metempsychosis* does not preclude absolute truth, notes that Zeno, "by illustrating that motion is relative and apparent, actually force(s) us to accept an absolute unity of space and time" ("Donne's *Metempsychosis*", 106).

[50] *De Legibus*, 264, quoted in Ornstein, "Donne, Montaigne, and Natural Law", 226.

If the Bible is the subject matter, the sermon is the means of communication; and since in the exploration of the former, truth is found to be constantly disappearing into the vortex of art, so it is no surprise to find the latter struggling in its attempt to convey that truth. Even without Donne's tendencies to integrate form with content and to mirror in his own words the words of the Bible,[51] the sermon's own inherent concern with process is what Donne most associates with creativity.[52] It is, in Stapleton's phrase, "a mode of art that exalts art".[53] Furthermore, the Bible stems from ancient, unimpeachable testimony; only the infected translation of this opens a fissure in truth to allow the entrance of diverse imaginings. The sermon by contrast has the free form of immediate experience, and is constituted solely and physically by the frailty of the preacher. Taken at best as an honest attempt to convey the original Word of God, it is still one further remove from the Bible: an interpretation of a translation that is manifestly even more prone to literary manipulation.[54]

Thus we observe in the style of the sermons effects that are at odds with our opening documentary attribution. Poetic phrases (II.3.101.244-7), indeed, whole passages appear regularly,[55] occurring not merely as irresistible aggregations[56] but in intricately worked out forms (II.15.316.181-6). There are specific references, too, to the arts: comparisons of the *ut picturia poesis* variety,[57] and a sly reference to the way in which art can approach truth [58] by means of "a Serpentine line, (as the Artists call it) to get up to God, and get into God by such degrees" (V.17.347.337-8). Poetry, the well-

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51 As Augustine prescribed; see Dennis Quinn for Donne's agreement ("Donne's Christian Eloquence", 280).

52 See p. 59 above.

53 *The Elected Circle*, 19.

54 As Guibbory points out, Donne's association of truth with origin leads him to value patristic over scholastic exegesis, since "we get farther from original purity as we descend in time" (*The Map of Time: Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History*, Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986, 78).

55 II.9.211.505-9; III.9.215.316-20.

56 I.2.174.227-9; II.3.96.41-2.

57 II.11.237.89-238.112; II.15.320.331-8; V.1.38.95-100; V.15.299.115-18.

58 Or as Donne phrases it, the way in which the words of secular poets could merge into the Word of God (IV.6.163.13-15).

attested argument runs, works insidiously on the emotions to impress divinity upon the hearer (IV.4.143.403-6; IV.14.347.93-348.101).[59]

However, Donne balances these effects with a conscious warning against churchmen "over-vehemently affected or transported with Poetry, or other secular Learning" (IV.4.143.392-3), and an exhortation that displaces such art from preeminence: "forbeare your acclamations and expectations of *wonderfull good preachers*, and *admirable good sermons* ... Content thy selfe with *truths*" (IV.5.152.264-7). Although situations evoked by the sermons with 'typical' members of the congregation as characters might be as much creations of the preacher as scenes in fiction, yet the preacher ought not to lose sight of the distant truth on which his profession purported to rest. Memories of the artistic poverty of earlier translations of the Bible, where it was imperative to "consider the matter, and not the phrase" (VI.1.55.609), and which seemed somehow closer in spirit as well as time to their original, underlay directions of this kind: "Let me remember how the Preacher said it, but let me remember rather what he said" (V.1.56.784-5). The preacher owed it to his source to convey what remaining truth he could find.

This presented a problem. The truth of the Bible could, of course, be propounded with as little intervention as possible. Assessed first by an individual drawing on others' opinions, it could then be more or less communicated by that individual's citation of the range of opinion (Donne's careful attention to exegesis is an application of the doctrine of the probable opinion). But truth outside the Bible, truth posited in the entirely human sphere was, I have argued, an inherently unfixed concept, and subject to constant qualification. Such truths, political and intellectual, changed with the times. Still, insofar as human society resembled God's hierarchy, the notion of secular truth did exist and there was some reflected basis of authority for it; the book of

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[59] See, for instance, Daniel Price on the usefulness of poetry in preaching ("The Marchant", Pauls Cross, 24/8/1607, 2), and Robert Cawdrey (*A Treasury of Storehouse of Similes* (1600), A_4) - quoted in Horton Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud; The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1986), 453, 447.

Nature gave dimmer and less steady light than the Bible, but it remained the preacher's duty to promulgate it. I would now like to show how Donne followed its changing trajectories in the early sermons.

D. The Sermons As Truth

> There is no work of art which does not break its affirmative stance by the "power of the negative", which does not in its very structure, evoke the words, the images, the music of another reality, of another order repressed by the existing one ... where the work no longer sustains the dialectical unity of what is and what can (and ought to) be, art has lost its truth, has lost itself.
>
> Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, pp. 92-3

Traditional analyses of Donne's politics have tended to class him as a typical conservative: monarchist, absolutist and generally, as the monarch required, non-interventionist along the High Anglican lines described by Louis Wright.[60] More recent studies have begun to question this view, at least with regard to his early work. Thus David Norbrook in "The Monarchy of Wit and the Republic of Letters: Donne's Politics"[61] discusses the legacy of More's Utopia to the poetry, and Donne's secret sympathy with the Essex circle.[62] Norbrook concludes that the new worlds of the *Songs and Sonets* represent Donne's substitution of "precarious Utopias" for a public state he could not endorse - a New Historicist version of Empson's anti-Christian, 'separate planet' argument.[63] Annabel Patterson in the same collection of essays examines the

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[60] *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1935, 269ff. So, for instance, Goldberg on Donne's uncritical echoing of royal rhetoric (*James I and the Politics of Literature* , 210-19).

[61] In *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Elizabeth Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 3-36.

[62] See Richard Barbieri's 1975 argument for the *Devotions*' expression of this ("John Donne and *Richard II*: An Influence?" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26 (1975) 57-62).

[63] See especially "Donne the Spaceman", in *Essays on Renaissance Literature* (*Donne and the New Philosophy*), ed. John Haffenden (Cambridge: U.P., 1993), 78-128.

transitional five years before Donne took orders, and finds subversive elements in "Elegie XIV", *Ignatius His Conclave* and *Pseudomartyr*, hidden within a technique of "Self-division and equivocation".[64] But by and large it seems to be assumed that once Donne had moved into the Church, he was careful to submit to, if not enunciate the Royalist line.[65] Even Paul Sellin, who argues tirelessly for Donne's personal zeal in "promoving" the Protestant and Palatine cause in Holland in 1619, does not attempt to find any reflection of this in Donne's subsequent sermons.[66] Yet in May 1622, the year James I issued two proclamations reinforcing his earlier order of December 1620 - that no preacher deal with State affairs - Donne announced: "that is not our sphear, the Publicke, the State; but yet States consist of Families, and Families of private persons, and they are in our sphear, in our charge" (IV.4.140.287-9). While appearing to re-State the King's command, he in fact breaks it down to assert the contrary; the given is deconstructed and reconstructed. Here the politically approved context - an attack on Catholic incursions into English society - seems to justify the reconstruction; but it allows Donne to point out illogicalities in the Royal dicta, and to derive logically from it subversive, or at least dubious, generalizations. Patterson's argument for a radical equivocation, a technique of simultaneously assenting to conflicting truths, would seem to apply equally well to the sermons, particularly in this tense period before the Thirty Years' War when censorship restricted more open forms of independent expression.[67]

So far from not intervening, then, Donne forcefully asserts his right to comment on State matters: moreover, his *duty* to embrace the full extent of his "sphear". Failure

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64 "All Donne", in *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Harvey and Maus, 37-67, 51. See also her earlier full-length study, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 92-105.

65Mary Ann Radzinowicz's well-meaning attempt to read forward from earlier equivocations and ironizations into "The Politics of John Donne's Silences" (*JDJ* 7(1) (1988) 1-19) typically assumes his subsequent withdrawal from debate, despite ascribing to this silence a political significance.

66 *So Doth, So is Religion: John Donne and Diplomatic Contexts in the Reformed Netherlands 1619-1620* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1988). And so Empson on Donne's post-1615 recantation of the implications of plural worlds (*Essays on Renaissance Literature*, 47).

67Such self-contradiction, Goldberg notes, imitated besides the King's own self-undermining rhetoric (*James I and the Politics of Literature*, ch. 3, esp. 131-4).

to do so results in egotistical contraction that draws the world into the self, associated explicitly with misery and suffering.[68] Monastic retirement into religious seclusion constitutes such a selfishness; for a monk "to bury himself alive, is as much wrong to the State, as if he kill himself" (I.3.209.980-1).[69] Far more praiseworthy is the soldier, whose personal sense has conversely expanded to merge with that of his country.[70]

Donne advocates therefore a policy of public engagement, although just as his critique of withdrawal is conveyed in the main metaphorically, so this positive advocacy is almost always delicately tempered for the time in religious or classical terms.[71] Apart from Patterson's type of equivocation, analogical displacement or the broadening of a statement beyond its immediate context was the only way one sort of truth could be concealed within another. For instance, Donne could genuinely disparage "occasional preachers" who went so far as to "make the emergent affaires of the time, their *Text*" (IV.10.276.424) - quite different from elucidating from the text principles bearing on contemporary politics; and while this might seem also to flatter the royal line on censorship, it could be understood just as well to criticize "*State*-Divines, who made Divinity serve present turns, and occasions" by supporting this very royal line (IV.3.120.1151-2), as the recalcitrant Protestant clergy with whom the King was concerned.[72] Contributing responsibly to public affairs could in this way be reconciled

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[68] II.2.78.238-40; II.2.84.459-67.

[69] See Carey's discussion of Donne as himself an egoistic and anomic suicide-fancier (*Life, Mind and Art*, 195-200). Both habits of mind are criticized here - but then, as Carey notes, Donne in the final analysis was not a suicide.

[70] II.5.134.107-8. David Aers and Gunther Kress show that though Donne advocates Stoic inward retreat in various Verse Epistles, his poems are "constructed around the core forms of the language of social interaction and ... the self is defined in interaction with others" (Aers, Kress and Bob Hodge, *Literature, Language and Society in England 1580-1680*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981, 40-8, 43); see my Chapter 1 (pp. 54-6) for a brief reconciliation of Donne's need to be incorporated into society with his yearning for nothingness. The obvious poem of retreat is "The Sunne Rising" - but cf. Meg Lota Brown, "'In that the world's contracted thus': Casuistical Politics in Donne's 'The Sunne Rising'", *'The Muses Common-Weale': Poetry and Politics in the Seventeenth Century* , edd. Claude Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1988), 23-33.

[71] II.17.343.284-7; I.3.207.906ff; IV.5.160.557ff.

[72] See also Donne's attack on "State-Divinity, that obeyes affections of persons", i.e. the king (IV.14.349.161-2). It was during the five years immediately prior to the *Devotions*, 1619-23, that clerical opposition to the King's Spanish policy was at its height.

with the duty to avoid open conflict. Such methods were unnecessary in areas where Church and State interests coincided - for instance, in the colonial enterprise that spread both religious and economic power abroad, and which Donne could whole-heartedly endorse.[73] But many of the government's policies from 1615-23 aroused more controversy among the Church and general public, and these forced Donne back and forth in an attempt to balance conflicting truths. Although a smooth surface had ultimately to be maintained - and Donne's conservative reputation amongst critics testifies to his success in maintaining it - this is by no means unfought for.

We might compare Augustine's forebearance towards political injustice, while nonetheless endorsing the possibility of opposition where order could be re-imposed;[74] or Luther, supporting a perfectionist ethic, yet action in this world.[75] Like them, Donne preaches first and foremost the passive endurance of Job and Christ; tribulations come to improve us.[76] This is not to deny "abuse in State or Church" (III.7.184.500-1); rather, the necessity of endurance testifies to it. It is the patience of martyrs Donne calls for: "teares for the *State*, that penall laws, pecuniary, or bloudy, lie heavy upon [its citizens]" (V.4.111.575-6). But he himself lacked patience, and his commendations are frequently unconvincing or dubiously couched in ominous, Macchiavellian style: "Those ways which we see not, wee hope are directed to good ends" (III.7.183.468-184.469). Elsewhere too, Donne lauds the virtues of active anger with enthusiasm (II.2.77.178-83); though he endured suffering, even the Lamb of God

> had his colluctations, disputations, expostulations, apprehensions of Gods indignation upon him ... security, call it by a worser name, stupidity, is not a lying

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[73] I.9.307.238-308.254; and see IV.10, "A Sermon Preached to the Honourable Company of the Virginia Plantation" (13/11/1622).

[74] See Peter Burnell, "The Problem of Service to Unjust Regimes in Augustine's *City of God*", *JHI* 54 (1993) 177-88.

[75] Cynthia Grant Shoenberger realigns Luther's attitude to resistance with Burnell's rather than the more traditional Augustine, arguing that "Luther came eventually to embrace a notion of resistance based on constitutional and positive law and finally even on natural law ... a strategic exception to an underlying belief in non-resistance" ("Luther and the Justifiability of Resistance to Legitimate Authority", *JHI* 40 (1979) 3-20, 19). The shift of tone in these two articles places my representation of Donne in direct line of descent.

[76] I.1.163.457; I.3.192.318-20; II.1.51.96-52.101.

> down like a Lamb, but a lying down like *Issaches* Asse between two burdens, for two greater burdens cannot be, then sin, and the senslesnesse of sin (II.18.358.362-8).

Such verbal expostulations or active "murmurings", as Donne commonly termed them, had their place amongst the martyrs of the Bible; Job himself not only suffered but spoke out.[77] Since Donne often compares murmuring against the State to evil murmuring against God,[78] his occasional approval of expostulation with God could be seen to have equal political relevance.

Naturally, this was not to be taken too far. Open religious controversy Donne always condemns;[79] and in one passage he ominously associates "Carnality in the understanding; a concupiscence of disputation, and controversie in unnecessarie points" with the punishment accorded instigators of sedition:

> The mind of a curious man delights to examine it selfe upon Interrogatories, which, upon the Racke, it cannot answer, and to vexe it selfe with such doubts as it cannot resolve ... Wee will needs shew wit in moving subtile questions, and the more ignorance, in not being able to give our selves satisfaction (II.2.84.443-50).

Yet even here, although it was both "impossible" and "impertinent" to "sound" the Mysteries (I.6.256.143-4), outright silence on such matters was in principle to be condemned as echoing "the blinde and implicite obedience practised in the *Church* of *Rome*" (II.3.105.378-9). While acknowledging the dangers of "having too much, and to be mad with too much knowledge" (I.2.171.113-14), Protestant preachers had still to propagate knowledge to their congregation (II.6.153.330-2). Donne puts both sides of the problem forward to his listeners:

> I am not ordinarily bold in determining points (especially if they were fundamentall) wherein I find the Fathers among themselves, and the School in it selfe, and the reverend Divines of the Reformation amongst themselves to differ; But yet neither am I willing to raise doubts, and leave the auditory unsatisfyed, and unsetled (II.15.320.347-52).

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[77] I.7.277.350-3; V.12.232.62-233.70; and see my discussion of Devotion 2 (Chapter 5, pp. 226ff).

[78] Cf. II.7.166.59-61; I.1.159.309; and I.4.223.9-11 to V.19.382.68-72.

[79] For instance, V.1.40.169-77; V.14.276.290-277.328; II.15; II.16.

Typically, he solves the dilemma by finding both sides of the religious argument in question to be true, which in turn resolves both sides of the related ethical problem; the auditory and he are "so setled" without it being necessary to adjudicate between differing and equally reputable convictions of truth. Equivocation again gives rise to the illusion of an overriding principle.[80]

Donne was acutely sensitive to anything that might bring "the reverend Divines of the Reformation" into disrepute, including such public displays of doctrinal disagreement.[81] One might guess from the personal ring of some of his complaints that this derived in large part from his own insecurity, as a member of a well-known Catholic family.[82] Again, however, he does not deny that abuse, and violent abuse, of office exists beneath the surface of Church decorum; what he asks is that abuse not be *said* to be done, that the *idea* of the Church not be brought into disrepute (III.7.184.481-502).

It is because of this concern with an *apparent* or aesthetic harmony that Donne has been regarded by many liberal academics as an opponent of State criticism and one of the main supporters of royal censorship - a *collaborateur* removed into the aesthetic sphere. Yet as we see, this concern did not prevent him from expressing personal misgivings, and it is worth examining to what extent he reconciled these misgivings with his public role as Royal apologist.

By the beginning of 1615, St Paul's had become the centre for news and "murmuring" against the King's Spanish policies,[83] so Donne would have been intimately

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[80]Frank Kermode speaks similarly of the Principle of Complementarity in physics, which makes the past a special case of the present to ensure concord and continuity. The risk, as he says, is "to establish a consonance between what is so and what is not so; propositions may even yet be true and false at the same time ... The dissonances as well as the harmonies have to be made concordant by means of some ultimate complementarity" (*The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction,* Oxford: U.P., 1968, 59-63).

[81] II.13.279.345-58, 278.310-11; V.4.111.552-9.

[82] See II.1.58.331-6. On the same principle, he consistently denounces informers, foreign or government (II.16.330.192-209; III.1.63.112-21; V.12.239.301-8). Carey, of course, has written the book on this.

[83] Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621-1624* (Cambridge: U.P., 1989), 22ff.

aware of the reasons behind tightening press control.[84] Sermons and Puritan pamphlets critical of Royal policy (if not the King) proliferated, although usually not in printed form, particularly after August 1622.[85] Thomas Scott's *Vox Populi* (1620) blamed the situation entirely on those *around* the King, whom personally the author praises - but James I was furious and gave immediate orders for his imprisonment.[86] Shortly after he issued the Orders of December 24, 1620, forbidding preachers to deal with the Spanish match or affairs of State.

This hardly accorded with Donne's declaration of the preacher's duty to speak out "in fiery tongues" (III.9.214.300 [16/12/1620]),[87] but he was very early and very publicly behind these measures, probably fearing civil disturbances. Even before the first Orders were officially passed down, he was criticizing an instance in the Scriptures where "excesse and inordinateness" "*should* not have been said" (III.6.156.17-19 [Nov.1620]). From 1620-2, he condemned those who preached "over-freely, offensively, scandalously" (III.16.337.172-3), casting "popular and seditious Calumnies and Scandals, and Reproaches ... upon the present State and Government" (IV.3.91.80-2).[88] He even criticized prayers against religious toleration that seemed to "insinuate, that any such tolerations are being prepared for us" (IV.3.91.84-5).[89] Not all preachers were as sensitive. In February 1621, John Everard was twice committed for preaching against the match.[90] On July 26, 1621, the King's proclamation was reissued, and on August 4,

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84 *Blessed Revolution*, 20-1.

85 *Blessed Revolution*, 29-34. On September 25, 1623, however, it was still thought necessary to issue a proclamation against the unlicensed printing of books contrary to the laws of the land and the Stationers' Regulations (Godfrey Davies, "English Political Sermons 1603-40", *HLQ* 3 (1939) 1-22, 6).

86 Simond D'Ewes, *Autobiography and Correspondence*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1845), 158-60. One might cite this identification of an attack on the State with an attack on the King as further evidence of the pervasiveness of the idea of the King's two bodies.

87 See also III.12.259.120ff (Trinity Term 1621).

88 See also III.3.112.794-7; V.16.333.576-7; II.14.303.589ff, 606-610 and II.16.328.112ff. Cogswell describes similar attacks by other preachers (*Blessed Revolution*, 30ff).

89 Also IV.9.253.607-18 (5/11/1622 at St Paul's).

90 Millar Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons 1534-1642* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1958), 102; see also his *Register of Sermons Preached at Paul's Cross 1534-1642*, rev'd. by Peter Pauls and Jackson Campbell Boswell (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 117.

1622, the King issued his *Directions For Preachers*, which forbade anyone below the office of Dean to discuss - even moderately - predestination, election, reprobation, God's grace, State matters or any arbitrary limitation of princely powers; or to deliver "bitter invectives, and undecent railing speeches against the Persons of either Papists or Puritans".[91] On August 25, Mr Claydon spoke against the match; then one week later, Richard Sheldon savaged "The Beast", ironically praising English freedom of speech against Spanish censorship. They received severe reprimands,[92] as did John Knight, Ward, Winniffe, Randes, Everard (again) and Young.[93] On September 15, Donne preached the official defence of the King's Directions (IV.7); but the next sermon we have, IV.8 (13th October), was itself rather anti-Romanist, although not topically related or actually anti-Spanish. We do know that the King had it for some time, and that although Donne hoped it might be printed, it was not; Potter and Simpson cite its anti-Romanism as a possible reason. If this was the case, it is further possible that the King asked for the sermon to decide whether or not it was seditious; which would accord with the severity of a shutdown where the most preachers could usually do was draw attention to their gagging.[94] It would, however, have been embarrassing to arrest the recent spokesman for the Directions, and his position may in this instance have conveyed upon Donne some direct immunity. He continued in any case zealously to condemn preachers who interfered with matters of State and did not monitor their speech for the good of public order,[95] and also upheld James's order against public debate on doctrines of reprobation and salvation.[96]

Yet Donne was quite aware that censorship repressed not only any bad but "any good purpose" (II.3.101.214), and if to quell increasing public unrest he served practical

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91 Wilson, *The History of Great Britain*, 199-200.

92 Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, 103-4; *Register*, 121.

93 Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, 27; Elisabeth Bourcier's *Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, 1622-1624* (Paris: Didier, 1974), 94.

94 Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, 33-4.

95 IV.10.276.423-5 (Marchant Taylor's Hall,13/11/1622); IV.9.252.571-2 (St Paul's, 5/11/1622); IV.11.286.106-10 (St Paul's, Xmas Day 1622).

96 IV.12.305.78-85 (2/2/1622).

necessity, still he objected in principle to displays of force.[97] For a preacher of the word, censorship was a form of death just as death was a form of censorship.[98] Only declaration indicated health in the body politic, and the withholding of State secrets which contrasted with God's revelation of His bordered on tyranny.[99] This was a tyranny exercised moreover by State over Church, and while it was wrong for preachers to challenge the State merely to assert Church power (III.16.337.173-5), still that power should not be abjectly surrendered; it was equally wrong to consider "that as the Church is within the State, so preaching is a part of State government, flexible to the present occasions of time" (II.18.348.10-11).[100] In an attempt to downplay the prescriptive nature of the King's commands, Donne in his Royal defence denies that the Directions do constitute any restraint on preaching (IV.7.207.1047ff). But Maclure considers the arguments weak,[101] while a contemporary remarked on Donne's visible discontentment during this sermon.[102] Donne himself in a guarded reference compares this experience unfavourably with another, where he was "left more to mine owne liberty".[103]

Donne was careful to call for obedience to the Royal line, then, but there are sufficient indications of unease to justify a closer look at his actual conduct. As we

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97 Even when attributed to God, although here his feelings were more ambivalent; see I.9.312.422-3 (but cf. I.8.286.30-1) and I.6.255.135-256.138 (but cf. "Batter my heart, three-personed God"). See also Donne's general antagonism to the implications of double-predestination; man is not destined to sin, but *free* to do so (II.6.151.272-152.310; III.16.338.227-38; V.1.39.151-6: cf. Milton's "Sufficient to have stood, yet free to fall").

98 Hence III.3.92.59-60: "I that speak now, and shall not speak then, silenced in the grave ..."

99 V.18.365.35-6; V.4.104.306-10. Cf. Davies who, on the evidence of V.15.298.87-95 alone, associates Donne with the Laudian protectors of *arcana imperii* (*Like Angels From a Cloud*, 327).

100 Or that religious observance was likewise subject to the State (V.4.108.428-31); also II.8.189.343-5.

101 *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, 104-5.

102 *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. N.E. McClure (Philadelphia, 1939), II. 451.

103 Gosse, II. 174-5 ("To the Right Honorable Sir Thomas Roe ...", 1/12/1622). Patterson notes stylistic unease also (*Censorship and Interpretation*, 98-100), while Nancy Wright compares the numerous Biblical and patristic proof-texts cited in support of the first literal part of the sermon (dealing with the preacher's divine commission to the Word of the Gospel), with their radical omission in the second, legal part, presenting the king's ordinance as therefore implicitly secular (emperors, kings and Aquinas are the only witnesses). The prefatory epistle, Wright notes further, acknowledges Donne's personal responsibility for the first part only, associating the second with James and Buckingham ("The *Figura* of the Martyr in John Donne's Sermons", *ELH* 56(2) (1989) 293-309, 303-5).

have seen, Donne did not necessarily practise the same truth he preached; quick for instance to condemn those who "censure State Councels, and Judiciary proceedings" (II.13.278.334), he himself blamed inability, laziness, ignorance and corruption for protracted court procedures of hearing suitors.[104]

The primary subject of censorship was the virulent, anti-Catholic propaganda published from 1620-22; it is interesting to see how far Donne actually obeyed his own exhortations to restraint in this area. In 1620, certainly, he was following a moderate line; the Roman Church was human, but unreformed and in error.[105] While he rejected Romanist and Calvinist, he finally condemned the Roman Church on Republican grounds - that the people were without the word of God.[106] Later the same year, he counselled against rejecting all Papist practices simply because they were Papist.[107] At the same time, he gave Calvin qualified praise.[108] Up to this point, Donne was following the King's conciliatory position and possibly his own inclination to unite the churches.

By 1622, however, as priests' entrance restrictions and penal laws were being relaxed, a vindictive reference to Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot appears;[109] then a number of reminders of the Romanists' unlawful missions. Many priests were being released, but it was still a felony to take them in, and Donne criticized those who concurred in illegality by attending the increasingly blatant Roman masses in person or by proxy.[110] On Christmas Day, he was openly accusing the pro-Papists of treason (IV.11.301.679-80), and vehemently opposing reconciliation with things no longer human: "for things in hell, there is no peace made, and with things in hell, there is no reconciliation to be had by the blood of his Crosse" (IV.11.302.696-8).[111] Reprimands to

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104 II.6.148.147ff; II.3.102.248-9, 117.823ff.

105 III.4.123.350ff; II.9.204.258-62.

106 III.4.127.500ff.

107 III.7.175.158-70.

108 III.7.177.212; also IV.15.373.346-60 (22//5/1623).

109 IV.3.95.213-96.254 (Spital Cross, Easter 1622).

110 IV.3.108.686-98 (30/5/1622); IV.4.140.289-141.325 (30/5/1622); IV.5.155.369-157.467 (24/6/1622); IV.9.263.980-2 (5/11/1622); V.1.43.287-311, 46.401-6).

111 See also IV.15.370.230-2 (Lincoln's Inn, 22/5/1623).

others perhaps quelled Donne's tone. At any rate, after this, he contented himself with factual reminders of the Spanish invasion[112] or the Gunpowder Plot [113]- although Dr Whiting was imprisoned in 1623 for little more.[114] Open Romanist declarations and pro-Spanish tracts were now appearing,[115] and court divines, protected by patrons, responded in force; although even with such protection, Whiting and Hall were imprisoned. Donne, though more cautious,[116] can be said to remain with the Church rather than the King on this, in spite of his public support: rejecting peace with the Papists (and implicitly Spain) but avoiding the call to martyrdom.

The King's second, related concern in enforcing censorship was to avoid war with Francis I of Austria over the deposing of his son-in-law, the Elector Palatine. Donne vigorously pursued James's peace policy, not only condemning "unnecessarie Warres" (IV.7.187.304-5 [15/9/1622]), but blood shed "lawfully in just warres" (IV.15.378.538-9 [22/5/1623]).[117] His keenness to avoid conflict doubtless rendered such a policy congenial; even here, though, he incorporates an opposing voice - "no Peace is safe enough, where there is no thought of War" (I.4.234.413-4).

We find Donne, thus, insistently inconsistent in his declarations and actions, "the great equivocator" twisting and turning on matters of policy. "Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott/ A constant habit". But for the sake of settlement, truth *had*, it seems, to be "flexible to the present occasions of time, appliable to the present dispositions of men" (II.18.348.11-12). Those who failed to realize this were, as Wilson remarks, imprisoned

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112 IV.12.306.123-5 (2/2/1622).

113 IV.5.155.372-5 (24/6/1622); IV.15.368.168-71 (22/5/1623); V.2 (9/6/1622).

114 Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, 44. As David Cressy shows, these two historical moments of crisis acquired particular resonance during the troubled 1620s (*Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989).

115 Cogswell, *Blessed Revolution*, 37-41; and see Wilson, *The History of Great Britain*, 240ff.

116 At IV.4.347.65-82 (28/3/1623), he simply patronizes a Spanish author, and at V.1.51.596 (1618/1620/1621?) he makes a slight, slighting reference to a "Spanish Agent".

117 Also I.3.218.1292-1307; I.4.229.215-42; IV.11.291.299ff (25/12/1622); IV.1.48-50, (8/3/1621); V.14.285.644-6; see Cogswell's *Blessed Revolution*, for the background of support and opposition (13-14, 27-9, 42-3). Doctrinal Puritans shared this interest in peace - for instance, Thomas Adams, in *City of Peace* (1622), 310-34.

for their pains, "but if they cunningly, and subtily, could glance at the misdemeanors of the Times, and smooth it over *metaphorically*, it would pass current, though before the King himself".[118] It is exactly in this way that Donne engaged and engaged successfully in political matters without betraying his duties to State, Church or conscience.[119]

Interestingly, Steven Mullaney associates a very similar technique of equivocation or, as he calls it, amphibology, with treason, in his article, "Lying like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England", and a number of parallels can be drawn between Donne and Mullaney's traitor.[120] Both are threshold figures, caught between two worlds (32-5); both are "seduced by a language without origin" that resists control (37); and both succeed in "taking advantage of the multiple senses of things" by amphibology - "The image is that of a crossroads where the only right route to take is both at once" (34-7). The vividly gruesome nature of some of Donne's language has its equivalent in the viscerality of the traitor's public execution, which served to re-humanize the monster of reason 'deceived' by re-grounding it in powerful physical detail (32-3). Finally, the effect of each's amphibology is to generate at an least underlying arc of rebellion (43). Despite this resemblance, however, Donne is no more an *active* rebel than a passive conformist (though the striking similarity does, I think, highlight the true subversiveness of Donne's style).[121] Where Mullaney sees amphibology as essentially "unsettling" (37), I have attempted to demonstrate Donne's use of it as an act of settlement. The difference derives from Mullaney's title; to say that "Amphibology lies like truth" (42) is to assume that lies and truth are mutually exclusive, that truth is a

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118 Wilson, *The History of Great Britain*, 151.

119 Cf. John Gleason, who essentially damns Donne for avoiding imprisonment during this period; however, public interests were not necessarily best served by a direct speaking out ("Dr Donne in the Courts of Kings: A Glimpse from Marginalia", *JEGP* 69(4) (1970) 599-612, 605ff). See Jonathan Crewe's defence of Wyatt's conservation of truth through craft, which removed the "tiresome obligation to bear suicidal public witness" (*Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare*, Berkeley and L.A.: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1990, 31-2).

120 *ELH* 47 (1980) 32-47; further references in the text.

121 Renaissance manuals of the kind from which Donne drew warned against rhetorical and logical sophistries, as Alvin Sullivan notes ("Donne's Sophistry and Certain Renaissance Books of Logic and Rhetoric", *SEL* 22 (1982) 107-20, 113ff).

monological secular entity - for Mullaney's purposes, to be identified with the dictates of the State. Anything from outside that imitates it for deceptive purposes is therefore disruptive. For Donne, as I have argued, lies and truth, outside and inside, are by no means so distinct; his amphibologies point in different directions but at multiple truths. Crossroads may be legitimately rather than deceptively embraced; indeed, they had to be if different perspectives, equally valid, were to be propitiated for the smooth harnessing of State and individual. Where balance is maintained, rebellion is contained and control is retained. Over-lying aesthetic harmony is constructed not in spite of but out of the expression of tension beneath.[122]

Royal flattery added a final polish to this contrapuntal veneer. Donne has also been much criticized for this,[123] but without regard for his overall intention. His mode of flattery, like the harmony it celebrates, is not imposed upon but generated from heteroglossic views. Alongside explicit celebration of the kingdom's prosperity, with "more publicke charitable works perform'd, more *Hospitals* and *Colleges* erected, and endowed in threescore, then in some hundreds of years, of superstition before" (II.10. 234.777-9), runs one such religious superstition of decline and decay, according to which "this is the last time, and the Apostle hath told us, that the last times are the worst" (III.6.168.456-7).[124] Donne is acutely aware of the insidious line that divides praise and

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[122] So the Derridean formulation of language; linguistic creation comes from the tension "between the always painful impulse to question, criticize, or negate, and the equally irresistible urge to affirm". To heighten conflict is not necessarily to reject order (E.M. Henning, "Archaeology, Deconstruction and Intellectual History", in *Modern European Intellectual History,* edd. LaCapra and Kaplan, 153-96, 175ff).

[123] So Potter and Simpson on I.3 (March 24, 1616/17, King's Day): *He that loves pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips, the King shall be his friend* (I, 127); doubtless for passages such as I.3.213.1102-9 - although cf. Chamberlain's contemporary view, to keep the occasion in proportion (*The Letters of John Chamberlain,* II. 67). And in any case, far from detracting from the force of the sermon, this is one of the most splendid in the volume. Cf. also Norbrook, who detects relatively little flattery in 1614 ("The Monarchy of Wit", in *Soliciting Interpretation,* edd. Harvey and Maus, 18).

[124] Cf. Heather Dubrow's detection of strains of criticism in the adulatory Ker Epithalamium ("'The Sun in Water': Donne's Somerset Epithalamium and the Poetics of Patronage", in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture,* edd. Dubrow and Richard Strier, Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988, 197-219). This combination of the messianic and the elegiac Maclure notes as characteristic of the Paul's Cross sermons, which were most concerned with state affairs and the need for balance (*The Paul's Cross Sermons,* 118-22). It stands in sharp contrast to the picture painted by Joseph Wittreich, where commentators on British politics were expected to use apocalyptic

flattery, whether it threatens the Scriptures themselves (V.12.232.37-44) or disguises itself as collateral increpation (V.10.200.67ff) - he criticizes himself, for instance, in the very process of overstepping it (II.18.348.19-349.27). Such self-consciousness is far removed from Jonson's panegyrical masques,[125] or indeed Church practice generally.[126] Donne in fact condemns the use of the pulpit to praise anyone but God. Guilty himself of the analogy, he admits that God "will not be told, I have praised thee, in praising thy creature, which is thine Image". Rather, any praise of Princes "determines in that use which I have of their favour", and could encourage wrongdoing (IV.12.308.190-1, 202 and ff). Against this, there was the possibility that the flatterer's sincere admiration might induce life to imitate art; the subject could be shamed and guided into living up to his flattery - "But remember that nothing is flattery which the speaker believes; and of the grossest flattery there is this good use, that they tell us what we should be".

Furthermore, a dose of conscious flattery could assist in the essential preservation of civil order by justifying the hierarchy. Chaos could not be allowed to threaten, and to this end, Donne supports the governing classes, "Rank, and Order, and Majestie" (I.4.234.416-17). Against traditional Scriptural belief, he justifies honestly acquired wealth,[127] while still sympathizing with the blameless poor.[128] The shiftless do not deserve charity (III.5.139.200-8), for by refusing a calling, they have placed themselves outside the hierarchy (II.3.105.370-6). Donne finds an historical basis for social elitism (V.1.35.1-36.24), and in two passages seems to argue for a privileged filtering of knowledge .[129] But this deserves qualification, since in the first passage, his

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terms purely as evidence of their personal loyalty to the King and government ("'Image of that horror': the Apocalypse in *King Lear*", in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, edd. C.A. Patrides and Wittreich, Manchester: U.P., 1984, 175-206, 182-3).

125 Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), ch. 8.

126 As Church power depended more and more on Royal prerogative, and was challenged by Parliament and common law, many preachers turned increasingly to exalt the person of the King as their source of power (Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, 99).

127 III.2 generally; III.1.52.187-94; II.14.292.188-91.

128 II.10.214.30-42; IV.12.318.566-319.594.

129 II.2.72.2-5; IV.12.305.82-3.

fear that "every man would thrust in" to the Bible is directed at heretic rather than lower class interlopers; and in the second passage, his concern is only to withhold doctrinal disputes from "every popular auditory, and every itching eare", for which another motive has already been suggested. Besides, one of his criticisms of the Roman Church is precisely its withholding of the word of God from the people (III.4.129.552ff).

There is, in addition, a fascinating opposing strain that runs through these early sermons, a resentment of that which delineates the hierarchy - "this infectious disease of precedency, and love of place ... run over all places, as well Cloysters as Courts, And over all men ... And over all times" (II.14.297.353-5). On the one hand, Donne advances the traditional argument that if honour is not paid to the King, the whole hierarchical chain of order will disintegrate, and ultimately God will lose respect (IV.12.316.477-8). In this scheme of things, the political hierarchy not only appropriates God as its head but mirrors God's entire, harmoniously composed cosmos, powerful by relation and hierarchy and stable in its "continuance".[130] On the other hand, this is the poet who time and again finds "all correspondence gone" between heaven and earth, God's Truth and man's truths; whose perception of that final unbridgeable gap in the chain from man to Godhead lies at the root of all his political discontinuities. The hierarchical chain is constantly disintegrating, and it is man at the other end of it who is threatened with loss of control. Just as without Christ the harmony of the spheres is all "disordered" (II.7.170.212-20: 215), so in moments of despair, Donne's official constructions of this break down.

At Whitehall, in April 1620, he declared:

> all the world together, hath amazing greatness, and an amazing glory in it, for the order and harmony, and continuance of it ... and yet what profit were it, *to get all the world and loose thy soule?* Therefore *Solomon* shakes the world in peeces, he dissects it, and cuts it up before thee, that so thou mayest the better, see how poor a

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[130] III.17.358.363ff (25/12/1621) - see Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons*, 107; and Potter and Simpson's Introduction to Vol. IV, 18. Using David Nicholls's classification, the relationship between God and King is thus both analogical and univocal ("Divine Analogy: The Theological Politics of John Donne", *Political Studies* 32 (1984) 570-80, 570).

> thing, that particular is, whatsoever it be, that thou setts thy love upon in this world (III.1.48.35-44).

In this passage the whole is perfect and harmonious, but illogically the parts that compose it are not worth the coveting. Donne moves from praise to criticism via the connecting Gospel quotation which opposes "world" - riches, worldly success - to "soul" - spiritual triumph. By placing this in a misleading context - building a bridge from nothing - he creates confusion between the first use of "world" as praiseworthy (Nature, God's Book which *reflects* Heaven) and the Gospel's use of it to represent heaven's fallen antithesis, a world that defines itself by exclusion of any other.[131] Nor are the two perceptions equally possible. Meaning disintegrates over time, and Donne shatters his first world in order to arrive at the alternative; the text is end-focussed, apocalyptic and progressive in its self-destruction, rather than stable: syntagmatic rather than paradigmatic, or hierarchical.[132] The reflection of God's world is *replaced* by the self-standing worldliness of man - the Fall cannot be reversed.

The link between the two "worlds" is James I's court, since it is both a type of God's ideally ordered kingdom and the source of worldly success.[133] It is thus the source of this passage towards disillusion, which may reflect the growing tensions between King and Parliament over Divine Right - Donne was a member of the "Addled Parliament" of 1614 that eventually dissolved in confusion.[134] It may also shadow

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131 Troy Reeves notes Donne's uses of "world" in both these senses (*An Annotated Index to the Sermons of John Donne* , Vol. I, Salzburg, 1979, 29-30).

132 Donne's concern with time directly challenges the notion of an ordered, unchanging state. Economically and socially, a "spatial concept, based on the equivalence of power and land ... was being undermined ... by the new concept of the equivalence of power and time ... the period of a loan, the date of a contract" (Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons,* 124). Politically, just such an obsession with time and Revelation characterizes those texts associated with Radical Protestant thought, according to Norbrook (*Poetry and Politics,* 4, 14). Protestant exegesis, he argues, "opened the way for a conception of the incarnation as operating in a linear, progressive manner, as opposed to the medieval conception of a vertical hierarchical cosmos of graduated images and shadows" (39-40). See Chapter 3.

133 A moral ambiguity represented more simply by Jonson in a way that Donne also does: by alternating the satiric (tragedies, satires) and the idealistic (masques) (R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* , Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1987, 111, fn. 37).

134 Patterson, "All Donne", in *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Harvey and Maus, 58.

concern for the Elector Palatine's difficulties on the Continent, and the eventual disintegration of the Protestant alliance. Notably, it is Solomon - the wise king - who "shakes the world in peeces"; and James who dispersed Parliament and whose non-intervention on behalf of the allies divided Europe.[135]

More generally, though, this collapsing of official structures represents the crumbling of authority whence the notion of secular truth derived. With Parliament and King in opposition, even law, the defining narrative frame of the State Donne is so concerned to uphold,[136] becomes doubtful. Sermon V.11 justifies in certain circumstances unauthorized religious assemblies called for political purposes,[137] and finds upon cautious argument that laws may be disobeyed where particular cases are genuinely thought to have been forgotten by an otherwise attentive lawgiver (V.11.226.364ff). Donne is clearly uneasy with this conclusion; he has in fact re-internalized the next level of (external) authority above the individual. Law now depends on "genuine thought".[138] Instability here (as with the policies Donne alternatively supports and undermines) stems from the fact that the external reference point, the figure of authority who legislates the individual's activity, is not an absolute God but a fallible king, himself changeable and subjective.[139] The search for a political

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135 Roy Strong documents James's fondness for comparisons with Solomon in *Britannia Triumphans* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 16ff.

136 For example, V.14.290.830-1.

137 This is treading on thin ice, as church meetings at the height of public discontent were often used for political purposes, especially at Paul's Cross.

138 Cf. Donne's support in *Pseudomartyr* for the notion of common law as immemorial, impersonal and infallible (see Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers*, 111, 121).

139 As Ornstein points out, the attempt to establish a framework of objectively determined universal law ('God') was doomed to fail, since "The ancient custom of obedience to authority was too deeply engrained to change; what changed were the authorities themselves" ("Donne, Montaigne and Natural Law", 220). So T.M. Parker notes that "the Laudians substituted for an arbitrary and all powerful God the arbitrary and absolute prelate" (Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud*, 207); so Persons distinguished between Puritans, Catholics and Protestants on the basis of their respective derivations of authority - people, Pope and prince. According to Thomas Merrill, even Sceptics, 'natural' as opposed to 'right' reasoners, located objective truth simply in a different kind of authority (*Christian Criticism*, 139). For Donne's like substitution of a different authority within an unchanged political framework, see Lota Brown on "The Sunne Rising" (*'The Muses Common-Weale'*, edd. Summers and Pebworth, 23-33) - she expands Carey's argument that Donne appropriates rather than subverts monarchical power (*Life, Mind and Art*, 93-7).

source thus fails in the same way that the search for a metaphysical source fails; in both cases, our reference points reveal themselves to be open-ended, subjectively fixed. The discrepancy, that is, between the act of "genuine thought" and the goal of absolute knowledge, between an infinite number of formal truths and Truth, is the step between an ideal state (God's harmony) and the actual State (I.3.212.1077), between origin and beginning.

Throughout the hierarchy, we can trace the inadequacy of authority and so the destabilizing of secular truth until it too becomes no more than a contextual layer, encouraging individual determination. This occurs at the expense of Donne's immediate Church superior; although he follows the Bishop's Directions against cosmetics on numerous occasions, inveighing against "that abomination of painting" (III.3.104.474) where women "cast bird-lime for the passengers eye",[140] in another mood, he contradicts himself - and the Bishop - with a spirited defence of the practice:

> Certainly the limits of adorning and beautifying the body are not so narrow, so strict, as by some sowre men they are sometimes conceived to be ...if they that beautifie themselves, meane no harme in it, therefore there should be no harme in it ... it is an unnecessary, and insupportable burden, to put upon our score, all the lascivious glances, and the licentious wishes of other persons, occasioned by us, in over-adorning ourselves (V.15.302.220-56).

And if the Bishop's Directions can be disregarded, so can the King's - or as James I himself realized, "No Bishop, no King".[141] As we have seen, Donne's recommendation of the 1622 Directions did not prevent him from disobeying them in practice: speaking against Popery and 'mentioning the war'.

From the King's Directions, we arrive at civil government's final source of authority, the king himself. As we would expect, it is here that Donne's flattery is focussed.[142] On the vexed question of absolute prerogative, he seems for instance, to

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140 V.9.187.105-8 (1621/3?); II.17.343.311-16 (12/2/1619); III.3.103.463-104.506 (Easter Term 1620); III.10.234.348-235.362.

141 See Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud*, 194.

142 I mark a deliberate gradation here between the law of the land, as represented by the King's Directions, and the King himself - as Donne remarked in 1622, "It is not the Power of

support James's claim of an absolute right to rule: through "*Libertie*, and *independency*, and *Supremacie*, to bee under no man, and ... *Abundance*, and *Omnisufficiencie*, to neede no man" (IV.10.269.140-2).[143] Other definitions, however, stress the king's dependence on his subjects for his position; thus "Kings and subjects are Relatives ... *Relations* constitute one another" (I.3.184.25-31) and "if the servant ... be oppressed, worne out, annihilated, there is no such thing left, as a Master ... They depend upon one another, and therefore he that hath not care of his fellow, destroyes himselfe" (V.5.114.39-42). With the redefinition of the subject such relation demands, the very hierarchy becomes fantastically confused; "Bishops ... are become subject to their Subjects" (V.5.117.128-30). So Bishop, so King. In law, "there concurs, besides the authority of the Prince, the counsel and the consent of the Subject" (I.2.174.241-175.249). Still Donne does acknowledge those "extraordinary cases" where the prince's prerogative transcends formal law (he notes, however, that in such cases in the Bible, it did not).[144]

The danger with this vesting of absolute judgment is that even kings cannot be figures of absolute trust, save "in matters of *indifferent* nature, by the way" (IV.9.256.701-2). Donne cites kings subject to error, prejudice, irresponsibility, corruption and even perversion.[145] Not surprisingly, he records the Old Testament account of monarchy as a punishment - with appropriate qualifications.[146] Similarly, he quotes "That Man that said it was possible to carve the faces of all good Kings that ever were, in a Cherry-stone" in order to condemn him, but the humour and positioning of the somewhat irrelevant quip at the beginning of I.3 ensure its point (183.1-2). Such

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the King, that signes a pardon, but his Person" (V.2.63.176-7) and see fn. 126 above. It is worth noting that six years earlier, before the serious rift between Parliament and the king, Donne was happily identifying the king with the law (I.3.221.1416-7).

143 Also III.11.254.497-500 (see Itrat Husain, *The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne*, London and N.Y.: Macmillan, 1938, 21).

144 III.14.298.224ff; IV.9.257.748-60

145 III.5.147-8; VI.1.44.190-1; I.3.213.1096-8; III.8.195.311-14.

146 Relating to time and people. The progress of both is reflected in the changing nature of God's punishment, set in an amusingly legalistic structure; first he gives them a king, then two kings (the old joke), then no king at all (II.18.352.140-9).

subversive citation permits Donne, like Shakespeare's Antony, to criticize with impunity.[147]

In the face of all this, the platitude that princes are gods sits oddly in Donne's repertoire,[148] and indeed to one comparison of God and the King, he cannot forebear the mocking parenthesis, "(for we may measure the world by a Barly corne)".[149] He certainly did not go so far as to describe God as a prince, and displays surprise at a Spanish author's audacious use of this reversal to call the Holy Ghost a "good Courtier" - "(as his very word is)". He then condescendingly excuses him ("He meanes surely the same that ..."), and applies a correcting hand, descending to the Spaniard's terms: "That Spanish Author need not be suspitious of the Holy Ghost in that kinde, that he is no good Courtier so", for "in all the books of the world, you shall never reade so civill language".[150]

Although he attempts on occasion to defend the king from censure - he conceals his actions only to "countermine underminers" - Donne is forced back on to his "false thread" of relativism, *"he does but as other Kings put him to a necessity to do"*; which

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147 Or the citation may be more oblique - see Barbieri, "John Donne and *Richard II*". It should be noted that although the *citational form* was indirectly subversive, the comment was usually confined to commonplace criticism of bad kings, avoiding specific reference (see Smuts on the general practice: *Court Culture*, 81-2). Donne's sermons differ in this respect, not surprisingly, from his poetry; Milton Rugoff gives examples of the dangerous topicality of Donne's early imagery (for instance, "Elegie IV", ll. 43-4: "like a tyran King, that in his bed / Smelt gunpowder, the pale wretch shivered -") - see *Donne's Imagery: A Study in Creative Sources* (N.Y.: Russell and Russell, 1962), 153-4.

148 I.4.223.11-13; I.4.235.461-6; I.3.210.1008-10; III.3.112.781-92; III.7.183.462-6; IV.9.240.123-241.156; V.3.85.284-6.

149 V.18.371.247-8. The tone is consistent in IV.7.183.155-7, and as Rosalie Colie notes, rhypological comparisons were characteristic of the metaphysical style. Here the King is impliedly so far from being an approprate measure of Godliness as to stand representation by the lowest thing that "under incongruous dissimilar similitudes" can "ablatively" or negatively honour God (*Paradoxia Epidemica*, 24-5). This irreverence seems to resurface in what Potter and Simpson regard as a Stoic attempt to accept the Elector's defeat in V.2: "if thou look down, and see Kings fighting for Crownes, thou canst look off as easily, as from boyes at stool-ball for points here: And from Kings triumphing after victories, as easily, as a Philosopher from a Pageant of children here" (V.2.75.641-4). Lota Brown argues for something similar in "The Sunne Rising", where "juxtaposing the King to insects [and, incidentally, schoolboys again] deflates the dignity of rank" ("'In that the world's contracted thus'", in *'The Muses Common-Weale'*, edd. Summers and Pebworth, 23-33, 27).

150 IV.14.347.65-82.

actually detracts from James's claim to rule by Divine Right by subjecting him to political contingency. Eventually Donne admits that the king's person must be defended even in the face of actions "evident, and bad".[151] This view was generally held by both Calvinist and Arminian preachers. Most, like Bishop Morton, subscribed to the more extreme view that even tyrannical kings had to be not only defended, but obeyed without question.[152]

Donne went less far at this stage. His acceptance of the 'extraordinary' prerogative fell short of recognizing James's Divine Right as absolute.[153] In 1623 he declared, "when such Superiours insult over the Lord himselfe, and think themselves Gods without limitation, as the God of heaven is, when they doe so, we must tell them they doe so" (IV.14.348.120-3). The danger is defused by Donne's application of the passage to the Pope, a common disguise,[154] but the principle again emerges from an approved context into a general formulation. Such a principle only reflected James's own view, in any case - that Divine Right could become tyrannical if not conducted according to the law;[155] but John Knight of Oxford was imprisoned in 1622 for saying much as Donne had done (but with less care), that subjects could and should correct tyrants.[156] If Donne survived 1623 in the King's favour, it was partly because of his care to uphold God's supremacy only within approved contexts or in the King's own words,[157] but also because he took care to load concealed advice with praise; in his

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151 IV.9.249.473-250.475, 250.508; IV.7.187.297ff.

152 *A Sermon Preached before the King...* (1639) in Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud,* 154, and see Davies generally, 315-6. Cf. Jesuitical teaching that kings, even Popes, could be deposed if heretical (Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers,* 49ff).

153 The notion of the King possessing (general) absolute as opposed to extraordinary power was a fairly recent interpretation of the royal prerogative, based, Brian Levack suggests, on the growing interest in civil law traditions ("Law and Ideology: The Civil Law and Theories of Absolutism in Elizabethan and Jacobean England", in *The Historical Renaissance,* edd. Dubrow and Strier, 220-41). Donne may well have studied these at the Inns of Court, but his opposition to Bacon, one of the chief proponents of the field, makes it unlikely to have attracted his support (234).

154 IV.14.348.124-5, 349.149-52, 353.303-5.

155 Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons,* 100.

156 Maclure, *The Paul's Cross Sermons,* 109.

157 See Jeanne Shami, "Kings and Desperate Men: John Donne Preaches at Court", *JDJ* 6(1) (1987) 9-23: "By upholding the example of Christ as contrast to the King, by stressing the

words, "It is one thing to sow pillows under the elbows of Kings (flatterers doe so), another thing to pull the chaire from under the King, and popular and seditious men do so".[158] From the subsequent analogy with David, Shimeis and Nathan, it follows that the latter preachers are not so much wrong about their King as unwise in their approach.

From another point of view, though, the same is true of the former flatterer-preachers. A marginal comment of Donne's, "Criers up of y^{e} King's prerogative", echoes Thomas Scott's description of the culprits responsible for the suppression of Parliament: "time-servers (who) cry the laws down and cry up the prerogative".[159] Only Parliament represented a recognition of the individual's fallibility, and a need for consensus and diverse opinion.[160] Donne justifies its role by religious analogy; if "King" stands for God, yet God delegates authority to the Trinity, and may rule through either a single entity (King) or a plural ("divers Governours").[161] Then in 1621, with rumours that James was going to call his first Parliament since 1614,[162] Donne suggested the King's need for "Counsell at home" (III.11.246.190-2). Two extraordinary passages justify this in the *Devotions*. Devotion 11 locates the King as the heart of the body politic, but adds:

> the rest as *Subjects*, though in eminent *Place*, and *Office*, must contribute to that, as *Children* to their *Parents*, as all persons to all kindes of *Superiours*, though

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supremacy of the Law of both God and Conscience as the final moral arbiters, and by asserting the balance of jurisdiction between Church and State, Donne challenges [a King's court in the King's words]" (21) (Shami actually has "the King's words in a King's court," but her argument indicates the other meaning). I agree that Donne uses this method to limit tactfully the Royal prerogative, but not with Shami's assertion that the court sermons confine themselves to this sort of qualification and abjure Patterson's equivocation (10).

158 IV.14.348.115-18. The *Devotions*, for instance, abounds with Royalist praise, although Robert Cooper traces an undercurrent of critical but loyal advice to the King as David in its first half, and repeated warnings against Romanist relapse in its second ("The Political Implications of Donne's *Devotions*", *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Gary Stringer, Salzburg, 1977, 192-210). In Cooper's analysis the King is again seen as a basically good but hardly perfect ruler, and certainly a figure subject to limitations (198-203).

159 Gleason, "Dr Donne in the Court of Kings"; compare *Vox Populi*, (1620), B_3^{V}.

160 Romanists, for instance, placed the people's right to depose the king in Parliament (Doleman's *Conference* [1595] - see Clancy, *Papist Pamphleteers*, 66ff).

161 III.3.290.578-81. See Nicholls, "Divine Analogy", 574ff; so Donne actually describes God's council as "a Parliament of all States, Upper and Common house" (V.13.252.282-253.283). See also Goldberg's detection of republican medical analogies in the *Devotions*, and the rejection of the extraordinary prerogative (*James I and the Politics of Literature*, 81-2).

162 See Patterson's account in "All Donne", *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Harvey and Maus.

> oftentimes, those *Parents*, or those *Superiours*, bee not of stronger parts, then themselves, that serve and obey them that are weaker (11M: 56.25-30).

Devotion 20 speaks of the "*constant supporter of the State* by his *counsell*" - clearly the Parliamentarian, judging by the reference to bribes (perhaps another jibe at Bacon, but two years previously impeached for bribery) - and declares from a reverse assumption "that there should not belong *hands* to every *head*, *action* to every *counsell*, was never intended" (20M: 105.10-18).

Donne supported by 1623, therefore, some sort of balance between Parliament and King, as the key to an awareness of discrepancy. But can he really be compared with Milton and the Spenserians, the subjects of Norbrook's argument in *Poetry and Politics*? For one thing, he often refers to God's Kingdom in terms of James's court.[163] Yet he does also criticize the "mis-belief, a mis-conceipt, that all this religion is but a part of civill government and order" (II.8.189.343-4), and his abortive attempts to relate the two realms in more detail indicate that their internal organization need not be similar. Indeed, he finds that the immensity of the vertical distinction between heaven and earth completely flattens any gradations or horizontal distinctions that exist on earth.[164] Thus "no single sand in the sea ... is not likelyer to weigh down all the world, then all the world is to counterpose God" (III.3.95.158-61) - or, as he personifies the same discrepancy in reverse, a beggar is closer to the king, than the smallest worm is to nothing.[165] It is a barely noticeable step from this to a not simply Republican but Levelling description of "a begger, as nobly [born] as the King upon Earth" (IV.3.90.29-30). Bounded by two infinities, men are crushed into relative equality. God must

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[163] IV.15.368.175-369.177; III.7.183.453-6.

[164] Or, in Nicholls's term, the analogical is finally subject to the univocal ("Divine Analogy", 574-6).

[165] IV.2.85.822-3; IV.3.128.1449-54. Julia Smith cites this last passage to show the enormity of the concept of nothing in Donne's eyes, and so perversely ignores its political impact: "the fascination and awe which kings held for Donne make this image a particularly emotive one" ("Moments of Being and Not-Being in the Sermons," *Prose Studies* 8(3) (1985) 3-20, 4). There seems no reason not to approach the comparison from its obvious direction, and say that the fascination and awe which nothing held for Donne puts social difference in perspective (see Chapter 1).

always be Lord, but before him all are equal; if kings are Gods, Christians are also all kings, and if James personifies his Kingdom, a Christian is a commonwealth.[166]

This is one version of a wider, medieval theme still popular among preachers of Donne's time: that of democracy in death.[167] Here, man *merged* with infinity, and "that which is infinite must necessarily be equall" (V.3.80.120). Not only philosophically but *physically* "in the grave there is no distinction",[168] which for Donne was important confirmation. Though in Whitehall in 1623 he might condemn "this miserable equality of so unequall persons, by so foule a hand", the relish with which he reduces "a great and mighty Monarch" to helplessness in the face of "his own wormes" (and in the worms of his own face), and casts "one hand of death, into one Cart, into one common Tide-boate, one Hospitall, one Almeshouse, one Prison, the grave, in whose dust no man can say, This is the King, this is the Slave" hints that he too may be of Satan's party without knowing it (IV.13.333.341-334.367). Several months later, at Lincoln's Inn, he openly glorifies God's coming democratization; no longer a "foule hande" but "*Christ* shall make *Master* and *Servant* equall", although he adds the prudent, Augustinian "but not yet; not heere; nor ever, equall to himselfe, however they become equall to one another" (IV.15.377.506-8).[169] He concludes with an avowed timidity - a Republican desire, tempered by fear of the times; "*Christ* favoured himselfe in the *Church*: I dare not make

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166 IV.3.112.870-113.873; IV.8.216.229, 221.411-12. Norbrook notes that while use of the term "commonwealth" no longer at this time necessarily indicated radical beliefs, it did show a "habit of mind that saw the state as an artifice that had been created by a collective agency, rather than a natural hierarchy embodied in the person of the monarch" (*Poetry and Politics*, 49). Although cf. James's own frequent use of the phrase "well-governed Common-wealth" to refer simply to the state in his 1603 speech to Parliament (Wilson, *The History of Great Britain*, 17,19).

167 For example, John Bowle in *A Sermon Preached at Flitton...* (1614) cited Menippius from Lucan: "in death there is no *difference* betwixt a King and a *Beggar*" (Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud*, 160-1), as did Robert Horne, who speaks of the "grave the common Inne" (*Of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (1619), $H1^r$), a "peece of ground of five foote" for King and beggar ($H2^v$), "the common bagge of the earth"($H1^v$) and worms. Donne may well have read this sermon, since they also share discussions of toothache, holy dying and the Antipodes (see fn. 21 above). He had in any case read Lucan, referred to in "A Valediction: of the Booke".

168 IV.10.277.434-5; IV.1.53.290-306; III.3.105.542-3.

169 See also IV.6.177.503-4, his description the previous year to the assembled Lords of Buckingham, Northumberland and Carlisle of the contrasting glory of God's assembly: "to see *Princes*, and *Subjects*, crowned all with one crowne, and *rich* and *poore* inherit one portion".

that generall neither; to make all places equall, or all persons equall in any place" (378.514-16). If, as the *Devotions* noted, "in the *primarie* law of Nature, there was no *Proprietie*, no *Meum & Tuum*, but an universall *Communitie* over all ... no *Superioritie*, no *Magistracie*" (11M: 57.4-8), we recapture the origin only in the end.

So in November 1620, though Donne describes Republicanism and Monarchy as "two great axiomes", he adopts his usual strategy of refusing to choose between them. Instead he nominates a third, Charity; which is to say, he chooses both - "The good of the people is above all Law, and then ... The pleasure of the Prince is above all Law" (III.7.185.532-40). But realistically in the 1620s, he had no choice. Faced with the Elector's defeats in Europe - metaphorially viewed as Chaos returned[170] - order was of paramount importance.[171] In the End is the Beginning, and Donne's paraphrase of the Chaos of Revelation includes "a divorce between Princes and Prerogatives" (III.11.254.497-8 [30/5/1621]). Kingdoms represented, realistically, the most desirable *possible* form of government, though "All governments may justly represent God to mee, who is the God of Order". Donne admits simply to be "more accustomed to the contemplation of *Heaven*, in that *notion*, as *Heaven is a kingdome*, by having been borne, and bred in a Monarchy" (IV.9.241.151-5). More himself, as Norbrook points out, selected one man to create his Utopia, and most Republicans would have been quite content with the designation of the King as "God's steward for the publique".[172]

To summarize the difficulties that surround a political classification of Donne, based on the sermons of 1615-23; he was by no means non-interventionist, and insisted on speaking himself on public affairs, if only to denounce the act of so doing. He proclaimed at least publicly the line dictated by the High Anglican Church for fear of a breakdown in civil order; thus he opposed seditious speech against State foreign policy

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[170] III.6.168.434-5 (Nov. 1620); IV.7.196ff (22/9/1622).

[171] IV.7.192.485-6 (22/9/1622); Adams, *City of Peace*, 325.

[172] IV.12.313.386. See "The Monarchy of Wit" in *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Harvey and Maus, 7. The difference between republicans and absolutists lay primarily, Norbrook notes, not in acceptance of monarchy, but in republican support of political participation from below (9). See fn. 139 above, on the ingrained resistance to raising some objective law above a figure of authority.

and supported political peace, which constituted one aspect of that policy (and besides maintained order), and opposed reconciliation with Rome which constituted the other but bore directly on and threatened to undermine the Anglican Church. His points of view on most matters of policy changed dramatically; for the sake of harmony, truth adjusted to context (political or artistic) by as much as God's representative(s) fell short of God and the notion of certainty.[173] Only the ideal could obliterate imaginative doubt. Yet it was precisely this imaginative doubt arising from the absence of an ideal that constituted Donne's political engagement. The continued attempt to find and found authority is the continued attempt to begin, to register oneself and one's actions in the public realm ("without authority, understood as the act of foundation, the world as a political context has little or no connection to our experience of natality").[174] Donne's multiple acts of foundation, to the same extent that they successively undermine each other, point still in the direction of their single antitype.

On the one hand, then, the incorporation of opposing voices was to preempt protest, including, paradoxically, Donne's own. But underlying this monarchist facade, and given the voices of opposition that not only in part supply but are supplied by it, Donne's own Christian tenets could still lead his discussions of theoretical government models and political states towards some notion of a republican ideal, a notion he perhaps approached most nearly in Devotions 16-18 with the realization that "No man is an Island". This state correlated more harmoniously with God's, but could not ultimately be impressed upon the world Donne inhabited. Unlike Norbrook's apocalyptic writers, Donne locates his Republic literally in the Apocalypse, projecting it beyond the text and this earth's political consequences in the same way that he projects its general principles out from particular political contexts.[175] "Guaranteed access to a

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[173]Donne's scepticism led him similarly to espouse differing scientific 'truths' depending on their applicability to immediate context (see Carey, *Life, Mind and Art*, 235-9).

[174]Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (London: Macmillan, 1989),106.

[175]Where, that is, he does conceive of one; this is not to deny those less interesting cases, where he simply projects earthly hierarchies beyond the grave. For Donne's withdrawal of a "renovated world", the "apocalyptic promise" from history, cf. other major writers of his

truth that lies beyond individual or social construction, beyond doubt or rebellion" rests neither in a political institution (as it did for More) nor in the text of the Bible (as it did for Tyndale).[176] Textual prevarication is the only answer to political abuse; we progress in time, but the better State we approach is realized in Heaven rather than Earth.

We might say, then, that in the sermons as in the Bible, Donne finds truth to be suggestively implicated in the shifting perspectives of art. Yet both expressive and referential functions of language are concurrently present on either side of the textual plane. Aesthetic harmony smoothes its upper surface (serving political order), and political conflicts support its undersurface (undermining mutual credibility but generating artistic tension). As Carey says of the poems, the sermons "do not lie like flawless monuments upon the uncertain feelings beneath them, but allow those feelings voice and movement".[177] Outer is inner,[178] and Donne "makes both one, each this and that" ("The Extasie", l.36).

The public State divides into private persons, and one truth splinters into many, becoming art - thus the world falls to words. But in their accumulation, these words supply the text's upper unity, pointing back to their single source ("In the Beginning..."), and so forward also to a single, in(di)visible and absolute world. Where authority failed, authorship could perhaps provide the means to Truth. This is the subject of my next chapter.

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time, see Wittreich, "'Image of that horror'", in *The Apocalypse*, edd. C.A. Patrides and Wittreich, 199, 176.

176 See Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), 111.

177 *Life, Mind and Art*, 116.

178 Cf. Goldberg's assertion that Donne saw himself only as either in or out (*James I and the Politics of Literature*, 219). Norbrook views Donne's inability to transcend as the reason for his failure to maintain his desired position outside society - the traditional liberal apology ("The Monarchy of Wit," in *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Harvey and Maus, 6-7). But transcendence was not necessary even if it were possible - an exclusively external position was as undesirable as its counterpart (see Jean Starobinski, "The Inside and the Outside", *Hudson Review* 28 (1975) 333-51, 344-5).

CHAPTER THREE

Time and Text

> For, this paper is not addressed, as a ship, to a certain port, or upon any certain purpose, but expos'd to the disposition of the tyde, to the rage of the winde, to the wantonness of the Eddy, and to innumerable contingencies, till it wear out to nothing ...
>
> I.3.190.279-83

In the last chapter, the 'Mannerist' tendency of Donne's work to gesture beyond itself to a system of outlying authority only revealed the decrepitude of that system, returning the reader to its own authority, that of the word. Thus David Evett says of Mannerist systems of art that they force the reader to repeat the reading experience, or else enact it in life.[1] For Donne, I would argue, this distinction does not exist. The '*document*ary' and the '*work*like', that which is read and that which is performed, overlap in the sacramental experience of the sermon: "a dynamic, corporate event involving preacher, congregation and the Holy Spirit".[2] In his "*Elegie upon the death of the Deane of* Pauls, *Dr.* Iohn Donne", Thomas Carew distinguishes merely "plaine / And sober Christian precepts", the "Grave Homilies, and Lectures" of the pulpit (ll. 11-14) from the mysterious *event* of Donne's preaching:

> ... the flame
> Of thy brave Soule, that shot such heat and light,
> As burnt our earth, and made our darknesse bright,
> Committed holy Rapes upon our Will,
> Did through the eye the melting heart distill;
> And the deepe knowledge of darke truths so teach (ll. 14-19).

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1 "Donne's Poems and the Five Styles of Renascence Art", *JDJ* 5 (1986) 101-31, 126.

2 Thomas Merrill, *Christian Criticism: A Study of Literary God-Talk* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V., 1976), 160ff; although he distinguishes this revelatory experience from both documentary instruction and the "static literary entity".

The flame that shoots out from the text actively invades, consumes and appropriates life external to it. Other systems of authority end by collapsing concentrically into a final wheel of words that resembles nothing so much as the eponymous circular figure of Evett's first 'Renaissance' style: all-encompassing and seemingly self-propelling, sustained by the presence of a God who, alone untouched, constitutes a potential (but not kinetic) source of power.[3] Carew's contribution to the "death of the author" observes,

> So doth the swiftly turning wheele not stand
> I th'instant we withdraw the moving hand.
> But some small time maintaine a faint weake course
> By vertue of the first impulsive force (ll. 79-82),

but Donne takes the term into postmodernism with a more modest use of the same image: "neither do I speake to move a wheele that stood still, but to keepe the wheele in due motion" (IV.10.281.591-3).[4] Carew's is a tribute to the personal quality of poetic inspiration which continued to affect others after Donne's death; Donne's an acknowledgement that he himself, in his most exalted moments, could be carried away by its general momentum. In this chapter, I would like to turn inward and upward, from the events of the world to the event of the text.

The course of a wheel is twofold. On the one hand it describes a revolution, which in absolute terms indicates, like 'renaissance', a return to beginning: a yearning of Donne's that we have traced metaphysically in Chapter 1 and in the political sense of Chapter 2, as a "restauring, a revolving back, to the old order, of the way things ought to

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3 "Donne's Poems", 127. Were God's influence kinetic, collapsing 'Mannerist' into 'Renaissance' would constitute Evett's 'Baroque'. Writing to Goodyer, Donne does wish this "wheel ... concentrique to God" in turn (*Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. M. Thomas Hester, Delmar, N.Y.: Scolars Facsimile Press, 1977, 61), but cf. *Devotions*, 10M: 51.5-11: "*Natures nest of Boxes* ... are *Concentrique* ... the light of *God* ... only ... bends not to this *Center*."

4 Anthony Low argues in "The 'Turning Wheele': Carew, Jonson, Donne ... Law of Motion" that these poets anticipated the First Law of Motion, which reversed ancient notions to state that everything moved unless prevented from so doing by friction or resistance (*JDJ* 1 (1982) 69-80). However, he overstates his case at least with regard to Carew's passage; the wheel continues to move of its own natural force "some small time" only, and no explanation is suggested for its eventual stopping other than the withdrawal of Donne's actively "moving hand ... the first impulsive force". Donne's comment also fails to support the theory.

be". N.J.C. Andreasen coined the term "conservative revolutionary" of Donne, but it is, as Hannah Arendt remarks, every revolutionary's conservative desire to refound the origin, to return "to the way things were before they were violated by the despotism of Absolute Monarchy".[5] On the other hand, at the same time that revolution returns a wheel to its original position relative to its own components, it also carries the wheel forward, relative to time and space.[6] Insofar as Donne's text is grounded against the world, its movement registers passage; insofar as his text seeks to include the world, its movement ultimately attempts to absorb passage. This chapter will examine Donne's approach to forward linear movement, and the way it manifests itself in the narratives of time and text. The reader has examined process (beginning) and situation (in the world); he must now look to the means of the journey, the medium of progress.

A. Time

Time and eternity bear the same relation to each other as the public and ideal states of Chapter 2. Bound to one, we strive constantly for 'the other'. Ricardo Quinones in his classic work, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time,* associates the increasing urgency with which writers pursued this vision of a non-contingent[7] immortality from the fourteenth century onwards with the increasing secularization of the time. No longer were the feudal community prepared to await with patience their just reward, "without murmuration and difficulty";[8] the rise of capitalism created the desire for individual profit in temporal terms, and clocks swiftly arrived on the scene to measure the new

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5 *On Revolution* (N.Y.: Viking, 1965), 41ff. See Chapter 2, pp. 91ff.

6 Uniform circular motion in the same place is, in Plato's *Timaeus*, attributed only to the world, belonging as it does to pure intelligence and reason (trans. Desmond Lee, Penguin, 1977, 45-6); the divine bodies revolve but also advance, as here (55).

7 Donne in my head-quote from 1616 supplies the *OED* with its first recorded use of this sense of *contingency*: "A chance occurrence; an event the occurrence of which could not have been, or was not foreseen; an accident, a casualty" (p. 825, 4a).

8 *The Book of the Craft of Dying* , ed. Frances Comper (London: Longmans, 1917), 15-18; see Chapter 2, p. 78.

consciousness.[9] As Donne writes, "so short is life, that every peasant strives,/ In a torne house, or field, to have three lives" (*The first Anniversary*, ll. 133-4). Yet if the individual's timespan could be expanded vicariously through children or (for those of a more Stoic temperament) through fame,[10] both humanist attempts at historical continuity time and again revealed their flaws. Disillusion set in, and the classical figure of Father Time as "creative Eternity" merged darkly with the medieval figure of Saturn, devourer of progeny and destroyer of "spurious values".[11] After 1600, Quinones concludes, the metaphysicals reverted to a more spiritual perspective.[12]

Donne's mediaeval heritage has been well-documented; yet he had much of the humanist in him.[13] On the evidence, he subscribed speculatively to both these humanist endeavours. With 12 children in 14 years, he effectively milked his wife to death: clearly no mere side-effect of conjugal affection, since he continued long after her death in 1617 to insist publicly on propagation as the justification of marriage.[14] Ostensibly this was according to Christian doctrine - the duty of man was to repopulate heaven after the fall of the angels - but Donne's humanist interest is plain: "*Propagation* is the truest Image and nearest representation of eternity".[15] On the Stoic front, he produced three books, and prepared for future publication what today amount to ten volumes of sermons.[16] That he viewed children and fame as the twin flanks of an offensive on time

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9 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1972), 3-20. See also Carlo Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture 1300-1700* (London: Collins, 1967), 39ff.

10*The Renaissance Discovery*, 497-9.

11See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1972), ch. 3: 93.

12*The Renaissance Discovery*, 495.

13See Thomas Sloane's argument that "Donne was more the humanist than Milton", in *Donne, Milton and the End of Humanist Rhetoric* (Berkeley and London: Univ. of California Press, 1985), xi.

14II.17.339.165-342.261; III.1.68.282ff; III.11.244.101ff. In this last passage, he denounces any couple's refusal to have children, "To hinder it by Physick, or any other practise; nay to hinder it so far, as by a deliberate wish, or prayer against children" (245.139-41).

15*Essays*, 69.26-7. See also I.3.222.1427-8; V.5.116.114-15. Cf. Robert Watson's argument that Donne set "immortal lines" against "mortal lineage": "*The Rest is Silence*": *Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1994), 229-39.

16His refusal to publish his poetry, far from disproving his desire for fame, is precisely evidence of a particular concern with *how* he might be remembered. The more 'serious' writing of his later years he showed no concern to withhold. Thus he speaks of having

is indicated by his frequent association of the two spheres, in both life and work. Hence it was for his eldest son, John, who was to carry forward his name and, he hoped, profession, that he wrote out transcripts for most of the sermons - to be published posthumously, but under the nonetheless active editorship of a 'John Donne'. In his work, conversely, he speaks of the *Devotions as* his progeny, following the tradition traced by Quinones: "*In this* last Birth, *I my selfe am borne a* Father: *This* Child *of mine, this* Booke, comes into the world, from *mee, and* with *mee... so shall I live*" (*Epistle*, 10-19).

Donne therefore does not abjure the public, temporal world's attempts at continuity; still, as I argued in my last chapter, neither does the pressure of time pluck him cleanly from "aesthetic awareness to ethical action".[17] One face rather defines another, as time is the moving image of eternity; or at least in its intimations of its own immortality, a preparation for rest. I would like to argue that Donne works through the realization of Shakespeare's late plays and Milton's later poems, as described by Quinones: "from the forced experience of the hazards of succession, hazards which dispossess him of natural and human reliances" - "the disposition of the tyde ... the rage of the winde ... the wantonesse of the Eddy"[18] - through to a "sense of being" that transcends physical forces:[19] that his writing is itself a type of action that aims, not at "a certain port", but at its own fulfilment - a mergence with the eternal, a wearing out to nothing.

In Chapter 1, we saw how acutely Donne experienced the hazards of succession. Unable to locate a single origin in time, he was forced to experience every moment as its own origin: potentially isolated, threatened with discontinuity and beset on all sides by

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"descended to print anything in verse" (Gosse, I.302), and in his witty justification for printing *Conclave Ignatii* of his reluctance "to descend to this kind of writing" (he refers to "another book formerly published" without any excuse in sight: Gosse, I.254). Critics continue to apply misleading misreadings of emphasis - see as recently as Richard Wollman, who uses these comments to illustrate Donne's "ambivalence in regard to publishing anything in print" ("The 'Press and the Fire': Print and Manuscript Culture in Donne's Circle", *SEL* 33 (1993) 85-97, 92-3).

[17]Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery*, 495.

[18]See headnote.

[19]*The Renaissance Discovery*, 459.

"innumerable contingencies", political or otherwise.[20] Marjorie Nicolson's statement that "Shakespeare lived in a world of time, Milton in a universe of space" dissociates, if not sensibility, then intellectual perception; for, logically concurrent with Donne's technique of infinite division to suggest a visibly infinite possibility in ever-dividing, ever-contracting space, there runs a temporal consciousness that the elusive "sense of being" characteristic of eternity can only be simulated by what Quinones calls "a sense of presentness and a sense of contraction" - the "readiness" to live all life not only from, but infinitely within the fullness of a moment.[21] Narrative self-consciousness too must be refined to its most immediate point, since continuity is not guaranteed and every such point, every linguistically represented moment, may well be our last.

The attempt to refine a moment of time to its 'purest essence', to fix it at its own imagined origin remains, however, never-ending. Time is Plato's "eternal moving image of the eternity which remains for ever at one",[22] and a final implosion that escapes measurement is inconceivable. The push forward to an impossible future thus mirrors the push backward to an impossible beginning; no thing and all time blend at the boundary into God's province. Nonetheless, insofar as the principal aim of the sermons is to image the passage to God, I would like in this section to trace Donne's awareness and representation of the chase from time to eternity in the 'darkness visible' that constitutes the text.

1. God's "Timeless Time"

In his Preface to *Pseudomartyr*, Donne draws the traditional distinction between Divinity and "temporall matters".[23] Subsequent attempts to describe atemporality, however, come up against the logical and imaginative difficulty, that once within this realm

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[20]Quinones describes the general experience of this in the sixteenth century as distinguishing it from the fourteenth (*The Renaissance Discovery*, 175-86).

[21]*The Renaissance Discovery*, 26-7.

[22]*Timaeus*, 51.

[23](London, 1610), B_3^v.

distinctions can no longer be drawn. Externally, the concept presents no boundaries that Donne can get his mind around: "I cannot name a time, when Gods love began, it is eternal, I cannot imagine a time, when his mercy will end, it is perpetual" (I.1.167.612-14). Even from within, eternity lacks differentiation, and since "It cannot be expressed, nor conceived" (III.12.266.379), Donne conveys it in the wholly inappropriate temporal terms of the Bible (2 *Peter* 3:8): "with God one daye is as 1000 yeares, and 1000 yeares as one day ... It is all one when that fire beginnes that shall never goe out" (II.6.146.91-6)- thus measuring, as he emphasizes, precisely "the <u>different</u> computations between God and us" (II.6.146.88-9). Non-differentiation is conveyed by differentiation, and description depends and ends on paradox: Christ is "slain from the beginning of the world" (I.9.305.161-2), from "that beginning which was without beginning, the eternal beginning, for there Christ came in that eternal decree, that he should come" (I.9.306.173-5). Generally, words are redefined in ways that break down their distinctive meanings. God "is, before *Abraham* was" (III.5.134.3-4); Christ suffers for

> *eternity*; which though it doe infinitely exceed all *time*, yet is in this consideration, lesse then any part of time, that it is *indivisible*, eternity is so; and though it last for ever, is all at once, eternity is so. And from this point, this *timelesse time*, time that is all *time*, time that is no *time*, from all eternity, all the sins of the world were gone over him (II.5.139.304-9).

Paralleling the move from being to nothingness, we are forced backward into a pre-Babel world, where words with separate, distinguished meanings dissolve again into the original Word of God that is all-inclusive and absolute - the perfect Adamic language.

Intellectual failure, then, results in failure of the imagination: Donne "cannot imagine a time" for God (I.1.167.613; II.15.321.382-3). In fact, he goes so far as to project this failure into the life to come: "this eternity, this Everlastingnesse is not only incomprehensible to us in this life, but even in heaven we can never know it experimentally" (IV.2.87.879-81).

Since we cannot therefore visualize God's 'history' in our inescapably evolutionary perception of time, to place "our days" in the scale of "the unmeasured measure of his owne" (V.8.181.486), the convenient solution, as with the atemporal

procession of the Trinity, is to view it by internal relation:[24] typologically. Tracing God's actions from Old to New Testament, we observe a history-of-the-word instead of interpreting the word of the text in isolation. This progressive rather than analytical approach concentrates more on the *sequence* of the parts than the parts themselves. Hence, Frye argues, typology makes Biblical mythology diachronic, compared to most other synchronic mythologies.[25] Certainly it involves an evolving perspective; the reader is located in the Bible's continuous framework, alongside David but between retrospect and prospect, Adam and Christ (II.1.69.748-56). Since s/he participates in history, her/his position maintains its immediacy: "we are able to interpret some places of the *Revelation*, better then the *Fathers* could do, because we have seen the fulfilling of some of the *Prophecies* of that Book, which they did but conjecture upon" (I.3.216.1231-4).

And yet there is more to typology than simply establishing an historical chain, an effect equally achieved by Puritanical literal-historical exegesis.[26] The relationship between type, reader and antitype becomes in the complex process of discussion more than merely sequential. Another application of the same text used above locates the reader paradigmatically rather than syntagmatically: "First then, all these things are *literally* spoken of *David*; By *application*, of us: and by *figure*, of Christ. *Historically*, *David*; *morally*, we; *Typically*, Christ is the subject of this text" (II.3.97.96-8). Here historical difference has been absorbed into the present spoken moment. The reader instead *merges* in time with David and Christ - as Terry Sherwood remarks, "Donne's conception of typology invests time with a crucial importance that incarnates all value, past, present and future, in the immediate moment within the believer".[27] Through typology, man both evokes and aspires to the vision of God, for whom "future, and present, and past is all one" (I.9.305.142); through historical linking he aims to obliterate

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[24]See Chapter 4 , p. 168.

[25]*The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1983), 83.

[26]A distinguishing feature of the metaphysical preachers was their preference for typological exegesis (Horton Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud; The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645*, San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1986, 62-6).

[27]*Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought* (Univ. of Toronto Press, 1984), 178.

history, and by reversing the route of God's verbal intrusion into our time, he seeks to recapture the experience of eternity.

A strange interface thus exists between eternity and time. God's world cannot be conceived of in terms of temporal boundaries; and yet the logical paradox exists that passage from the temporal into the atemporal *must* be defined by time - the atemporal is effectively bounded by time in the transition, in the very notion that a transition is possible. When Donne asks, "Are you so reconcil'd to Christ Jesus now ... that you durst welcome that Angel which should come at this time, and sweare that time should be no more ...?" (II.15.324.498-502), it is "and", the conjunction of faith rather than logic, which carries the weight of the reconciliation.[28] Donne's logical attempts to reach this conjunction, to escape present time to the timelessness of beyond-life-and-text remain impossible. Searching ever farther, he is only able to assert negatively, and finds his final point always ahead:

> *after all this,* (so that this is not my last act, to dye, nor my last scene, to lie in the grave, nor my last *exit*, to goe out of the grave) *after,* says *Job*; And indefinitely, *After*, I know not how soone, nor how late, I presse not into Gods secrets for that; but, *after all this*, *Ego*, I, I that speak now, and shall not speak then, silenced in the grave, I that see now, and shall not see then ... (III.3.92.55-61).

This obvious "longing ... to make his peroration an apocalyptic foreshadowing of humanity's escape from time"[29] emerges constantly. As he declares his orientation towards the future, "Creatures of an inferiour nature are possest with the *present*; *Man* is a *future Creature*" (VIII.2.75.458-9). Approvingly he cites Hebrew's lack of a present tense as evidence that man's attention should be directed rather to expectation and memory, to the awaiting of Christ's reappearance;[30] future, based on past, determine present concerns.

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[28]Compare the bald transition in Holy Sonnet X: "death, thou shalt die".

[29]M. M. Mahood, *Poetry and Humanism* (London: Cape, 1950), 158.

[30]Eugene Hill concludes this is an original, moralized view of Donne's own ("John Donne's Moralized Grammar: A Study in Renaissance Christian Hebraica", in *Papers in the History of Linguistics*, edd. Hans Aarslef, Louis Kelly, and Hans-Josef Niederehe, Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1987, 189-98).

Yet elsewhere Donne complains of "a life built of past and future, not proposing any constant present" as "wretched" and "useless": "a line discontinued", consisting of points that "concur not".[31] Not surprisingly, the exponential nature of future projection frustrates him in the same way as the quest for an origin. Imagination is perpetually subject to logical satisfaction. As Quinones records, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, man's blind faith in his ability to guarantee continuity and succession gradually disappeared. By Donne's time, the overreaching of time to mediate directly with eternity no longer seemed possible; Spenser, for instance, began by pursuing a policy of constant succession and continuity via the heroic process, only to lose faith in the face of mutability and leave his poem unfinished.[32] Donne's solution in the search for beginning was to turn back in on himself; here again, he abandons endless apocalyptic projection to concentrate his attention on the directly present, immediate time of the sermon. In the very confession of weakness, he glimpses salvation: "I am the worst present man in the world; yet the instant, though it be nothing, joins times together".[33] The present, that is, is not to be *ignored*: "This life is not a Parenthesis, a Parenthesis that belongs not to the sense, a Parenthesis that might be left out, as well as put in" (III.13.288.512-13). Rather it is itself conjunctive, fundamental for the sense of what is to come.[34] Its very status as 'nothing' foreshadows our final transfiguration, while as an "instant", it is a type of Donne's eternity - "lesse then any part of time ... *indivisible* ... this point" (II.5.139.305-7).[35] It is here that the two perspectives of typology converge; events are aligned in historical sequence, but also translated into the same spoken space. We see simultaneously *in relation to* and *from within* - for faith we

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[31]Gosse, I.219.

[32]*The Renaissance Discovery*, 175-86, 285-9.

[33]Gosse, I. 215.

[34]Julia Smith discusses Donne's attraction to the "significant moment of time, which bridges disparates" ("Moments of Being and Not-Being in Donne's Sermons", *Prose Studies* 8(3) (1985) 3-20, 3). However, her insistence that this present moment excludes past and future overlooks Donne's deeply typological impulses (16). Smith's own argument, that Donne was desperate generally to "force( ) continuity between the past and the present" (18), indicates the awareness instead of a relative perspective, on Donne's part if not the critic's.

[35]Medieval Hebrew grammarians traditionally described the present as an indivisible point between future and past (Hill, "John Donne's Moralized Grammar", 190).

try to escape time for eternity, while for reason we try to express eternity in time. Both by imaginative projection and logical representation, the future depends on the present and can be derived from it. From, and even within the Now, the antitypical future appears as both imminent and immanent:

> the Apostle could not properly use this present word *Now*, with relation to that which is not now, that is, to future glory, otherwise then as that future glory hath a preparation and an inchoation in present grace; for so even the future glory of heaven hath a *Now*, now the elect children of God have by his powerful grace a present possession of glory (II.12.251.26-32).

2. The "Time of the Sermons"[36]

> A writer's view of time and history is more truly and interestingly revealed by his characteristic modes of expression, than by his explicit statements about history.
>
> Achsah Guibbory, *The Map of Time*, p. 31

One of the earliest of Donne's references to the immediate time of the sermon comes in I.6, where he says of the speed of grace, "we must not insist long upon it, lest we be longer in expressing it, then it was in doing" (259.250-1). A parallel is suggested between the time of an action and the time of its reporting; events transformed into narrative should ideally maintain their original duration - or at any rate, not exceed it.[37] Donne's concern reveals an uneasy awareness of the time-lag of language, that even words immediately received can never quite keep pace with the events they record.[38] On another occasion when time does overwhelm the teller, the consequences are dire: not the speed of grace but "Deadly wounds and deadly sicknesses spread themselves all

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[36]II.7.168.154.

[37]Cf. Renaissance ideas on the dramatic unity of time: see Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge: U.P., 1970), 125ff.

[38]The problematic time-lag of letters Donne acknowledges in his jocular excuse for not having written to George Gerrard: "whensoever I tell you how I doe, by a Letter, before that Letter comes to you, I shall be otherwise, then when it left me" (*Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, 240). Awareness of the futility of trying to keep up to date by post doubtless underlies in part Donne's general avoidance of "news" in his letters; as he tells Sir Henry Goodyer, "There can scarce be any piece of that, or of those things whereof you require light from me, that is not come to your knowledge by some clearer way between the time of your letter and this" (Gosse, II.226). (Also, jokily, "Goe, and catche a falling starre", ll. 23-7).

over, so fast, as that the Holy Ghost, in relating it, makes it all one, to tell the beginning, and the end thereof" (II.2.81.340-2). In this scenario, real time subsumes narrative time, as passing event not only overlaps but overtakes present narration; language can neither warn, nor so much as guarantee the immediate truth of its own representations.

History's headstart can be caught back, however, and the movement reversed in favour of narrative, with a Neo-Classical solution to the unity of time. The 'artificial day' proposed by Aristotle's Renaissance commentators (though not Aristotle himself) allowed the artist to metaphorically order events from a point of narrative retrospect.[39] Historical duration was shortened and linear chronicling curtailed, allowing the writer to present "an artificial perspective on the serial flow of historical events" by coming at their climactic close; "It is not a form of experience, but rather a point of view from which experience becomes fully intelligible" - "the terminal, privileged moment of perceptible change ... at the end of the 'whole story'".[40] This, I would suggest, is precisely the effect obtained by Donne's technique of metaphorical telescoping,[41] where he compresses "a type of the whole year in a Lent";[42] Lent itself into a single night, "but the Vigill, the Eve of Easter: to so long a Festivall as never shall end, the Resurrection" (IV.1.45.2-3); and all historical time into a single day: "the whole circle of time, and before time was, and when time shall be no more, makes up but one Judgment day to him" (II.15.312.61-3). Although this is God's eternal perspective, Donne, too, crams the Creation telescopically (and parenthetically) into a brief portion of his sermon: "(for we must pass through all the six dayes in a few minuts)" (II.11.241.236-7). The artist also is the God of his creation, refined not so much out of existence as into it.

For we must ask where this perspective places Donne in his own account. Rosalie Colie mentions what she calls Donne's familiar device in "Upon the

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[39]See David Riggs, "The Artificial Day and the Infinite Universe", *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5(2) (1975) 155-85, 155-9.

[40]Riggs, "The Artificial Day", 168-9.

[41]Cf. other mannerists such as Francisco de Quevedo (see L. Elaine Hoover, *John Donne and Francisco de Quevedo: Poets of Love and Death*, Chapel Hill: Univ. of N.C. Press, 1978, 35).

[42]Gosse, I.228; see also II.18.361.483-4.

Annunciation and the Passion Falling Upon One Day, 1608" of "compressing linear time into a single, deeply significant point", concluding that this point "becomes less a *punctum temporis* than a *punctum ex tempore*".[43] In the poem, "One Day" again collapses beginning and ending; but where does this leave the speaker at the end of the day? What remains at "the end of the 'whole story'"? To discover this, we must examine not only Donne's themes and metaphors, but his enactment of process which takes the implications of these to their logical conclusion.

For it is not enough, finally, for Donne to bring his audience down to the prospect of a 'Last Day'. By the seventeenth century, time ticked readily by in minutes, as Donne was well aware[44] - and his instinct for precision and refinement led him not so much to *carpe diem* as *carpe momentum*. Taken to its limits, time is telescoped eventually, graphically, to the minute of a "Now" in the measure of a sentence: "Let him that hath been buried *sixty* years, *forty* years, *twenty* years ... rise now, now *this minute*, and then, as *Adam* that dyed *five thousand* before, shall be no sooner in heaven, in his body, then you" (III.4.133.698-701). As we sweep triumphantly toward the present, the passive, third person evocation of another "living, buried man" ("Let him that hath been buried") becomes a resounding direct address to the present congregation ("*Adam* ... shall be no sooner in heaven, in his body, then you").[45] We have arrived at the "now" of the sermon that is also the "intense, eternal *now* of prayer",[46] and it is from within this concentrated present that Donne strives to speak.

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[43]*Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: U.P., 1966), 136.

[44]Private clocks were increasingly popular, and the minute hand became correspondingly more common (Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture,* 49-50). Donne's "Elegie XIX" seems to refer to such a personal timepiece either directly or by analogy: "Unlace your self, for that harmonious chyme,/Tells me from you that now it is bed time" (ll. 9-10).

[45]Contrast, for instance, Donne's dismal evocation of an unsuccessful preacher: "They will do nothing of that which thou hast said to them ... they will do nothing of that, which during the time of the Sermons, they had said to their own souls, they would do" (II.7.168.152-5). The addresser and addressees, the "I" and the "you", are here absent even in the moment of address, and the moment itself is fast slipping away. Initially, Donne speaks of it as already, but simply, past ("thou hast said"); when he comes to reiterate it, it has receded into more distant time still ("they had said"), mirroring the preacher's ineffectuality.

[46]Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, "Time, Place and the Congregation in Donne's Sermons", in *Literature and Learning in Medieval and Renaissance England: Essays Presented to Fitzroy Pyle*, ed. John Scattergood (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1984), 197-215, 208.

> It is an extensive word, *Now*; for though we dispute whether this *Now*, that is, whether an instant be any part of time or no, yet in truth it is all time; for whatsoever is past, was, and whatsoever is future, shall be an instant; and did and shall fall within this *Now* (II.12.250.10-13).

In this passage, narrative time finally overtakes real, narrated time as Donne describes the collapse of all events into the present verbal moment, "*this Now*", this "extensive word, *Now*". Past, reported action is effectively replaced by the present word that reports it, thus reversing the Creation; in Donne's implosion back to the beginning, flesh becomes word. At last ahead of the past, left definitively and superlatively without history, the spoken, speaking Now becomes its own subject, and the action it reports is its own. By the time Donne comes to describe the call to Resurrection in the *Devotions*, we see three things in operation: firstly, the narrative voice works so fast on the dead man that it paradoxically 'gets before' itself, pre-empting the actual event of resurrection ("Though I be dead, I shall hear the voice");[47] secondly, the narrative becomes its own event ("the sounding of the voice, and the working of the voice shall be all one");[48] and thirdly, historical time is elided ("all shall rise there in a lesse *Minute*, then any one dies here") (2E: 13.22-5).[49]

Speaking about speaking, writing about writing; throughout his work, Donne uses an awareness of the acutely experienced (heard, read) word to insist on an urgent and intensified present consciousness. As he confesses in a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer, "no man's letters might be better wanted than mine, since my whole letter is nothing else but

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[47]Groucho Marx's rejoinder, "Madam, if I get any closer, I'll be behind you!" operates on similar lines; as we approach moments of liminal excitement, logic emerges the wrong side of itself.

[48]Cf. Anne Ferry on Donne's attempts in the poetry to fuse experience and word, to "give shape to moments in time as he experiences them so that his interpretation becomes part of the experience itself rather than existing independently as a permanent literary record of passing minutes" (*'All in War with Time': Love Poetry of Shakespeare, Donne, Jonson, Marvell*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1975, 76). (I would argue, though, that the two are not mutually exclusive).

[49]Julia Smith focusses on this imagined simultaneity of action and reportage by whose means the moment of resurrection is quicker than the moment of death, as "this moment which forces continuity between the past and the present" ("Moments of Being", 18); but more interesting than the fairly obvious comfort provided by such a scenario is the way narrative time, the time of "the voice", displaces the time of the event.

a confession that I should and would write".[50] One of his most frequent motifs as a preacher is the length of his own sermons - or rather their duration, for he is concerned with the psychological time undergone by his congregation.[51] In I.6, he declares himself against preaching either too long or too often, since this might invite the opinion that "the sanctifying of the Sabbath consists in the patience of the hearing" (261.331-2). Actually, as it turns out, there are indications that this opinion may at least partly be justified in Donne's view, for patience exacerbates the present and makes the happening moment conscious. On a number of occasions, Donne invokes his listeners' patience, apologizing for the length of his oration - "this exercise of your *Devotion*, and perchance *Patience*" (II.1.51.93); "no farther tediousnesse... I can promise no more shortnesse" (IV.6.164.30-1). At other times he does promise beforehand to be brief (II.10.225.448-52; II.5.131.6ff). But whatever his approach, Donne's digressions upon his listeners' immediate, long-suffering experience do not serve to relieve it; rather the contrary. It is often when he is most sedulous not to tire his congregation that he tends to be most long-winded. IV.3 provides perhaps the clearest illustration of this, where Donne begins by emphasizing the importance of "succinctnesse and brevity" (IV.3.92.119), only to speak for what, by even a conservative estimate, must have amounted to two or three hours.

This was certainly long by Donne's standards - he cites an hour-long sermon as "a Compasse, that all Ages have thought sufficient" (IV.15.378.520),[52] and Richard Brathwayte's notes testify to his usual compliance with this.[53] For one thing, the standard gave Donne a convenient metaphor precisely for the compass of all ages. His numerous references to hourglasses and hourly bells visible or audible within the Church supplied not only physical reminders of time passing, but microcosmic images for the

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[50]Gosse, I.171. See also I.123.

[51]As Ní Chuilleanáin stresses, "To study the role of time in Donne's sermons is ... to recognize the importance in those sermons of the congregation's unanimous *presence*, involving place as well as time" ("Time, Place and the Congregation", 213-14).

[52]See also II.15.319.307; III.10.232.278-9; III.9.206.1; IV.15.378.517-20.

[53]Gosse, II.235.

span of human life.[54] Thus the congregation are made to "see the houre-glasse running to the death of the houre" (II.9.203.215) with the same fear as the dying man who sees that "his Glass was run out, his Bell was rung out" (I.6.264.462-3). Donne describes the baby literally "borne when the glasse was turned, and dyed before it was run out" (I.8.294.318-9), but he warns also those present: "who knowes whether your patience, that you will heare, or who knowes whether yours, or my life, that you can heare, shall last to the end of this houre?" (III.10.226.40-2).[55]

The sermon's measure becomes the measure of life; all experience is contracted to the endurance of the hour. Ní Chuilleanáin sees this as directly opposed to the precepts of dramatic unity,[56] but Donne has, as I have argued, worked through a framework similar to that devised by the latter's proponents, telescoping historical evolution to the point of immediate performance; "Now" both "designes the whole Age of this world from the Creation, to the dissolution thereof (for, all that is comprehended in this word, *Now*)" *and* "is intended most especially of that very act, which we do now at this present, that is, of the Ministery of the Gospell ... of Preaching his word)" (VIII.9.219.3ff). Through preaching of preaching, stretching out the definition of the present moment and thus actually enacting the present continuum, Donne arrives at the crest of pure, metaphorical convergence, when Frank Kermode's *kairos* (virtual time) becomes *chronos* (real time), and the present hour is genuinely all we live in.[57]

To realize the time of the sermon, therefore, requires a level of self-consciousness on the part of the audience. In the same way that Augustine measured time as no more than the continuum of duration in consciousness[58] (and anticipating Berkeley's extreme

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[54]III.9.206.1; I.1.161.367; I.5.250.515-6; II.12.260.364-5. Josef Lederer examines Donne's general use of clocks to symbolize life's brevity ("John Donne and the Emblematic Practice", *RES* 22 (1946) 182-200, 188).

[55]Cf. the warning to the reader in *Essays on Divinity*: "as it is yet possible that you will read this book thorow now, but if you discontinue it (which is in your liberty) it is then impossible to your knowledge" (29.23-6).

[56]"Time, Place and the Congregation", 211-12.

[57]*The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: U.P., 1968), 46ff.

[58]See Robert Cushman, "Greek and Christian Views of Time", *JR* 33 (1953) 254-65, 261-4.

development of this theory), Donne argues that "7 years make but an instant to that man, that thinks of himself, but once in 7 years" (II.3.108.494-5). It is this instant which Donne seeks to sustain in his sermons, for here, "As the mind becomes conscious of itself- in-the-present it is able to rise 'above time understood as mere succession', a feat that corresponds to the rhetorical act of making an artificial order".[59] From the 'crisis plot' of the ancients, we derive the apocalypse plot of seventeenth century preaching, of which we may likewise ideally say:

> the present moment reveals itself as an available means to the 'end' of its own history. To make this discovery is to acquire a subjective awareness of time. Past, present and future cease to be an undifferentiated medium of flux and change that includes the self. They become instead an object of conscious thought, susceptible to arrangement, manipulation, and control from within the present.[60]

The triumph of language for Donne is its ability to create and enunciate the possibility of that present moment; the rhetorical act is also an act of rhetoric.

3. The Point of Eternity

Chapter 1 examined Donne's tendency to contract and divide physical space in his search for the finally indivisible point of origin, citing amongst other things the general appeal to the age of microcosmic analogies, epitomes and small copies.[61] The related compression of time I have suggested here has received rather more attention from Donne critics. Jonathan Kamholtz, for example, describes Donne as "fascinated by the smallest units of time, in the moments in time that cannot be sustained ... when another state of time is imminent".[62] This he contrasts with the usual Elizabethan tendency to annex small units to large, and certainly, from one point of view, Donne appears to be moving in the opposite direction. His natural tendency is to divide days into tithes, and

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[59]Riggs, "The Artificial Day", 180.

[60]Riggs, "The Artificial Day", 170.

[61]See, for instance, Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the "New Science" upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry*, rev. ed. (N.Y.: Columbia U.P., 1960), 57-61.

[62]"Imminence and Eminence in Donne", *JEGP* 81 (1982) 480-91, 480.

tithes into hours, annexing the small to the still smaller (III.9.206.5-8). On the other hand, as with Pascal's atom, such a process can lead the dissecter to a whole new world. In the course of arguing for Donne as atomist, David Hedrich Hirsch notes that *atomos* was Greek for moment, and defined in mediaeval thought the smallest measure of time, about 15/94 of a second.[63] We can reclaim Hirsch's particular argument here for our own purposes, since Donne's "conceptual linkage of the atom with time" (83) derives from a paradox more familiar to him than its linkage with space and the infinite.[64] Hirsch observes how the "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington" "link the word, 'Atome' with the suggestive term 'minutes', which can be read as both tiny particles of matter and tiny particles of time". He concludes that, "The effect is a probing of the incomprehensible gap between death and rebirth, formlessness and reformation, the intelligible time of minutes preceding the Apocalypse and the vastness of eternity merely a twinkling of an eye later. In this critical space between time and timelessness is the infinitely minute atom" (the infinitely atomic minute, the NOW).[65]

By moving inwards, therefore, Donne is still seeking to annex the smallest units of time to the largest in the approved Elizabethan manner, in the same way that he did with space. Thomas Traherne in my first chapter represented the later expansionist school of thought that Kamholtz obviously has in mind, and his attitude to time is, as one might expect, correspondingly contrary to Donne's. For Traherne, just as infinite comes to mean merely indefinite,[66] so (eliding Boethius's distinction)[67] eternity comes to

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[63]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies: Deconstructed Bodies and the Resurrection of Atomic Theory", *SEL* 31(1) (1991) 69-94, 83.

[64]See my disagreement with Hirsch over Donne's atomic theories in Chapter 1 (pp. 35ff).

[65]"Donne's Atomies and Anatomies", 84. Hirsch seems unaware of the discrepancy he creates between the atom as matter and the atom as time, by juxtaposing with this statement an atomistic argument for Donne's theory of matter. There he argues that there *is* no "incomprehensible gap" between form and formlessness, matter and non-matter, in Donne's mind, because for him there is nothing beyond the atom, *no* "vastness of eternity". The "intelligible time of minutes", the intelligible space of atoms, he suggests there, is our final frontier.

[66]See Chapter 1, fn. 107.

[67]See Richard Dales, "Time and Eternity in the Thirteenth Century", *JHI* 49 (1988) 27-45, 27-9.

mean simply perpetuity: "not a *nunc stans* but an infinite successive duration or extension of time".[68] As Cusanus deduced,

> Within itself, the mind finds the simple concept and 'principle' of the point: and from this, after continuously repeated movements, it produces the line, the surface, and the entire world of extension. Within itself the mind finds the simple idea of 'now', out of which unfolds the infinity of temporal series ... By virtue of this [creative] power the human mind enters into time and yet remains above time understood as mere succession. For, as the origin and creator of science, the human mind is not so much in time, as time is in it. The mind itself, by virtue of its power of discretion, creates definite time intervals and time divisions and draws the boundaries between the hours, months, and years.[69]

For Donne and the microcosmic school, this direction of thought is reversed. We begin in the *world* with a vague awareness of time and extension, and refine this through a series of "continuously repeated movements" into an increasingly acute consciousness of self in the here and now. Time is divided to distinguish thought, and thus the mind aspires not to time but eternity, while remaining beneath it, understood as absolute stasis. As Anthony Low says of Holy Sonnet III, Donne's "images are like a mathematical series converging on zero, the very opposite of the 'houres, dayes, months' ... which suggest expansion to infinity".[70] This is Zeno's paradoxical contraction to eternity, Aristotle's infinitely shrinking interval, the classical *nunc stans*.[71] To quote Wittgenstein, "If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life

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[68]Barbara Lewalski on Robert Jordan's *The Temple of Eternity: Thomas Traherne's Philosophy of Time*, in *SEL* 14 (1974) 139-75, 153. Note the persistence of this view today - Palomar, Calvino's eponymous hero, imagines the path to eternity thus: "'If time has to end, it can be described, instant by instant... and each instant, when described, expands so that its end can no longer be seen'" - trans. William Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 1985), 112-13. But Palomar's terms are ironically inappropriate, as the reader discovers. Rather than expanding beyond the vision of its own end, each descriptive instant, like Donne's, only replaces its predecessor in an intensified present.

[69]E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 41-2.

[70]*Love's Architecture: Devotional Modes in Seventeenth-Century English Poetry* (N.Y.: U.P., 1978), 61.

[71]Presenting, as Ní Chuilleanáin notes, "the piquancy of ... contrast between the meanest fractions of time and the eternal destinies involved in them" ("Time, Place and the Congregation", 212).

belongs to those who live in the present", and it is this, "feeling the world as a limited whole ... that is mystical."[72]

Donne's fascination with the *nunc stans* is apparent throughout the sermons.[73] Texts which include the word "Now" receive close analysis,[74] and he is fulsome in his claims for its compass: "There is not a more comprehensive, a more embracing word in all Religion ... that important and considerable particle" (II.12.250.1-5). As Ní Chuilleanáin observes, "To study the role of time in Donne's sermons, is ... to consider the energy of his 'now', often repeated and emphasized as the true time of salvation".[75] It is Augustine's "eternal present" of the mind, which keeps the present of things past, present and future simultaneously in view in the form of memory, attention and expectation:[76] the narrative reflection in both classical and liturgical tradition of God's "full and complete being".[77]

As I concluded in Chapter 1, the final point to which space contracts is visible and yet immeasurable, and so provides a means of representing infinity within a physically bounded text. Donne's 'Now', I would argue, is his temporal and linguistic version of this point, directly satisfying the two conditions required by Dante to simulate being - "a sense of presentness and a sense of contraction".[78] By dividing time thus into successively smaller units, by showing his congregation a world in the merest grain of sand that runs through his hourglass, Donne holds not only infinity in the palm of his hand, but eternity in a Now. The tradition of interpreting Plotinus's view of

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[72] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F Pears and B.F. McGuiness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 72-3 (6.4311, 6.45); so Frye, *The Great Code*, 130. For Donne's fondness for finite infinities, see Chapter 1, pp. 26ff.

[73] See G.F. Waller, "John Donne's Changing Attitudes to Time", *SEL* 14 (1974) 79-89, 87ff.

[74] II.11.238-9 (18/4/1619); II.12.250-2 (16/6/1619); III.4.114. (Easter Term 1620); III.16.336-7 (1617 - 11/2/1621-2); VII.11.279 (25/12/1626); VIII.6.157 (27/1/1627); VIII.9.219 (Easter Day 1628).

[75] "Time, Place and the Congregation", 198.

[76] *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Baltimore: Penguin, 1981), XI.20.

[77] See J.L. Russell, "Time in Christian Thought", in *The Voices of Time: A Cooperative Survey of Man's Views of Time as Expressed by the Sciences and by the Humanities*, ed. J.T. Fraser (London: Penguin, 1968), 59-76, 67.

[78] Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery*, 26-7, 96-7.

eternity - "undivided totality, limitless, knowing no divagation ... at no point broken into period or part"[79] - as an indivisible mathematical point stretches from Aristotle to Browne, who designated it "one permanent point without succession, parts, flux or division".[80] John Freccero argues for Donne's use of mystical geometry in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" to depict eternity exactly thus, as a "dimensionless point which is both a center and a circumference",[81] and indeed, Donne preaches in this case as he practises.[82] This theoretical point is also Augustine's famous figure for God, whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere - a conceit to which Donne subscribed, by proxy: "*David* considered God as a <u>center</u>, into which and from which all lines flowed" (V.16.325.270-1).[83]

The case for making an absolute equation between the present moment and this point of eternity turns out, however, to be more complicated. Augustine, for instance, writes more circumspectly elsewhere that the present is less an indivisible than a

> vanishing point: if any instant of time be conceived which cannot be divided into none, or at least into the smallest particles of moments: that is the only *it* which may be called present: which little yet flies with such full speed from the future to the past, as that it is not lengthened out with the very least stay.[84]

This derived from Aristotle, who noted that, despite "the present being the only real time, it is diminishing to an inextensive point", and went on to conclude that therefore

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[79]See Books III, VIII.11: cited in C.A. Patrides, *Aspects of Time* (Manchester: U.P., 1976), 4.

[80]*Religio Medici*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), I.11.

[81]*ELH* 30 (1963) 335-76, 340. In his virtuoso reading of the poem, Freccero discerns an expanding and a contracting circle, as "Love's compass describes the expansion of the lovers' spirit from eternity to time and back again" (337). The final circle, however, that "tends toward eternity as its goal" moves "(g)eometrically ... toward the circular perfection of the center; when the circle is finally closed, its radius will no longer have finite extension but will coincide with the limitless point of eternity" (340).

[82] See p. 110 above.

[83]Though Donne distinguished between the divinity and its attributes with regard to the infinite (see Chapter 1, fnn. 87, 107: the later attempts of writers like Joseph Raphson to bring about the divinization of space went against the grain of medieval Christian thought, with disastrous results).

[84]*Confessions*, XI.15.

"time only exists because it tends to not-being".[85] It is thus the ascribed tendency of the present to "dissolve all existence into emptiness",[86] to bring us within reach of Beckett's finally-desired, "accidentless One-and-Only, conveniently called Nothing"[87] and yet to leave us with a present-continuous process; still "vanishing" and "diminishing", it constantly "tends" and "dissolves" in the direction of something else. If, as for Augustine, "In every instant a whole world perishes, and in every instant a whole world emerges out of nothing",[88] Donne could not fix the two instants as simultaneous; as he says of the apocalypse, even this final moment of "present dissolution" and "present redintegration" can "not be done in an absolute instant: some succession of time, though undiscernible there is", some "motion, a transition from one to another place" (IV.2.75.450-6). In which case, this 'present' is itself still becoming and can not be said to have real being.[89] The problem is, as Lucretius and Epicurus pointed out, that even the smallest unit of time perceptible to sense can still be divided by reason.[90] For David religiously to consider God his centre requires a twofold act of faith, in both God as his saviour and the centre as absolute. For Donne philosophically to consider the present his instantaneous point of eternity demands a suspension of reason not similarly justified by Church teaching.

The result, in short, is a Neoplatonic "overflow of presence". Plato's description of the One travelling with time from the past to the future by way of the now was commonly interpreted by commentators to indicate that "the now stands still and is overtaken"[91] (i.e. presently). In the same way for Donne, the artist's 'concluding' Now is overtaken by a successive present which ends by relegating more and more of it to the

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[85]See Herman Hausheer, "St Augustine's Conception of Time", *PR* 46 (1937) 503-12, 503, on *The Physics*, trans. Philip Wicksteed and Francis Cornford (London: Heinemann, 1929),VI.3.

[86]Hausheer, "St Augustine's Conception of Time", 510.

[87]*Murphy* (London: Picador, 1973), 138.

[88]Hausheer, "St Augustine's Conception of Time", 510.

[89]See Cushman's analysis of Greek thought ("Greek and Christian Views of Time", 256-7).

[90]See Catherine Rau, "Theories of Time in Ancient Philosophy", in *Aspects of Time*, ed. Patrides, 21-9, 24).

[91]Panayiotis Tzamalikos, "Origen and the Stoic View of Time", *JHI* 52 (1991) 535-61, 548. Plotinus, for example, concluded time to be in continual motion with life.

past, until he may be said, like Montaigne, to depict not being but passage (III.27). Ultimately, Donne's faith in the natural, mediaeval flow of the cosmos triumphs over the cynical appropriation of divine power inherent in the design of an artificial order, with its static, absolute retrospect.[92]

As *Satire III* suggests, truth and value are instead seen to emerge from time, whose own "swiftly turning wheel" will not stand. Pursuing the fate of Donne's Now, we find it undergoing further refinement, disintegrating into motion. Joseph Duncan in his article, "Donne's 'Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse' and Iconographic Tradition", discusses Donne's combination of "Paradise and Calvary,/Christ's cross and Adam's tree" (ll. 21-2) in one figure, to "exhibit the simultaneity and the collapse of time into a spatial relationship".[93] In the transition from picture to word, however, exact visual simultaneity is inevitably lost. Donne's writing must always reveal its dependence on time for meaning. However he tries to draw his beginning and end together in the spatial compaction of a Now, the space of occurrence remains that of the page or the length of the utterance; as Sherwood observes, his "dilated moment" "remembers its place in a developing sequence".[94] In "*De immortalitate animae*", Augustine too announced:

> every body which moves in time, although it tends towards one end, yet can neither accomplish simultaneously all the steps which lead to this end, nor can avoid the several steps. For by whatever impulse it is moved, a body cannot be perfectly one, because it can be divided into parts; and there is no body without parts, as there is no time without an interval of delay, even if it is expressed by a very short syllable of which you hear neither the beginning nor the end.[95]

For Donne, some fraction of the syllable Now must always outlive its enunciation. A sense of this emerges in his tendency to repeat the word, as if trying constantly to stay ahead of himself: "seek Christ early, now, now ... seek him the first

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[92]See Riggs, "The Artificial Day", 175ff. Riggs cites Shakespeare's mediaeval figure of Time in *The Winter's Tale* as representing "not an order that the conscious subject can encompass by his own act of mind" (a literal point), but "a measureless order that encompasses him instead" (a circle whose circumference is nowhere, a *theoretical* point) (183).

[93]*JDJ* 3(2) (1984) 157-80, 164.

[94]*Fulfilling the Circle*, 23.

[95]*Concerning the Teacher and On the Immortality of the Soul*, trans. George Leckie (N.Y.: Appleton-Century, 1938), III, 62.

minute of this day, for you know not whether this day shall have two minutes or no" (I.5.250.527-30). Here the 'no' that 'completes' the sentence is also a truncated 'now'; the question as to whether this day will have two minutes or only the first (the "now") ironically answers itself as the speaker is cut short, literally mid-now. By capturing a proleptic Now, the shortened No images the step from time into timelessness. Just as Donne takes us to the atom and beyond to the infinite, he draws us down to the minute and beyond to the infinitely minute - the 'now' and beyond to the 'no', the 'nunc' and beyond to the 'nun' (itself both 'now' and 'none'). Underlying the present is the notion of nothing,[96] leaving us with the Romantic ideal, "the notion of an object, escaping, that fails to be".[97] Only nothing is impassible, subject to neither time nor decay. As Hannah Arendt remarks, the *nunc stans* is merely the conceptually convenient form of the "philosopher's experience of the eternal, which to Plato was *arrheton* ('unspeakable'), and to Aristotle *aneu logou* ('without word'), and which ... can occur only outside the realm of human affairs".[98] Or, as Donne distinguishes the two realms, underlying the Now is a *Then*, which denotes the incomprehensibility and everlastingness of the next world; if Now is timeless time, Then is pure timelessness - though typically, this is only to replace one word with another (VIII.9.219.3-7).

Future context is inescapable, and the Now we grasp is still end-focussed by nature. As Donne writes, "If we could imagine a blessing of health without permanency, we might call an intermitting ague, a good day in a fever, health" (III.2.84.403-5). But we cannot; and even if we could blot out anticipation of the future, that cannot prevent the future from anticipating us: "If there were any one minute in a mans life, in which he were safe from death, a man might in some sort be said to be immortall, for that minute; but Man is never so" (V.10.210.446-9).

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[96]The laws of time and space run parallel; cf. Hausheer's definition of the indivisible present as a "time-atom" without space ("St Augustine's Conception of Time", 503).

[97]Mallarmé, *La Musique et les lettres:* quoted in Georges Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1956), 34.

[98]*The Human Condition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), 20.

Having said this, to be 'never' is in another sense to be always (not); the perpetually temporal search for the atemporal, the setting of text in timeless time, paradoxically makes the unavoidable and unending progress through time a reflection of as well as an approach towards eternity.[99] Thus Donald Wilcox sees Mr Palomar in Calvino's novel of the same name wondering "if he can use the indivisibility of linear time to hold off death by dividing his moments into an endless series";[100] it is rather "infinite divisibility" than "indivisibility", but the implication is the same.[101] As Plotinus paraphrased Plato's famous pronouncement, "Eternity has rest, unity, identity, permanence, and indivisibility, time has motion, multiplicity, diversity, change, and divisibility; but by its continuity and progress towards infinity, time is the image of eternity". Or, from Aristotle's *De Generatione et Corruptione*, "the continual coming-to-be of coming-to-be is the nearest approach to eternal being" (II.10.317).[102] Donne plays with the paradox notably in "Elegie III" (ll. 35-6), "Woman's Constancy" (ll.12-13) and Holy Sonnet XIX (ll. 2-3).

The observation of Lucretius and Epicurus that every unit perceptible to sense can always be divided again by reason forms the basis for Wittgenstein's comment that "Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits - you can't see where your field of vision ends".[103] Only Calvino's metanarrative of Palomar's allows him to undercut this fact of life: Palomar *"decide che si metterà a descrivere ogni istante della sua vita, e finché non li avrá descritti tutti non penserà píu d'essere morto. In quel momento muore"*.[104] Because it is Calvino in the third person describing the instant

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[99]Though not, for Donne, its *equivalent*; cf. Traherne et al (see pp. 118-19 above).

[100]*The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), 271.

[101]See *Mr Palomar*, 112-3.

[102]trans. E.S. Forster (London: Heinemann, 1955). See Rau, "Theories of Time", 25-6; also the *Timaeus*, 51; Aristotle, *Physics*, III.8. Augustine, too, described time as the distension of the eternal (see Hausheer, "St Augustine's Conception of Time", 509-10); quite different from Traherne's view of eternity as the distension of time (see fn. 99 above).

[103] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 72 (6.4311).

[104]*Palomar*, 128. Weaver translates: Mr Palomar "decides that he will set himself to describing every instant of his life, and until he has described them all he will no longer think of being dead. At that moment he dies" (*Mr Palomar*, 113).

(every instant, in the novel's continued present tense) of Mr Palomar's thought, he can include in his narrative the moment of death. Mr Palomar himself cannot, and does not, "live to experience death", in Wittgenstein's words.[105] His ever-present consciousness does not meet with its own parameters any more than Donne's allows him to envisage the final transition between time and eternity - as the latter declares in a letter "To my honoured friend Sir T. Lucy", "I know not when I shall die, and perchance I shall never die".[106] Palomar and Donne alike are obsessed with eternity as an unreachable yet endlessly replicated end-point to progress.

B. Progress

> Only through time time is conquered.
>
> T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton", l. 89.

The image of life as a journey pervades Donne's sermons.[107] Borrowing Scriptural references to life as a "pilgrimmage, a peregrination, a travell" (I.7.279.401) and the meditative tradition of a gradual, step-by-step, spiritual progression,[108] Donne writes of lodgings, ways, "certaine gradations, and steps, and ascensions" (V.4.100.156-60).[109] Each step of the way nonetheless reiterates the importance of its particular Now - in Donne's succinct phrase, "You must goe *Iobs* way to Christs end" (II.14.299.450). In fact, the two are one and the same; Christ is Job's antitype, for though his "own fullness was contained in each moment, his life paradoxically developed in a pattern of birth,

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[105]Since, Wittgenstein continues, "eternal life belongs to those who live in the present" (see fn. 103 above). Ironically Mr Palomar achieves eternal life, though not in the way he thinks (see fn. 68 above).

[106]Gosse, I.173.

[107]On the poetry, see Stanley Archer, "The Archetypal Journey Motif in Donne's *Divine Poems*", in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Gary Stringer (Salzburg, 1977), 173-91.

[108]See Michael Hall, "Circles and Circumvention in Donne's Sermons", *JEGP* 82 (1983) 201-14, 210-11.

[109] Also II.4.125.218-20; II.8.186.245-6; V.17.341.101.

suffering, death, and resurrection".[110] He represents both the end and the means, the divine and the human. Donne sets his work within the same paradox. In Carey's summary, despite a cult of the moment in the lyric poetry and the Now of the sermons, these remain but "Moments, snatched from time's current", borne along on a stream of material versatility, vitality and change.[111]

Yet for Aristotle and his followers, from Hume to Borges, time is arguably just this "succession of indivisible instants", whose succession and yet integrity remain uncompromised[112]- the distension of the eternal. Augustine's Now, too, can be seen as a continuously passing instant.[113] Even Plato in a footnote to the *Parmenides* seems occasionally to envisage equating the Now with time as being likewise always present to the One, and therefore travelling with it through life instead of being overtaken.[114] Hence it is in accordance with both philosophical and Christian typological tradition that Donne's series of Nows trace a forward linear progress. As Sherwood says, "By 'patiently' considering each immediate moment, through conformity to Christ's pattern, Donne finds the recreation of time and must continue to find it every moment until death".[115] We may in fact say of these Nows, that "when they kiss one bank, and leaving this/ Never look back, but the next bank do kiss,/ Then they are purest" ("Elegie III", ll. 33-5). The *nunc stans* in Donne's case is more accurately a *nunc currens*, where each frozen moment runs into the next, always changing, always contracting to an end or centre: "Change'is the nursery/ Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity" (ll. 35-6).[116]

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[110]Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle*, 13.

[111]*John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber, 1981), 166-8.

[112]Hausheer, "St Augustine's Conception of Time", 504.

[113]C.A. Patrides, *Aspects of Time*, 6.

[114]Tzamalikos, "Origen and the Stoic View of Time", 548 fn. 71 (cf. fn. 91 above).

[115]*Fulfilling the Circle*, 190.

[116]Cf. Boethius's *nunc movens*, the actualization purely in time of a Platonic *nunc stans* discussed by Frank Kermode. Unlike the *nunc movens* which has beginning and end, Donne's *nunc* describes the continual experience of instantaneously endless moments. If anything, it resembles Aquinas's *aevum*, Kermode's "third order of duration", where "a moment has endless perspectives of reality"; Kermode calls this "the kind of time known by books" (*The Sense of an Ending*, 69-71). He cites Spenser's use of the *aevum* as explaining "delight in change, fear of change; the death of the individual and the survival of the species" (80), but

Paradoxically, then, Donne's plotting through time does not detract from his insistence on immediacy;[117] rather the present is made vivid by the very context of its passing. As Jonathan Goldberg writes of "Goodfriday":

> Time and space are not abandoned; instead they are the medium through which the individual rises to the perception of the single point of God's light which interpenetrates both time and space and which infuses all of history with eternal Christian meaning.[118]

An apocalyptic, teleological view of history need not be inconsistent with a passionate concentration on the present;[119] rather conversely, a passionate concentration on the present fuels and is fuelled by a realization of time's arrow.

Absolute stasis, by contrast, Donne reserves for death;[120] changelessness is the gift of God (I.4.227.141ff), but his last: "To be changed so, as that we can never be changed more, is the greatest change of all" (I.4.232.322-4). As Hooker put it, "Rest is the end of all motion, and the last perfection of all things that labour. Labours in us are journeys ... to come unto that".[121] Though measured in sin,[122] progress was man's duty, and the seventeenth century's declining faith in the succession of distinct, unbridgeable moments made it all the more important for Donne to insist upon it.[123]

To call rest both "the end of all motion" and "the last perfection" also suggests the Platonic-Aristotelian view restated by Donne in the *Devotions*, that "we consider *Tyme*

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it might well be Donne of whom he is speaking (and indeed he goes on immediately to mention "Air and Angels" [80-1]).

117Cf. Archer's argument in "The Archetypal Journey Motif", *New Essays*, 189.

118"Donne's Journey East: Aspects of a Seventeenth-Century Trope", *SP* 68 (1971) 470-83, 483.

119Patrides, "'Something like Prophetick strain': apocalyptic configurations in Milton", in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, edd. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Manchester: U.P., 1984), 207-37, 207-17.

120So also ecstasis, as William Rockett concludes: "John Donne: The Ethical Argument of *Elegy III*", *SEL* 15 (1975) 57-69, 69). See also Chapter 1, p. 53.

121*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book V in *Works*, edd. John Keble, R.W. Church and F. Paget, II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), ch. lxx. 4 (385-6). Cf. also Archer's comment that journeys in Donne are "either movement toward that fixed goal of rest or movement that serves as dramatic contrast to a celebration of religious truth" - but the two are, as Hooker's statement suggests, frequently one and the same ("The Archetypal Journey Motif", *New Essays*, 190).

122I.9.315.527-8; I.4.227.141ff.

123See Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, 13ff.

to be but the *Measure of Motion*" (14M: 71.18).[124] But Plato's time was absolute, "going according to number" - a single, continuous, homogenous flow within which events occurred.[125] Donne, as we have seen here and in Chapter 1, denies space and time to be at any juncture indivisible;[126] since they are rather infinitely divisible, they cannot be absolute. As a result of taking this standpoint against Newton in 1715-16, Leibnitz came to the conclusion that time and space were relative, there being no space without the order of bodies, and no time without events that need to be ordered.[127]

Aristotle, however, had already qualified Plato's statement by describing time and motion as interdependent, since "we measure motion by time and time by motion"; because "all events are temporal and ... there is no time without events", then empirically "time is measurement of motion in temporal order".[128] This uneasy compromise between the absolute time called for by the Greek world-view and the subjective requirement that time be measurable in event-form (that is, by the soul) in order to exist was attacked by Plotinus for its inconsistency.[129] Still, Aristotle's empirical working methods and perception of mathematical paradox had led him to what Robert Cushman calls "a quasi-independent continuum of duration", where time became at least "capable of being the matrix of inward as of outward experience.[130] Augustine completed the move to subjective time, announcing that we measure motion *by* time rather than *as* it. This, he argued, we do by measuring duration, "that present impression which passing events make in you, and which remains when they have passed, not the events which in passing away, have made it".[131] But such an experiential approach, as Rau points out, in many ways directly opposes Aristotle's mathematical and logical approach to the progressive

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[124]Aristotle, *Physics*, IV.12.405, IV.14.421; Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d.

[125]See Rau, "Theories of Time", 21-2.

[126]See my argument with Hedrich Hirsch over this in Chapter 1, pp. 35ff.

[127]Alexander Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1957), 243-6.

[128] Rau, "Theories of Time", 23 (*Physics*, IV.12.399, 14.421)

[129]Rau, "Theories of Time", 25.

[130]"Greek and Christian Views of Time", 258-9, 261.

[131]*Confessions*, XI.27.

division of time.[132] Donne, I would suggest, synthesized elements from both approaches.

On the one hand, he adopted the Augustinian account of the present *felt* as duration, a time measured by the mind (temporally) and not the motion of bodies (spatially).[133] Thus he can say: "God hath determined a day, from Sun to Sun ... yet when God hath use of a longer day, for his glory, he commands the Sun to stand still" (V.14.269.29-31). In Plato's terms, a "longer day" is not possible; if the sun halts, then time can no longer be measured. Donne is clearly working within Augustinian definitions of time such as Hooker's: "time doth but signify the quantity of continuance, which continuance may be in things that rest and are never moved". Hence the continuance of Donne's day may be extended though without "conceit of motion".[134] Suàrez, in his immensely influential *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (1597), had similarly followed the *Confessions* (XI.23) in insisting that time passed although the sun stopped, and his opponent, Burgersdijk (1590-1635), despite his insistence on time as physically regulated, agreed.[135]

On the other hand, Donne, like Burgersdijk, was naturally drawn to Aristotelian logic and spatial definition. As a writer, he represented time in terms of the space of the page and the movement of narrative: "And that which you call *present,* is not *now* the same that it was, when you began to call it so in this *Line,* (before you found that word, *present,* or that *Monosyllable, now,* the present, & the *Now* is past".[136] As even Hooker confesses, practical measurement of degrees of time and continuance requires a standard of celestial motion to define division into minutes, days and years: "as nature bringeth forth time with motion, so we by motion have learned how to divide time, and by the

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[132]Rau, "Theories of Time", 27ff.

[133]See Hausheer, "St Augustine's Conception of Time", 504-7.

[134]*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V.69.2 (p. 382).

[135]See Stephen Daniel, "Seventeenth-Century Scholastic Treatments of Time", *JHI* 42 (1981) 587-606, 593, 599.

[136]*Devotions*, 14M : 71.21-4; see also pp. 140ff below.

smaller parts of time both to measure the greater and to know how long all things else endure".[137]

Burgersdijk's compromise was to argue that time was any quantity of duration *theoretically* capable of being measured by celestial movement.[138] Donne's more integrated solution ingeniously redefines mental time in physical terms. Acknowledging that we should not judge great events only from the rising and setting of the sun, he reapplies celestial standards as a *metaphorical* measurement of experiential time, "of our risinge and fallinge". Thus

> God hath not only given thee a naturall day, from period to period to consider thy birth and thy death, this thou wast borne to, and this thou dyest worth, but he hath given thee an artificiall day, and a day which he hath distinguished into houres by continuall benefits, and a day which thou hast distinguished into houres by continuall sinnes. And he would have thee remember those houres, when and howe and by what degrees, by what meanes he raised thee, and humbled thee againe, and at what time and place (II.6.147.130-7).

The existence of physical and mental measures of time is admitted, but the ability to distinguish and evaluate either experience requires a common perception of spatial and logical movement, progress by degree and distinction.[139] As Aquinas remarks, the "succession of thoughts could give ... the idea of time".[140] Just as a consciousness of time arises from the measure of spatial motion, so conversely, an experiential awareness of time through the 'progress of the soul' allows the infinite distinction of spatial motion ("when as all Time shall cease, so all measures shall cease" [V.14.294.952]). Donne concentrates the world around him into a realization of his presence, but his inability to ever fully inhabit that realization returns him to the world.

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[137] *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V.69.2 (pp. 381-2).

[138] Daniel, "Seventeenth-Century Scholastic Treatments of Time", 597-605.

[139] In this Donne anticipated Kant, who himself largely drew on Augustine (see Rau, "Theories of Time, 29) to resolve the argument between Cartesian, Newtonian absolute time and relativist refutations by Leibniz, Berkeley and Hume. Kant's solution was to make time absolute and objective but within the phenomenal world; like Donne's artificial days and hours of the mind, Kant appeals to the "universal validity of intuitions essentially subjective in origin" (see Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past*, 31-2).

[140] VIII *Phys.* I.IV., lec. 17. And so Kant: time exists (albeit in the mind) with the function of *ordering* experience (Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past*, 31ff).

1. The Role Of Memory

To perceive movement as progress requires, like typological faith, the faculty of memory, an ability to relate moments past to moments passing. Pascal thus held that memory alone gave human time continuity, distinguishing it from instinctive, disjunctive animal time.[141] Donne like Augustine highlights this faculty,[142] declaring "the art of *salvation* ... but the art of *memory*" - the "neerest way" to God and the common, uniting heritage of "both Jew and Christian, Papist and Protestant, Puritan and Protestant".[143]

Moreover Donne practises what he preaches; his habit of memorizing the sermon to be delivered bears out his claim that "all *Religion* [is] in the memory" even as he makes it (II.2.74.68). The structure of his sermons reveals that he was familiar with the mediaeval 'arts of memory',[144] using them not only to remember the sermons himself but to make them memorable to his audience - to transfer them from his memory to theirs. Hence his style is straightforward, dominated, as one analyst observes, by "co-ordinate linkings, parallel structures and such groupings as do not tax the memory".[145] Troy Reeves accuses Donne of repetition,[146] but this too, assists (and illustrates) memory, and Donne cites illustrious precedents for it: "nay, the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is scarce anything else, then an often repetition of the same thing" (II.10.233.726-7). His primary aim is to teach his audience by and through memory, and with this goal in mind, "It is no tautology, no babling, to speak, and iterate his prayses" (II.10.232.721-

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[141]Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, 75-6.

[142]See, for instance Dennis Quinn, "Donne's Christian Eloquence", *JELH* 27 (1960) 276-97, 283.

[143]II.2.73.52; II.11.235.18-19; II.11.237.76-7.

[144]Cf. Achsah Guibbory, "John Donne and Memory as 'the Art of *Salvation*'", *HLQ* 43 (1979-80) 261-74, 266, with Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: U.P., 1990), 71-9. Donne speaks elsewhere as well of having made extensive notes on some 500 religious writers; although no longer extant, it seems reasonable to conclude that these comprised volumes of extracts that Carruthers calls florilegia, "memorative both in origin and purpose" (174ff, 176). Donne's reliance on traditional techniques of the *ars memoria* also explains his frequent 'misquotation' of authors; preachers were advised to *memoria ad res* rather than *memoria ad verbum* (*The Book of Memory*, 89-90).

[145]A.C. Partridge, *John Donne: Language and Style* (London: Deutsch, 1978), 243.

[146]*An Annotated Index to the Sermons of John Donne*, Vol. I (Salzburg, 1979), 13-15.

2).[147] On the contrary, repetition and memory, it can be argued, serve to *create* knowledge.

In II.2, Donne cites the Platonic view of teaching: "All knowledge, that seems new today, says Plato, is but a remembring of *that*, which your soul knew before" (74.68-70).[148] According to this, memory stores truths inaccessible to the senses, and so to teach is only to remind and all teaching is repetitive in character. So, by analogy with our discussion of creation in Chapter 1, all making is a re-making,[149] and, as Borges declares, "To speak is to fall into tautology."[150] But Augustine warned that "words ... only ... remind us in order that we may seek things ... not ... exhibit the things so we may know them",[151] and Aristotle and Aquinas in any case took a wider view. For them, we remind in order to teach in a more exploratory sense. God is only known through recourse to remembered sense-images, which then allow us to intellectually abstract universal propositions.[152] The Lullist art of memory operated on this principle of an investigative memory, memorizing procedures through questions and answers that were largely pre-determined.

Frances Yates, admittedly, contrasts this later development with the classical art of memory that "seeks only to memorize what is given".[153] However, even here repetition went beyond "babling" and "tautology". As Carruthers remarks, "the student of the text, having digested it by re-experiencing it in memory, has become not its interpreter, but its new author, or re-author":[154] re-making becomes making. The re-experience of

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[147]Murmuring traditionally accompanied memorizing, reinforcing the link between repetition and memory (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 164).

[148]Pascal's later focus on the time-lag that occurred between the affective instant and the *recalled registration of that instant's occurrence* depicts Plato's meaning in close-up (see Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, 82-4).

[149]See Chapter 1, pp. 7, 10.

[150]"The Library of Babel", *Labyrinths* (Penguin, 1970), 78-86, 85.

[151]*De Magistro*, in *Concerning the Teacher*, XI, 46.

[152]See Chapter 1, fn. 163.

[153]*The Art of Memory* (London: Pimlico, 1992), 186.

[154]*The Book of Memory*, 168. The metaphor of digestion, with its implications not only of absorption but "assimilation" (II.9.212.547-8), commonly demonstrated transformative imitation in medieval discussions (164ff) and throughout the Renaissance (see G.W. Pigman,

experience creates both, for though the appeal is to the memory of a past, yet as Donne put it, "since thou never thoughtest of it since that former hearing, till thou heardst it again now, thou didst not know that thou hadst heard it before" (V.1.55.738-40). As Chapter 1 demonstrated, the original and the reiterative become confused. Frye describes a similar, expanding realization over time that results from the typological repetition of Biblical narrative, with its "capacity for self-re-creation": "the Bible's own structure ... creates an awareness of itself by the reader, growing in time as he reads".[155] It is thus the *awareness of repetition as repetition* that is important, separating it from tautology and the dangerously tempting recollection of the sinner (I.3.193.389ff). Regina Schwartz distinguishes Adamic from Satanic repetition in *Paradise Lost*, ritual, willed repetition that leads to a fortunate fall and the redemption of loss, from pathological, compulsive repetition that leads to a fatal fall and continual relapse.[156] The former is creative, the latter opposed to innovation: while

> ritual inscribes memory, mere repetition ... is predicated upon forgetting ... Adamic repetition is repetition with a difference, one that can not only accommodate innovation, but is built upon the difference implied by memory - the admission of the pastness of the past (6).

Satanic, Faulknerian characters ("The past is not dead, it is not even past") attempt to turn 'it was' into 'thus I willed it', an impossible replay denoting no real will (99). Only recognition and *acknowledgement*, "that thou hadst heard it before", indicate a genuinely innovative willing: "It enables the recognition of repetition *as* repetition, and that re-cognition allows a new content" (104-5).

Essentially, then, it is the self-reflexive, or self-reflective quality of memory that saves mankind. Donne suggests a more sophisticated version of Pascal's distinction:

"Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance", *RQ* 33 (1980) 1-32, 4-5). For Donne's depiction of memory in such active terms, see II.11.236.47-50, and the preface to *Pseudomartyr*.

[155]*The Great Code*, 225. So also Nancy Beaty argues that in Taylor's *Holy Dying*, repetitive arguments "recur precisely because time is presumed to have passed" (*The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the* Ars Moriendi *in England*, New Haven: Yale U.P., 1970, 226).

[156]*Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in* Paradise Lost (Cambridge: U.P., 1988), 91ff; further references in the text.

"Beasts doe remember, but they doe not remember that they remember; they doe not reflect upon it, which is that that constitutes memory" (IV.12.306.114-6). Memory must be self-referential, concerned with its own action. Repeatedly, Donne enacts the act of awareness - involving the congregation in the moment of invocation, setting "a *seal* upon a *seal* ... a *sacrament* upon a *sacrament*" (II.2.73.60-74.61): "So have I let you in, into the whole Psalm, by this key, by awaking your memory, that it is a *Psalm for Remembrance*" (II.2.75.105-6). In the same way, Donne speaks in *The second Anniversary* of that which is "both the object, and the wit" (l. 442) - what Zailig Pollock describes as "the knowledge *of* God and *through* God, in which the means of knowing and the thing known are indistinguishable".[157]

In his sermons, therefore, Donne uses repetition to stimulate memory. III.6 provides a typical example. Its account of Christ's bleeding to death on the cross relies on repetition to re-enact the experience, as the drawing out of the text mirrors again the leaking of life-blood from the body:

> bleed to death ... shedding his bloud ... shed his bloud ... to let out all that precious liquor, and taste no drop of it, to draw out all that immaculate and unvaluable bloud, and make no *balsamum*, no antidote, no plaister, no fomentation in the application of that bloud (162.236-163.253).

The vivid liquidity of this outpouring catches us up in the present, continuous and bloody moment of a prolonged image, whose repetition withholds development of linear action. As P. G. Stanwood says of repeated liturgical action, it represents a "desire to perpetuate the past in the present; [to] advance faith in the future as if it were part of the present. And so time rests".[158] Despite repetition of action ("shedding", "shed", "to let out all", "to draw out all") and of response, or failure thereof ("no *balsamum* ... antidote ... plaister ... fomentation"), it is primarily the repetition of the word 'bloud' and its cognates that carries the passage along - as Joan Webber notes in her stylistic analysis of such passages, "less by logical progression than by association". Webber concludes

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[157]"'The Object and the Wit': The Smell of Donne's *First Anniversary*", *ELR* 13 (1983) 301-18, 303, 308.

[158]"Time and Liturgy in Donne, Crashaw and T.S. Eliot", *Mosaic* 12(2) (1979) 91-105, 91-2.

Donne's repetition stems from a basic distrust of words that "spurs [his] attempts to find out what is really behind these signs, to know completely what is meant by memory or time: the passionate intensity of the quest reveals itself in the repetition of the word that comes to symbolize the quest itself".[159] Christ's blood brought salvation to mankind, and the awareness of its verbal repetition here in the text depends on memory, the "art of *salvation*", just as awareness of the original event depends upon it. Thus repetition of the word as of the act, textually, is symbolic - a recreation of every Christian's desire to have been saved, and to be saved again and again ("When thou hast done, thou hast not done,/ For, I have more").

As Edward Tayler reminds us, "an awareness that the principal events in history occur but once and yet are 'repeated'" was familiar specifically to "readers of the Christian poetry of the Middle Ages and Renaissance".[160] Textually at least, *all* events are repeated - including the Christ-event which Augustine held to be alone unique in an otherwise cyclical history. In fact, the concentration on the Passion by seventeenth-century preachers and Church iconography makes it, not the one exception to historical repetition, but, as A. B. Chamber denotes it, in some ways the supremely timeless and spaceless event.[161] In the writing of the period generally and in Donne's sermons in particular, its imaginative recreation attains the status of ritual, with the same blending of times that Stanwood attributes to liturgy.[162] Invoking the memory of Christ on the Cross, and in such a way as to invoke the invocation, Donne reaches for the final knowledge of eternal light: "Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne/Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore". So also, in the description of Christ bleeding "now", Donne remembers both how he *has* bled "heretofore", and how he *shall* bleed. As Robert

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[159]"The Prose Styles of John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*", *Anglia* 79 (1961) 138-52, 140.

[160]*Milton's Poetry: Its Development in Time* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne U.P., 1979), 35.

[161]"'La Corona': Philosophic, Sacred and Poetic Uses of Time", in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Stringer, 140-72, 157. Hence its present tense depiction in "Goodfriday 1613": "since the event recurs in time, a contemplation of it ultimately leads to eternity" (158-9).

[162]See Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*, 74.

Hickey notes, memory "includes judgment of the future as well as recollection of the past",[163] and we are bid, as Donne later takes note, to "*remember the end*".[164]

In conclusion, memory is a present recorder of progress, but by returning us to past experience, it reintroduces us to something newly perceived *as* past.[165] Thus it not only places the present in a passing context, but the 'past' also - and, insofar as the relationship between past and present points directly in typology towards the future, all time meets in the weekly ritual of a sermon delivered *extempore*. Like the Now that, even as it distinguishes, moves only to absorb all time, memory testifies to both progress and the eternal state of being, where "future, and present and past is all one" (I.9.305.142).

Sermon II.11 (April 18, 1619), "A Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany", brings all these elements together. Bidding farewell to his congregation just before his voyage abroad, Donne takes as his text *Ecclesiastes* 12.1, "Remember now thy Creator in the dayes of thy youth". His final address is, unusually, a personal plea, playing on the reassurance memory brings:

> In my long absence, and far distance from hence, remember me ... remember me, not my abilities ... but remember my labors, and endeavors, at least my desire, to make sure your salvation. And I shall remember your religious cheerfulness in hearing the word, and your christianly respect towards all them that bring that word unto you, and towards myself in particular far [a]bove my merit ... That if I never meet you again till we have all passed the gate of death, yet in the gates of heaven, I may meet you all ... where we shall meet and never part (II.11.248.477ff).

As Donne invokes the future remembering of the present-moment-of-invocation as past, memory is *anticipated* in order to obliterate time and its losses. Present, past and future merge as they do in Augustine's phenomenal time, and the sermon projects a comforting circle in structure that sweeps Donne out to the Continent and safely back home again,

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[163]"Donne's Art of Memory", *Tennessee Studies In Literature* 3 (1958) 29-36, 32. Guibbory points out that neither Donne nor Augustine restricts memory to the past (*The Map of Time: Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History*, Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986, 104 fn. 45); also Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 193.

[164]See IX.2.84.611-85.615: "properly nothing can fall into the memory, but that which is past, and yet [the Bible] says ... *remember the end* ... The end cannot be yet come, and yet we are bid to remember that".

[165]Or in Pascal's case, something newly perceived as present (see fn. 148 above).

all within the time of the sermon. Thus he explicitly concludes as he began: "Now to make up a circle, by returning to our first word, remember" (II.11.248.475). With that acknowledgement, the concept of remembrance has been fully realized; we do not simply remember, but *return* to remembrance, remember that we remember. The voyage imminent at the start of the sermon has now been symbolically encompassed by it, and Donne closes with a vision of reunity after separation, "where we shall be all Souldiers of one Army ... and Children of one Quire" (II.11.249.512-13). We have both progressed and returned. We might compare this closure with Pascal's vision of integrating the affective and perceptive parts of thought (see fn. 148 above). Little by little the gap between incident and registration, "that little space of time, filled with drama, between the message received and the piteous response",[166] decreases: "At the farthest limit, it is in an ineffable contact, the abolition of time, the instant seized in the instant".[167] To re-cognize at exactly the moment we experience, is to remember that we remember - to close the gap between object and wit, to find oneself timeless with "the divine maximum and minimum of Nicholas of Cusa".[168]

Donne's image of eternal circular perfection in II.11, "where we shall end, and yet begin but then" (II.11.249.522), reflects the shape of that sermon as it already stands, and represents furthermore the point from which Donne is speaking.[169] Just as Milton, in Edward Tayler's analysis, makes "The 'Now' of the Nativity Ode ... a poetic *nunc stans*, glancing simultaneously towards present and past and conflating the two events separated in Time as though viewed from the vantage of Eternity",[170] so Donne uses the

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[166]*The Beckett Trilogy* (London: Pan, 1979), 176.

[167]Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, 84.

[168] *Pensées*, ed. Brunschveig, 434. Cf. Tilottama Rajan's reiteration of Eliot's thesis that Donne at no point crosses the gap between thought and sensibility ("'Nothing Sooner Broke': Donne's *Songs and Sonets* as Self-Consuming Artifact", *ELH* 49 (1982) 805-28).

[169]Of course in the written sermon Donne is genuinely speaking from some time in the future, when the trip *was* safely over and he was revising his sermons for publication. Nonetheless, the circular conceit in this version depends upon the pretext of immediacy; although in the earlier version of the sermon as delivered, Donne was unable to preserve the confidence he feigned here, and left the circle open - the final words, "where we shall meet and never part", are followed by the injunction, "But here we must."

[170]*Milton's Poetry*, 35.

present speaking moment to conflate the two events of his departure and his return, as though seen from the apocalyptic future. As to God's immanent vision, so now to Donne, "the whole circle of time, and before time was, and when time shall be no more, makes up but one Judgment day" (II.15.313.61-3). We are once again "in the now", "the terminal, privileged moment of perceptible change".[171] Memory or awareness of the past allows Donne to project the future backward into it from this point of timeless time; and from the very means of measuring time comes the "meaningful 'confusion'"[172] that overturns time's tyranny. Implicit in the preacher's command to "remember ... my desire, to make sure your salvation", is the suggestion not merely that the congregation remember Donne's *desire that they be saved*, but that they *remember it in order to* save themselves. From memory, we draw an image of eternity that promises our salvation.

Having said this, it must nonetheless be remembered that this circle in time is drawn in words. It cannot be the "timeless and motionless painted emblem ... the dance in which time and motion abrogate themselves" that Ernest Fenellosa saw as characteristic of the Elizabethan world picture, and in which Donald Davie for one includes Donne - a static whole where "movement ... cancels itself out, like the dance in which the dancer ends where he started, or the circular motion of the sphere which returns upon itself".[173] A.B. Chambers likewise in his perceptive analysis of "La Corona" concentrates on Donne's fondness for tracing circles as a Platonic emulation of the circular movement of the universe, which "approached non-movement as closely as possible by never moving out of its own place".[174] But Donne's textual circle does more than revolve upon itself, as I suggested at the outset of this chapter. In the course of making up a circle, the text has necessarily moved forward; several pages have elapsed in tracing the journey, and "by returning to our first word" we also create another (the same, yet different). However Donne may image forth the circle of eternity, we have still "moved out of our own place",

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[171]Riggs, "The Artificial Day", 168; see p. 112 above.

[172]Tayler, *Milton's Poetry*, 35.

[173]*Purity of Diction in English Verse* and *Articulate Energy* (Penguin, 1992), 234, 240-1.

[174]"'La Corona': Philosophic, Sacred and Poetic Uses of Time", *New Essays*, 143.

spatially - and so, impliedly, temporally, in the time of the reading: "there simply cannot be any beginning or end other than those imposed by the printed page and the psychological or practical necessity of reading sequentially".[175] Chambers underestimates the importance of his own qualification here in Donne's thought. For the Fenellosans, who see significant action - escape from time to eternity - as occurring outside time, language is necessarily inimical to ideal representation; for Donne, who locates it firmly *within* a temporal framework, there can by contrast be *no* "better media than language" in which to work.[176] It is the text, not the universe, which he uses to measure time, and which leads him towards its outer limits.

C. The "Visible Word": An Eye To Progress

> If you would teach a scholar in the highest form how to *read*, take Donne ...To read Dryden, Pope, &c, you need only count syllables; but to read Donne, you must measure *time*, and discover the *Time* of each word by the sense of passion.
>
> Coleridge, *Works*, 12: 2, 225, 216

> Time is the medium of narration as it is the medium of life.
>
> Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, p. 541

So, time is the measure of motion (physical or metaphorical) and motion - in the case of literature, readerly or writerly motion - may also be a measure of time that has elapsed. If the *nunc stans* makes eternity visible, its narrative simultaneously represents the progress we cannot avoid. Thus, according to Frye, "The narrative framework of the Bible is a part of its emphasis on the shape of history and the specific collision with temporal movement that its revelation is assumed to make".[177] Rosalie Colie comments similarly of Milton's more condensed epic, that "a reader vicariously lives through the

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[175]"'La Corona'", *New Essays*, 165.

[176]Davie, *Articulate Energy*, 234-5.

[177]*The Great Code*, 198.

experience of understanding how time and eternity can coexist by reading *Paradise Lost*".[178] This might well be applied to a narrative work of Donne's like the *Devotions*, whose headtitles convey a strong sense of progression, or to some of his longer poems.[179]

But Donne's sermons too follow a highly logical and temporal structure, analysing each word of the text in order and linking together their evolving meanings. Along the way he seems particularly aware of the necessity of consecutive and logical ordering - what Edward Said calls "the brute temporal sequence of an author's production",[180] so casually discounted by Chambers. Encountering, for example, the two figures of King and subject in his text of I.3, Donne declares that each is defined by the other (184.25-32), and should be perceived simultaneously: "We will not be curious in placing these two pictures, nor considering which to consider first" (183.19-20). However, the words of the Bible and Donne's sermons alike require consecutivity, unlike real pictures or Fenellosa's ideograms, and Donne must perforce deal textually with the two relatives in some order. As Plato excused the misleading impression given by his narrative account of the simultaneous creation of the soul and body - "God did not of course contrive the soul later than the body, as it has appeared in the narrative we are giving" - so Donne cites the constraints of the medium: "in our Text, we find the subjects picture first" (184.35). For practical purposes, he follows the Bible's lead; thus, like Plato's, his "narrative is bound to reflect much of our own contingent and accidental state".[181]

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[178] *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 519.

[179] See James Andrew Clark on "The Plot of Donne's *Anniversaries*", *SEL* 30 (1990) 63-77, 65, 63. He is wrong, it seems to me, to distinguish this impulse from that of the Bible, as in finding Colie's typological view of the *Anniversaries* to "underestimate the narrative impulse" - he himself underestimates the aggressively rectilinear march of typology, which presents the present as not merely past fulfilment but future shadow (that is, as semi-recapitulative). Typology *confirms* the code of succession (76 fn. 4).

[180] *Beginnings - Intention and Method* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1975), 194.

[181] *Timaeus*, 47.

Word by word a text is constructed, and thus it is re-read. Hugh of St Victor advised that "*modus legendi in dividendo constat*" ("the method of reading consists in dividing"),[182] and we have seen how Donne focusses narrative consciousness on increasingly minute linguistic instants. Just as Hugh prescribed that such short sections of text be memorized and then linked in a series, Donne proceeds to join these instants in sequence (the *overflow* of presence), finding in the nature of such narrative a specific correlation with the progress of the soul: through life we "sin Grammatically", and "tie sins together in construction, in a Syntaxis, in a chaine, and dependance, and coherence upon one another" (I.4.225.95-6).[183]

In life we advance as through a text, and in reading we move inexorably through time to our conclusion. God becomes the silence beyond the final word, the goal of all Christian readers. Alone he speaks "intemporaliter", or as Donne textually redefines it, "without spending any time in distinction of syllables" (IV.3.102.483). For us, bound to grammatical sinfulness, "*altè infixae;* every syllable aggravates our misery" (II.1.63.542-3), and the urgency with which "We passe on" (III.3.109.663) reflects the desirability of our final 'passing on'.

It is, in fact, the movement onward Donne emphasizes: "As Angells goe, ... men read" (*Obsequies to the Lord Harrington,* l. 100). Content can largely be dispensed with: "I find it true that after long reading I can only tell y^{o} how many leaves I have read", he confesses to Wootton.[184] His contribution to other readers is likewise depicted as an experience of pure sequence:

> as in great destiny no small passage can be omitted or frustrated, so, in my resolution of writing almost daily to you I would have no link of the chain broken by me, both because my letters interpret one another, and because only their number can give them weight.[185]

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[182]*Didascalion*, ed. Charles Buttimer (Washington: Catholic U.P., 1939), 58 (l. 25).

[183]And see Sherwood on Donne's use of discursive reasoning as a figure for time (*Fulfilling the Circle*, 23-6).

[184] E. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 313.

[185]Gosse, I. 165.

And again:

> you, who as you know that the affection which suggests and dictates them is ever one and continual and uninterrupted; may be pleased to think my letters so too, and that all the pieces make but one long letter, and so I know you would not grudge to read any entire book of mine at that pace as you do my letters, which is a leaf a week .[186]

As in typology, the relation of the parts assumes greater importance than the parts themselves.[187] Reading becomes less a question of studying content than measuring pages passed, the turning of time.

The urgent association of reading with time's passing was not new. Quinones gives examples from the fourteenth century onwards of humanist plans to crowd learning into schedules designed to maximize the time available.[188] Vergerius, in his *De ingenuis moribus*, went so far as to recommend that every library should have a clock in full view [189] - again, it was the overall time spent more than the specific nature of the knowledge gained that mattered. Donne's own purpose in reading, he says, is "not so much to avoyd as to enioy idlenes", not so much to acquire knowledge as to concentrate on the passing of time.[190] And, in fact, this "aroused exploitation of time", as Petrarch demonstrated, is what then allows time to be forgotten in the resulting flow of energy.[191] Jeremy Taylor in *Holy Dying* celebrates "(h)e that governs the day and divides the hours". Just as the lover who counted the minutes of absence in "the sands of his hour-glasse, or the throbs and little beatings of his watch, by dividing an hour into so many members ... spun out its length by number, and so translated a day into the tediousnesse of a moneth", so Taylor recommends we "tell our dayes by Canonical hours of prayer";

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[186]Gosse, I.290-1.

[187] See p. 108 above.

[188]*The Renaissance Discovery*, 147ff, 187-99, 449-50.

[189]*The Renaissance Discovery*, 197.

[190] Simpson, *A Study*, 314 .

[191]*The Renaissance Discovery*, 148ff. "As the mind becomes conscious of itself-in-the-present, it is able to rise 'above time understood as mere succession'" (see p. 117 above).

for, "If we were thus minute and curious in the spending our time, it is impossible but our life would seem very long".[192]

As with typology, the attempt to escape from time to eternity, to project ourselves imaginatively beyond a perceived *sequence*, becomes an expression of eternity in time that brings us into the same semi-recapitulative reading moment - the ever-present now.[193] For Donne the writer, Quinones's evolving sense of being emerges not only from a "readiness" but a 'read'-iness: a sense of contraction which is that of pages into time ("*modus legendi in dividendo constat*"), and an accompanying sense of readerly presentness that extends the moment.[194]

As Donne observes,

> Experience teacheth us, that if we be reading any book in the evening, if the twilight surprises us, and it growes dark, yet we can reade longer in that book which we were in before, then if we took a new book of another subject into our hands (II.18.354.230-3).

What the reader initially discovers, as the experience of reading merges with the experience of the day (and by analogy, with that of life), is that "as clearly as he sees the Sunne set, he sees his death before his eyes" (II.1.61.455-6) - in the sequence of words that lie before him. Montaigne the traveller thus compared his fear of finishing a book to that of finishing a journey.[195] Yet in the committed act of reading as of counting, there lies a means of prolonging our sense of passage, of 'reading longer'. As Aquinas argued, "in proportion as this act was brought close to its point of perfection, in proportion as it approached its own completion in time, it tended to release itself from time ...".[196] Literally, reading allows us to escape death: thus the warning of the scholar,

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[192]*Holy Dying*, ed. P.G. Stanwood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 37.

[193] See pp. 110-11 above.

[194]See p. 106 above; *The Renaissance Discovery*, 26-7.

[195]*Works*, ed. Donald Frame (Stanford: U.P., 1957), 915. As Quinones argues against Poulet, Montaigne was not future-orientated, but - like Donne, who cites him (Gosse, I.122) - present-directed *for the sake of the future* (*The Renaissance Discovery*, 523-4, fn. 21).

[196]See Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, 6-7.

> come to have use of his Reading to save his life at the Bar, when he had his Book, for some petty Felony, and then ... stricken with the spirit of stupidity, and not ... able to read ... If they fear not God, they have forgot their first letters ... they are offer'd their Book ... and they cannot read (I.4.232.344-54).

We saw earlier how narrative time tended to overtake and replace narrated time; so here more generally, the text replaces life with its own more immediate reality. Thus while "he that sayes well, presents a good text", "he that lives well" only "presents a good Comment upon that text" (V.13.263.673-5). Donne's images reflect the textualization of life. Human bodies become books to be written in, imprinted, stamped, defaced and mangled; though we tear pages of sins from our memories, God's book can still be found within us, "bound up in this velim, in this parchmin, in this skin of ours ... the covering" (III.3.103.469-104.471).[197] The body of the earth itself becomes something we read: "he opened the *Red-sea*, as he should have opened the *booke of life*, to shew them their Names, their security, and he shut the sea, as that book, upon the Egyptians, to shew them their irrecoverable exclusion" (V.9.188.145-8). Wherever possible, the world is spread flat before the reader, on facing pages - "the Earth opened her selfe like a booke, to deliver out her dead" (III.9.215.317-18) - or "laid open in a flat, in a plaine Map" (IV.7.181.65). Finally, the body of Christ himself is replaced by the Bible. Leaping over the intricate arguments of tran- and con-substantiation, Donne dismisses the need for an intermediary substance: "if a man reads the Scriptures a little ... he can finde flesh in the Sacrament, without bread, because he findes *Hoc est Corpus meum, This is my Body*" (V.1.39.135-40). The body of Christ exists in the text "*Body*", and the word becomes its own referent. Christ the essential Word becomes Christ the written Word, the Word made flesh made Word once more.

Donne's own language of power similarly seeks to impinge physically on the world,[198] while in the end returning us to itself as source. Elaine Scarry remarks of the engraved glass in "A Valediction: of my name, in the window" that, "it is only its *transparency* out to the world (is [sic] 'through-shine' as Donne calls it), its inlaying of

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[197] See also IV.3.96.270-5; II.11.244.347-9.

[198] See Chapter 1, pp. 43ff.

nouns and names (or what we could call its referential capacity), that gives it standing in the world"[199] -

> 'Tis much that Glasse should bee
> As all confessing, and thorough-shine as I (7-8)

- but Donne continues:

> 'Tis more, that it shewes thee to thee,
> And cleare reflects thee to thine eye (9-10).

The 'compromise' Donne arrives at is, furthermore, ultimately a restatement of this second assertion:

> But all such rules, loves magique can undoe,
> Here you see mee, and I am you (11-12).

We are eventually returned to the original text (the woman, the name), which stands alone. The man called by the outside world effectively makes his farewell from the poem as it ends.

For we must again remember that all this occurs within language, so that the boundaries between what we see as 'real' (Donne's "flesh") and what we see as text (Donne's quotation of the Bible's "*Body*") are blurred. The life that is imaged as name or text is already text to the reader; saying and living, text and comment upon text are actually apprehended as one. At III.8.188.42-7, Donne enacts the confusion:

> though this History of *Iob*, may seeme to spend it selfe, upon the relation of *Iobs* temporall passages ... yet, if we consider the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the booke it selfe, the first beginning, and the later end thereof, we shall see in both places, a care of the *Holy ghost*, to shew us first *Iobs righteousness*, and then his *riches*.

In this passage, Donne begins with the real existence of a person ("this History of *Iob*", a matter of the past), moves to the textual existence of that person ("*Iobs* temporal passages", the past-as-rendered-in-the-present), and ends with the real existence of text:

199"Donne: 'But yet the body is his booke'", in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Population and Persons*, ed. Scarry (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1988), 70-105, 81-2.

"the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the booke it selfe", as it exists in the present. The endpoints of the book come to replace Job's, and the process of reading fills in for history. So also the first words of Donne's "Valediction" engrave "My name" in the page if nowhere else ("herein"); alternatively, the single Roman numeral hovering above the poem ("I") stands as the poem's true, textual referent, just as the "glasse" of the page reflects the reader as the poem's true addressee.

Thus for the reader, life is reflected in the experience of reading only to become it:

> a sentence, so much as may be uttered in a breathing; and such a difference as in styles is in our lives, contracted and dilated. And, as in some styles there are open parentheses, sentences within sentences, so there are lives within our lives. I am in such a parenthesis now (in a convalescence) when I thought myself very near my period. [200]

Life overall, in fact, becomes "but a *parenthesis*" between birth and death, themselves "the perfect sentence" (III.8.188.24-5). Donne's writing consistently abounds with such examples of bibliographic terminology and linguistic metaphor,[201] the logical conclusion of which is to associate the period or perfected sentence with the ideal end of life. He presents this association in all its imminence from the writer's point of view ("this life of my body shall not last ever, perchance not to put the last word to this sentence" [V.13.250.191-2]); the reader's (sitting in his library late one night, he declares the room to have "a wholesome emblematic use; for having under it a vault, I make that promise me, that I shall die reading, since my book and a grave are so near");[202] and the

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[200]Gosse, II.208.

[201]IV.3.128.1435-49; III.3.98.274-5; IV.6.166.110-167.164; IV.3.122.1229-31; V.1.38.95-100; V.2.68.391-69.396; III.6.157.33-4; III.17.359.424-8; III.5.137.118.

[202]Gosse, I.195. In this Donne draws again on a long humanist tradition, from Epictetus - "Let death overtake me while I am thinking, while I am writing, while I am reading such things as these" (quoted in Rudolph Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity In Its Contemporary Setting*, trans. Rev. R. H. Fuller, London: Thames and Hudson, 1956, 141) - to Petrarch, who wrote to Boccaccio, "I could wish that my work could be completed with my life. But since that is too much to hope for, I hope that death may find me reading or writing ...", and "We are continually dying: I, while I am writing these words, you while you are reading them, others when they hear them or fail to hear them, we are all dying. I shall be dying when you read this, you die while I write, we both are dying, we all are dying, we are dying forever" (*Letters from Petrarch*, trans. Morris Bishop, Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1966, 302, 203). Note the paradoxical implications of literary immortality in the final clause; Donne, as I have argued, subscribed to this humanist goal (pp. 104-5 above; see also p. 152 below).

speaker's ("It hath been my desire ... that I might die in the pulpit; if not that, yet that I might take my death in the pulpit, that is, die the sooner by occasion of my former labour ... as long as I live, and am not speechless, I would not willingly decline that service").[203]

D. The "Audible Word": Lip Service

> so are wee ... to fit our Doctrine to the apprehension, and capacity, and digestion of the hearers.
>
> II.13.276.267-9

I would now like to turn to Donne as speaker, examining more closely the nature of the word he uses as his medium of progress. In line with the status he gives to reading, his writing emphasizes the importance of vision: "Things in other stories we do but hear; things in the Scriptures we see".[204] The inspired divine is thus primarily a *seer*, one who makes the invisible visible to others.[205] In an evocative picture of unpicturable death, Donne declares, "I have had no looking-glasse in my grave, to see how my body looks in the dissolution ... I have had no houre-glasse in my grave to see how my time passes" (III.3.110.716-19). Glass allows us to see both space and time, as the parallel clause constructions emphasize. In its different forms, it reflects the image of the subject back as object, or acts as a transparent container to reveal what lies within.[206] By combining looking-glass and hour-glass, Donne images time *as* space, for observers who are both actually without and imaginatively within.[207] The coffin becomes, like the Scriptures,

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[203]Gosse, II.268-9.

[204] III.1.57.352-3; III.3.110.722ff; IV.13.338.535-7.

[205]II.7.164.18-165.31.

[206]For Donne's use of both types of glass imagery in the sermons, see IV.13.329.193-5; IV.13.326.72-3; III.3.111.731-2, 112.777-8. For the poems, see G.R. Wilson, Jr, "The Interplay of Perception and Reflection: Mirror Imagery in Donne's Poetry", *SEL* 9 (1969) 107-21.

[207]Compare the similar superimposition of mirror vision (female reflector) and window vision (male confessor) in "A Valediction: of my name in the window"discussed at pp. 145-7 above (see also Barbara Estrin, "Framing and Imagining the 'You': Donne's 'A Valediction of My

"as a room wainscotted with looking-glass" (III.1.57.353); the body within watches itself crumble like sand through the hourglass of the text.

Frye asserts that Biblical imagery, in contrast, emphasizes the ear over the eye, the spoken over the written word.[208] Since the nature of preaching as a calling retains the imprint of this oral heritage, and as Frye's account has often been assumed of Donne, we should assess how far Donne subscribed to the impact of the 'audible' word.

He does, it is true, give the ear its due: "The Eares are the Aqueducts of the water of life; and if we cut off those, that is, intermit our ordinary course of hearing, this is a castration of the soul" (V.1.55.746-9). Moreover, a number of points I have made about Donne's attitude to reading can be applied equally to his position on hearing, which is similarly associated with salvation: Christ "came to save us by calling us, as an eloquent and perswasive man calls his Auditory" (I.9.313.438-9). Indeed, on one occasion Donne goes so far as to say that "howsoever it be Gospel in itself, it is not Gospel to us if it be not preached in the Congregation" (I.8.291.240-2).

Further, just as the written word is frequently self-referential, Donne speaks often of the act of speaking. Thus his account of Jeremy preaching in the Bible reflects clearly on his own in the present. Jeremy

> preached heavy Doctrin, and therefore his Auditory hated him ... I preach but the messages of God; (and *vae mihi si non*, wo be unto me if I preach not them), I preach but the sense of Gods indignation upon mine own soul, in a conscience of mine own sins, I impute nothing to another, that I confesse not of my selfe, I call none of you to confession to me, I doe but confesse my self to God, and you, I rack no mans memory, what he did last year, last week, last night, I onely gather into my memory, and powr out in the presence of my God, and his Church, the sinfull history of mine own *youth*, and yet I am a *contentious man*, says *Jeremy* ... I am a bitter, and satyricall preacher (II.1.52.132-6).

Name in the Window" and 'Elegy: Change'", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 30(3) (1988) 345-62, 347-9). In this sermon, however, the speaker is already on both sides of the glass ("Here you see mee, and I am you", l.12).

[208] *The Great Code*, 213-14.

Jeremy's words run indistinguishably into Donne's, as the diatribe joins references to "the sinfull history of mine owne *youth*", to accusations of "bitter, and satyricall" preaching reminiscent of the youthful satirist. The defensive tone is one that Donne falls into more than once when speaking of preaching,[209] and the belated return to context, "says *Jeremy*", comes as something of a shock.

Undeniably, the Christian duty to speak out is one of Donne's favourite topics:

> a Christian is not justified in silence, but in declarations and open professions; in tongues: and not in dark and ambiguous speeches, not in faint and retractable speeches, but in fiery tongues; fiery, that is, fervent; fiery, that is, clear (III.9.214.297-300).

Lips represent "a mans ability, to do service to that State in which God hath made his station".[210] Indeed, the voice "denominates" the Christian (II.7.172.291ff), who must grow, "by speaking and speaking again, by asking more, and more questions" (II.10.232.704-5). In a sense, as with reading, content matters less than the act of speaking itself. Since "God spent a whole week in speaking for thy good", Donne tells his listener, so must s/he "Speak then, and talk continually of the name, and the goodnesse of God; speak again, and again" (II.10.232.720-1). With communion comes communication: "the Lord of heaven is *verbum*, The word, and his servants there talk of us here" (III.4.122.303-4). Talk here is our link between the two worlds, and needs to be constantly created for that crossing to be kept in sight. Hence, in spite of its Romanist taint, Donne's insistence upon confession (II.6.160.593-8).

These sorts of comments have led critics like Heather Asals to presume that Donne saw speaking as "the essential tool of religious exercise".[211] Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin too concentrates on "the moment of the sermon's original delivery" as the point at which "sacred and secular time overlap or intersect",[212] while Thomas Merrill

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[209]See II.13.278.309-11, 279.345-51.

[210] I.3.206.861-2; III.12.259.120-260.153; II.10.228.564-71.

[211]"John Donne and the Grammar of Redemption", *English Studies in Canada* 5(2) (1979) 125-39, 126.

[212]"Time, Place and the Congregation", 213.

writes of Donne's Puritanical vision of the sermon as preached sacrament. Reading, according to Merrill, was of secondary importance only: "useful for spiritual nourishment, but not sufficient to initiate faith".[213]

And yet, when we look to the sermons, Donne expresses at least as much appreciation of the written word. For one thing, its quality of permanence gives it a lasting power that the evanescent spoken word must lack. Donne's preaching "transitorily by word" cannot outstay what appears in print (V.12.240.347-51), and he is left to echo Job's cry, "*Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book!*" (V.10.212.518-19). As Thomas à Kempis wrote in *The Imitation of Christ* (1441), "even of those who speak, see how naught they all are, for they cease with the sound of the spoken words: but the truth of the Lord lasts for ever."[214] For Donne, it lasts by virtue of its contrasting written status:

> this manifestation of his Will, must be permanent, it must be *written*, there must be a *Scripture*, which is his *Word* and his *Will*: And that therefore, from that Scripture, from that Word of God, all Articles of our Beliefe are to bee drawne ... (III.17.358.374-8).

Even as he declares that "it is not Gospel to us if it be not preached in the Congregation" (I.8.291.241-2), Donne can, in the very same sermon, insist that "there never was, there never must be any other Gospel then is *in sermone*, in the written word of God" (I.8.288.120-2). A.C. Partridge puts the case against orality:

> Donne's opinion is that the essential i.e. the God-given meaning of a word is partly to be gleaned by searching the generations of commentators, but truly found by the grace of understanding, whereby faith illuminates Scripture. He has limitless faith in the integrity of the written word, when compared with the slipperiness of the spoken.[215]

Undeniably, Donne shows a natural tendency himself to slip from the spoken to the written. He may, for instance, describe spoken events in textual terms - "after Christs *Consummatum est*, which was all the text, there should be an *Adimplendum est*,

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[213]*Christian Criticism*, c. 9 (170).

[214]trans. Edgar Daplyn (London: Lakeland, 1979), 92.

[215]*John Donne: Language and Style*, 230.

interlined" (III.16.337.199-201) - or he may begin by quoting the spoken word of the preacher, only to talk of eyes enlightening, the "written word" and the "place of Scripture" where we "read", before returning to the topic in hand, the way we "heare Sermons" (V.1.38.127-39.166).[216]

Finally, the argument that critics have used to dismiss study of Donne's interest in the written word, that he virtually ignores textual/sexual procreation as a way of defeating time's ravages, is demonstrably wrong. Literary posterity is something Donne clearly had an eye to. His conclusion to the *Devotions' Epistle* is a classic equation of the tome as tomb, a form of preserved memory:

> ... so shall I live (in my way) to see the happinesses of the times of your Highnesse too, if this Child of mine, inanimated by your gracious Acceptation, may so long preserve alive the memory of Your Highnesse Humblest and Devotedest JOHN DONNE (ll. 18-25).[217]

Nor is this merely convention. Donne expresses interest in both the short-term projection of his voice, in letters to friends - "I may speak to you in your chamber a year hence before I know not whom and not hear my self"[218] - and in the long term, as it may carry even to the Last Day:

> their sin, that shall sinne by occasion of any wanton *writings* of mine, will be my sin, though they come after ... [I] in something that I have said or done, might sin, that is, occasion sin, in the last man that ever *shall be* (II.2.88.603-9).

Fear in this last passage mingles with fascination, and the responsibility Donne assumes comes trailing clouds of vainglory. Achsah Guibbory, in an article entitled "A Sense of the Future: Projected Audiences of Donne and Jonson", describes Donne as more intent

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[216]According to Carruthers, material presented acoustically was frequently turned into visual form for purposes of remembering (16ff). She describes such workings of memory as "eye-dependent reading" (*The Book of Memory*, 27).

[217]See pp. 104-5 above. D. Louthon finds evidence for the implied pun in "A Valediction: of the booke" and various sermons ("The *Tome/Tomb* Pun In Renaissance England", *PQ* 29 (1950) 375-80) - see also pp. 147-8 above. We might note, furthermore, that one of the sermons Louthon cites provides the *OED* with its earliest use of the word "tome" (3. fig.).

[218]Gosse, I.168.

on affecting the future than being affected by it, a view which this passage supports.[219] To conclude, however, that Donne is therefore less interested in immortality seems perverse. Behind Donne's fearful thought lies a secret longing to *somehow* be present on the Last Day;[220] the characteristic activeness of his projected presence does not detract from the fact. Guibbory's argument, that Donne is against passive fame and for egoistic action - for, in other words, the word as preached, the "apocalyptic event" of the sermon, as Merrill puts it[221] - overlooks the *means* by which Donne here imagines himself to "occasion" future events.

At this point, we might return briefly to Merrill. In describing Donne's "Puritanical vision", he distinguishes it from that of Hooker and the Anglo-Catholics, who, he remarks, "saw no distinction between the Gospel preached and the Scripture read".[222] Yet so far from presenting a contrast Donne seems, as we have found, equally likely to venerate spoken or written word. In fact, Donne does not himself seem even to draw a distinction between the former as Gospel and the latter as Scripture: "it is not Gospel to us if it be not preached" (I.8.291.241), yet "there never must be any other Gospel then is *in sermone,* in the written word of God in the scriptures" (I.8.288.121-2). What Donne does is to fuse the two functions: "the Gospell is founded and rooted *in sermone, in verbo,* in the Word" (I.8.287.89-90). The English translation "Word" merges both written and spoken senses differentiated in Latin, and it is in this particularly *Anglo*-Catholic spirit that Donne approaches the Logos.

Once this fusion has been understood, the dialectical relationship between the spoken and written character of the Word can be more finely appreciated. The "Address to Countess of Montgomery" in II.8 refers to some of its aspects:

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[219]*JDJ* 2(2) (1983) 11-21.

[220]See Carey's discussion in *Life, Mind and Art*, 212-15.

[221]*Christian Criticism,* 170.

[222]*Christian Criticism,* 164.

> as a word vanisheth, so doth any power in me to serve you; things that are written are fitter testimonies, because they remain and are permanent[223]... I know what dead carkasses things written are in respect of things spoken ...

Although Donne admires the lasting power of written text, he is nonetheless aware of its unpleasant, corpse-like physicality. The contrasting fragility and flexibility of the spoken word render it more responsive, and even as it tends to "wear out to nothing", in this very immediacy of its presence it assumes a higher purity.[224] Partridge distinguishes the two responses as one might thus separate them out: "he preached to move a living audience, he only revised for the benefit of posterity".[225] Donne, however, does not separate them, as I suggested at the start of this chapter. Just as he confuses Gospel and Scripture, so he attempts, I would argue, to merge the experiences of listening and reading by treating the revised sermons as *read re-enactments* of the original spoken word. Thus discussion assumes both visual and oral terms; thus Donne preserves a dimension of oral performance in the written text - keeping, for instance, the apology that his voice has sunk low by the end of a particularly long sermon (IV.3.127.1390-6), characteristically describing his action as "I that speak now, and shall not speak then" (III.3.92.59-60), and using parenthesis, italics and rhythmic repetition to recreate speech patterns and emphasis.[226] "Ragges of paper", too, will wear out to nothing - "short-liv'd, aborted bee/ Those carcasse verses" ("A Funerall Elegie", ll. 11-14).

Walter Ong describes the shift via moveable type from spoken to written word as a move towards the visual, spatial, objective, externalized, depersonalized and

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[223] Cf. M.M. Mahood who argues that, unlike other Renaissance love-poets, Donne ignores the artist's ability to bestow immortality on his addressees (*Poetry and Humanism*, 91). Anne Ferry suggests that the aubades and valedictions on the one hand do constitute unconventional eternizing poetry, while "The Canonization", "The Relic" and "The Anniversarie" on the other hand mock the convention in their satirical tone and approach; thus having it both ways, neither of them convincing ("*'All in War With Time'*," 101-25).

[224] See Chapter 1.

[225] *John Donne: Language and Style*, 219.

[226] See D.W. Harding, "The Devotions Now", in *Essays in Celebration*, ed. A.J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), 385-403, 390. According to William Gifford's study of Donne's transcription practice, the printed sermon probably closely resembled the delivered sermon anyway, unless for some reason it widely exceeded the average length of 697 lines ("Time and Place in Donne's Sermons", *PMLA* 82(1) (1967) 388-98, 388-91).

quantitative. Theoretically words are no longer tied to a particular speaker in a particular time, but set free in marks on the page, detached from personal context, "fled from time into space".[227] Donne's attraction to the absolute is reflected in his fascination with the medium as ideal metaphor; however, his own use of it typically and realistically returns it to the personal and relativist. By imbuing the written word with an idiosyncratic voice and style to reflect the speaking person in time, he makes the logos a conduit of time; and not only the speaker's but the reader's, for he has created an objective or externalized, infinitely adjustable (since there are infinite readers) measure of subjective time. What was once measured by the sun is now measured by "our risinge and fallinge".

Richard Wollman has suggested that Donne saw manuscript more particularly as embodying this fusion between permanence and performance, since unlike print the handwritten word physically retains an intimate, oral dimension.[228] In support, Wollman invokes William Nelson, who, however, only states that the relationship between writer and reader in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries was more intimate generally, whether "before or after Gutenberg" (89). Donne's own discussion furthermore centres around the speaking/writing distinction - nowhere does he distinguish between manuscript and print within the written sphere. The residual orality advanced by Wollman as one reason for Donne's preference for manuscript over print inheres in the sermon-*form*, regardless of the technological nature of its representation; and does indeed relate, not only Donne's manuscript poems but his printed sermons, with their appeal to the ear and eye - to his handwritten letters (91-2). Wollman's other argument in support of the theory that Donne's confinement of his poetry to manuscript did not bespeak carelessness of its survival, is that manuscript transmission gave Donne direct authorial control over interpretation by limiting readership (88). But, in the light of Wollman's overall argument that Donne's reason for writing was to communicate after

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[227] *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 307-14, 308. The quotation comes from A.E. Malloch's analysis of Ong in "John Donne and the Casuists", *SEL* 2 (1962) 57-76, 69.

[228] "The 'Press and the Fire'"; further references in the text.

death when no amount of personal control would have been possible (91-2), I see no good reason to overturn the theory that Donne specifically wished to be remembered for his *printed* prose.[229]

To conclude, the general process of printed sermon-reading is just as affective as listening to the preacher. Far from presenting a passive spectacle, the visible word acts upon the reader, translating him into time, locating him in the present. It is present in its 'now' to the same extent as the spoken word; no future audience is projected beyond it, since all readers are equally present. Literary posterity simply allows the *nunc stans* to be infinitely reiterated. As Ruth Fox concludes in an analysis of the commemorative *Anniversaries*, theirs is

> the denial of distinctions betwen times past and time to come and the affirmation of their conjunction in art which is life, presently lived, yet heard not only now, but then ... [in] verse created by a process repeatable to infinity on any occasion of the celebration of goodness in the soul of men.[230]

Or, as Donne says of a friend's letter: "I keep it therefore to read every day, as newly written".[231]

Readers, like recipients of letters, are equally individual. Just as the spoken word supposes the uniqueness of the moment of direct individual address to a congregation - nonetheless defined as a group physical presence[232] - so here the read word addresses the individual reader albeit via an artifact published and designed for a mass readership. Whether we read in the wake of others or simultaneously amongst them, "our every repetition makes possible a fresh and unaltered performance",[233] in what is,

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[229]See fn. 16 above; and cf. Ernest Sullivan's observation, that the recent proliferation of Donne manuscripts shows that Donne early on lost all control of his readership: *The Influence of John Donne: His Uncollected Seventeenth Century Printed Verse* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1993).

[230]"Donne's *Anniversaries* and the Art of Living", *ELH* 38 (1971) 528-41, 541.

[231]Gosse, I.300.

[232]See Ní Chuilleanáin, "Time, Place and the Congregation", 202ff.

[233]As Stanwood describes the liturgical impression of Donne's poetry ("Time and Liturgy in Donne", 105).

like preaching, a "dynamic corporate event".[234] It is at this immediate, always-unique reading moment as much as at the moment of the sermon's original delivery that "sacred and secular time overlay or intersect", to borrow Ní Chuilleanáin's phrase: this liturgical point of identification between Logos and reader, which "tries to be the occasion for Providence's intrusion into the worldly man's soul".[235]

It is also at this moment that Donne's incarnationist theology of language fulfils itself, evoking not simply time within the space of the text, but Real Presence. Those involved in the reading process are envisaged as not only temporally and individually but also substantially present, through the text. Chapter 1 explored the intrusion of body into text, and earlier in this Chapter we glanced at the intrusion of text into body; here, ideally, Donne seeks to render the two materially interchangeable. In invoking the means of thus incarnating discourse, the Holy Ghost, Donne's physical emphasis is clear:

> The Spirit of God ... in the speaker or writer, and... present in his tongue or hand, meets himself again (as we meet our selves in a glasse) in the eies and eares and hearts of the hearers and readers (Address to Countess of Montgomery, II.8).

Incarnationist rhetoric is also, as James Baumlin notes, inherently phonocentric, tied to the orator's 'voice'[236]and resulting in just such a performative approach to language as Donne exhibits (155).

Baumlin actually argues that Donne's performance in his early verse-letters fails (156-7), and that his purpose may therefore be to explore the *loss* of incarnationist rhetoric and sacramentalism (154). He bases this theory, however, on Donne's "explicit repudiation" of transubstantiation later in his career (Dec. 1626, Easter 1630) - a dangerous procedure[237]- and to the extent that when he finds "To Sir Thos. Woodward" "re-presents the poet to a reader-communicant in the same way that the sacrament expresses Christ's Real Presence", he immediately assumes ironization (159-62). In

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[234]See p. 101 above.

[235]"Time, Place and the Congregation", 213-4.

[236]"Donne's Poetics of Absence", *JDJ* 7(2) (1988) 151-82, 152-3; further references in the text.

[237]See Chapter 4, pp. 194-5.

truth, the reduction of Real Presence to Baumlin's merely figural, Zwinglian representation (158-9) was massively unpopular in seventeenth-century Britain, and directly opposed by Donne in such poems as "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."[238] Even the sermons retain an echo of Luther's response to Zwingli, *That These Words of Christ, 'This is My Body', Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics* (1527), in Donne's own location of physical presence in those words, moreover in a passage that refuses to condemn transubstantiation:

> if a man reads the Scriptures a little ... He can finde flesh in the Sacrament, without bread, because he findes *Hoc est Corpus meum, This is my Body* (V.1.39.135-40).[239]

This is not to deny Baumlin's analysis of the way in which various *Songs and Sonets* do actually undercut a belief in sacramental, performative language and poetic presence (162ff), but where it occurs, such a failure is (as I shall argue in Chapter 5) specifically a function of their secular character. To state *generally* that Donne believed in "the absence of the Person from the words ... Christ's Real Presence ... becoming (like the poet of Donne's youthful verse letters) a merely figurative presence that heralds absence" (162), is to ignore the distinctive conjunction of the Logos.

Finally, Donne's depiction of memory, the 'art of *salvation*' itself, as a "manuall, a bosome book", emphasizes the vital interchange between writer, reader and Holy Ghost. Regarding this book as a "Gallery of the soul, hang'd with so many, and so lively pictures of the goodness and mercies of thy God to thee",[240] we read its pictures in order to remember; we *can* read them only *because* we remember. At the moment we consciously read them - "the sight of God, in fulnesse"[241]- the affective and perceptive merge, and

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[238]See Anne Barbeau Gardiner, "Donne and the Real Presence of the Absent Lover", *JDJ* 9(2) (1990) 113-24; also Eleanor McNees, *Eucharistic Poetry: The Search for Presence in the Writings of John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, and Geoffrey Hill* (London and Toronto: Associated U.P., 1992), ch. 2.

[239]See p. 145 above.

[240]II.11.238.108, 237.90-1. As Carruthers notes, such pictures of memory are "referential not to an object, but to a text ('historia') and thus to the human memorative process called reading and composition" (*The Book of Memory*, 222-3).

[241]*The second Anniversary*, l. 441.

we remember that we remember. Coincidence of "both the object and the wit"[242] brings us to the speaking now and the possibility of salvation. Once we have arrived at this moment of salvation, furthermore, the pictures of God's grace read us in their turn: "as a well made, and well plac'd picture, looks alwayes upon him that looks upon it; so shall thy God look upon thee" (II.11.237.93-5). In the exchange, in the confusion of 'looking upon him that is looking upon him', simple subject-object perception (*meum* and *teum*) is replaced by God's instantaneous, all-inclusive vision ("I am that I am"). Through words, we meet ourselves in meeting each other:

> The Spirit of God that dictates them in the speaker or writer, and is present in his tongue or hand, meets himself again (as we meet our selves in a glasse) in the eies and eares and hearts of the hearers and readers: and that Spirit, which is ever the same to an equall devotion, makes a writing and a speaking equall means to edification (Address to Countess of Montgomery, II.8).

Whether the 'glasse' be the body of the preacher or the body of the book, consciousness once shared makes no distinction. By explicitly running speaking and writing together in this passage, Donne enacts the eradication of difference each form of communication endeavours to achieve. It is personal identification, empathy, that unites separate spirits at the moment of reading - thus Donne's eulogy to "*Printing*, by which the learning of the whole world is communicable to one another, and our minds and our inventions, our wits and compositions may trade and have commerce together" (III.17.359.424-7). By reading the products of print, "wee overcome distances, we deceive absences, and wee are together, even then when wee are asunder" (I.8.285.13-14). There is no greater aim for the man of God than to cross the divide. It is not surprising that Donne called friendship, "my second religion",[243] and that he wrote so assiduously to his friends. Letters, too, retained the fresh imprint of the spoken voice; so also in "friendship's sacraments", as he called them, "time and days cannot have interest or be considerable because that which passes by them is eternal, and out of the measure of time".[244]

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[242]*The second Anniversary*, l. 442. See p. 135 above.

[243]Gosse, I.170.

[244]Gosse, II.43.

In communicating his first religion, Donne could invoke the Biblical epistle. Aligning himself with St Paul, Donne borrows his words to "transferre" them in his turn:

> to whom belongs this woe? I must answer with *S. Paul, vae mihi*, woe unto me if I do not tell them to whom it belongs. And therefore since in spirituall things especially charity begins with it selfe, I shall transferre this *Vae* from my selfe, by laying it upon them, whom your owne conscience shall find it to belong unto ... (II.18.350.69-74).

Identification with Paul leads to identification with others. Elsewhere, Donne notes how temporal distance is annihilated in Paul's letter to the Colossians: those "who now rejoyce in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh" (*Coloss.* I.24). The "now" refers both to Paul writing in prison and the moment the Colossians hear the message (III.16.336.148ff). Although the text is written, the two times of enunciation and reception are imaginatively joined as they would be in the spoken "now" - joined, furthermore, with our time 'now' of reading. The time-lag between action and report is continually being bridged. Reading acknowledges and triumphs over the "hazards of succession", Derridean absence is overcome by simultaneous semiotic reception,[245] and in the word's liturgical presence, we glimpse an eternal present, an eternal identification, that lasts as long as the existence of the text.

Behind this drive towards unification, however, lurked inevitably the spectre of division, which Donne saw as all-pervasive and inseparable from the human condition. Just as the "now" in its linguistically corrupt form fragments still further, so my next chapter shifts focus from the *contingencies* of time to the *contingents* of thought: "those proportions that fall to any person upon division".[246]

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[245] *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 207-8. As Erasmus argued, sacred writings "bring you the living image of His holy mind and the speaking, healing, dying, rising Christ himself, and thus they render him so fully present that you would see less if you gazed upon him with your very eyes" ("The Paraclesis", *Christian Humanism and the Reformation*, ed. John Olin, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973, 106). It is the difference, in other words, between Donne's liturgical and Derrida's juridical language (see Nancy Wright, "The *Figura* of the Martyr in John Donne's Sermons", *ELH* 56(2) (1989) 293-309).

[246] *OED* p. 826, B.5a.

CHAPTER FOUR

Structures of Division and (Transc)ending

A. The Idea Of Division

> God Himself, who only is One, seems to have been eternally delighted with a disunion of persons. They whose active function it is, must endeavour this unity in religion ... but we must take heed of making mis-conclusions upon the want of it; for, whether the mayor and aldermen fall out (as with us and the Puritans; bishops against priests) or the commoners' voices differ who is mayor, and who aldermen ... yet it is still one corporation.
>
> "To his honourable friend Sir H. G.", May/June, 1609[1]

Division in one form or another shapes the driving impulses so far examined in Donne's work. The search backward to beginning and forward to apocalypse is conceived of as endless progress, endless division of space and time; the individual who undertakes it creates this world without closure simultaneously in the midst of and in contrast to the very real and public temporal world. Primarily such a life can be thought of as an image "in the world, but not of it", an amphibologous image which faces two ways at the same time, ahead and behind, outward and inward. Since the drawing of such distinctions and the attempt to come to terms with them was clearly endemic to Donne's habit of mind, it is fitting that this action should form the basis of the climactic third birth of the *Devotions*. Division was also, however, the subject of Donne's explicit attention in the *Sermons*, as this chapter will proceed to examine.

Donne's most unequivocal pronouncements describe division as "the fore-runner (and alas, but a little way the fore-runner) of destruction" (II.18.353.175-6). Though

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1 Gosse, I.223.

disposed like the mystics to place a favourable construction in practice on the fact that "whatsoever may be broken and divided may come to nothing",[2] publicly he decries "the devils way to come to destruction by breaking of unions" (II.18.352.153-5). Basically, division signifies man's fall from grace; whereas eternity is indivisible (II.5.139.301-9), the sinner is "divided, separated from the face of God" (V.17.361.863-4).

Against this, Donne notes that God's final three separating judgments lead not only to damnation but salvation (II.15.319.286-95). Indeed, he goes out of his way elsewhere to trace a spurious connection between the word "prayer" and Latin *separare* (VI.1.50.402-8), for the earliest sign, the very "embleme of division, of disunion", is also God's means of creation, His firmament that "was to *divide* between waters and waters" (II.17.340.200). It is by analogy with such division that we now know and understand:

> there is a kind of firmament produced in us, a knowledge of a difference between Heaven and Earth; and ... there is in our constitutions an earthly part, a body, and a heavenly part, a soul, and an understanding as a firmament, to separate, distinguish and discern between these (I.8.290.196-200).

Despite criticism of divisiveness, therefore, Donne subscribed at least in part to the tradition noted by Regina Schwartz in her study of *Paradise Lost*, whereby "creation is sanctified by its divisions",[3] and conversely, "the most heinous of confusions aspiring, as Eve does, to become 'as the Gods'".[4]

1. "To become 'as the Gods'"

Donne's ambivalence stems, I would like to argue, from a general ambivalence surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity, the essential Christian paradox of division. On one hand, God is seen as one all-embracing entity, in contrast to whom "Earthly Judges have their distinctions, and so their restrictions" (II.15.316.196-7). On the other, he is

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2 See Chapter 1.

3 For instance, III.3.96.197-200.

4 *Remembering and Repeating: Biblical Creation in "Paradise Lost"* (Cambridge: U.P., 1988), 11ff: 12, 15.

just so himself distinguished into the Persons of the Trinity, effectively divided after the reprehensible manner of the Pagans and Gentiles; the former "broke God in pieces, and changed God into single money, and made a fragmentarie God of every Power, and Attribute in God" (V.16.325.263-5), while the latter "broke God in pieces, and crumbled, and scattered God into as many severall gods, as there are Powers in God" (III.12.262.218-19). As Donne wryly recognizes, the similarity of procedure highlights the difficulty and perversity of persuading heathens to abandon their multiple gods for the "one God" that is ostensibly the hallmark of Christianity:

> But when all these lines were brought into one center, not to let that center rest, but to draw lines out of that againe, and bring more persons into that one centricall God-head, this was hard for reason to digest (V.1.47.451-4).

At the very moment that we declare, "There was a naturall, an essentiall, an eternall union between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, and the Devill sought to break that" (II.18.352.159-61), our distinction of Persons places us in the Devil's Party.

Thus Eve's attempt to bridge the division between man and God paradoxically risks multiplicity with its threat of further divisibility; in seeking unity, the individual aims to become plural, 'as the Gods'. Such 'plural singularity' can only result in a different confusion. Like eternity, it upsets the rules of grammar - "God had spent infinite millions of millions of generations, from all un-imaginable eternity, in contemplating one another in the Trinity" (II.17.342.248-50) - which becomes symbolic of our failure to understand. In III.5, Donne makes the connection: "I know the explicite Doctrine of the Trinity was not easie to be apprehended then; as it is not easie to be expressed now" (142.319-21). Then and now, incomprehension and incomprehensibility, meet in Donne's struggles to elucidate the contradictions of the Trinity:

> Consider God altogether, and so in all outward works, all the Trinity concurres, because all are but *one* God; but consider God in relation, in distinct Persons, and so the severall Persons do something in which the other Persons are not interessed; The Sonne hath not a generation from himself, so, as he had from the Father, and from the holy Ghost, as a distinct person, he had none at all; the holy Ghost had a proceeding from the Father and Son, but from the Sonne as a person, who had his generation from another, but not so from the Father. Not to stray into clouds, or perplexities in this contemplation, God, that is, the whole Trinity, judges still, but

so as the Sonne judgeth, the Father judgeth not, for that Judgment he hath committed (II.15.329.295-306).

Essentially, the Trinity is conceived of both as plural aspects of a single entity, the Christian "*one* God" (dissected parts of a whole but fragmented self, all in one), *and* as "distinct Persons" or entities, each of which *is* the whole (copies, several selves, one in all). Thus at V.2.61-3, Donne discusses the mystery of the Spirit who is completely God as well as distinct Person, while in II.17, the Creator is seen to be in the Bible one being (*faciam*), and then not only several - as it seems, multiplying - persons ("let us make him, as though more persons were employed") but several, still multiplying Gods ("Gods created, as though more Gods were employed") (II.17.344.334-41).[5] As Donne was later to play on the contradiction outright, "God is a plurall God, and offers himselfe to all, collectively; God is a singular God, and offers himselfe to every man, distributively" (IX.5.140.341-3). Two opposed tendencies emerge from this conundrum: an anatomizing tendency to perceive a whole as a series of parts (an internally divided, or subject/object perspective), and a pluralistic tendency to perceive multiple wholes (or multiple-subjects).

2. Subject/Object

The first, anatomical perspective reveals itself most obviously in Donne's advocacy of physical dissection. He recommends examination not only of the ill - "this sicke sinner dissected and anatomized" (II.2.85.470-1) - but all: "Let every one of us therefore dissect and cut up himself", making "one desection, one Anatomy" (I.7.273.193-4). Worms can usefully be cut apart (III.7.180.329-34); the soul we may metaphorically anatomize (II.6.159.549ff); even the mind repays dissection into parts since this creates the possibility of internal dialogue. By announcing, "I am not all here, I am here now preaching upon this text, and I am at home in my Library" (III.3.110.692-3), Donne

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5 See also VI.3.81.1ff; IX.1.51.139ff; and see *John Donne and the Theology of Language*, edd. P.G. Stanwood and Heather Asals (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986), 85-90.

divides himself into speaker and listener. Being in two minds, he can then "be such a Preacher to himself, and ask himself *Nonne tu*" (I.6.263.418-9). In some ways, the criticism that Donne speaks mainly of himself is thus true: "I doe but confesse my self to God, and to you ... I onely gather into my memory, and powre out in the presence of my God, and his Church, the sinfull history of mine own *youth*" (II.1.53.139-43). Like God, he plays at being both Creator and creature (I.9.304.111-13), the thief set to catechize the thief (I.6.259.283ff).

But humankind also is "one Anatomy", and Donne's internal dialogue reforms between preacher and congregation. Donne was very conscious of the dramatic contrast between himself upright in the pulpit, and his audience seated below; his sermons abound with references to "preachers" and "congregations".[6] This emphasis on function draws a sharp distinction between clergy and laity, "*meum & tuum*",[7] which Donne heightens when defensive: "I would it were as well provided, that buyers and sellers, and farmers might not be Divines, nor censure them. I speake not of censuring our lives ... But ... of censuring our Doctrines, and of appointing our Doctrines" (II.13.279.345-51).

The structure of the sermons, as we shall see, also reflects this sense of division. For the moment we may compare their tendency to set up fictional stuctures of debatement, in the form of dialogues - for example, between God and David, or Eve and Mary (V.15.305.329ff).

3. Multiple-Subjects

The above patterns of thought illustrate Donne's fondness for distinguishing parts of a whole, whether physical, mental or verbal. The concept of the King's Two Bodies could be regarded similarly, as Donne readily shows in his ingenious justification of the King's absence on King's Day in I.3: "for a *Noble* part of this Body, (our Nation) is gone with

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6 I.8.291.240-2; II.10.216.114-6; II.14.296.330ff.

7 I.1.161.392; IV.15.370.241ff; IV.3.109.731ff.

him, and a *Royal* part of his Body stays with us" (I.3.221.1416-7). The phrase "Two Bodies", however, stresses multiplication over division, plural physical entitites rather than a single, divided conceptual entity of humankind. Between "this Body" and "his Body", it is one whole body that goes, and one that stays.

Along these lines, we find numerous references in Donne to looking-glasses and mirrored reflections, whether of God, seen "by reflection, upon a glasse" (III.3.111.732), his own dissolving body or "all at once".[8] He was sufficiently familiar with the "old Writers in the Optiques" to cite their opinion "that when we see a thing in a glasse, we see not the thing itselfe, but a representation onely" - that is, 'another' self (VIII.9.222.130-223.132). Additional versions of the self could be created by hand. Thus Donne notes the mutual regard of sitter and viewer in portraiture - by implication, precise mutuality would require subject and object to be identical: subject and (painted) subject (II.11.237.90-5). Natural copies also abound, of people like Job (I.7.273.183-4), for the concept of *imitatio* depends on the possibility of multiple versions. All Christians represent not only images of each other, but of God (V.10.203.199-203), and they are in a sense not simply images, but actual copies: "The Kings of the earth are faire and glorious resemblances of the King of heaven ... they are like gods, they are gods" (V.3.85.284-6). Again, "as Princes are Gods, so their well-govern'd Courts, are Copies, and representations of Heaven" (I.4.223.11-13). We directly deface God by defacing ourselves only if such an identification is made (I.1.160.347-9).

All these devices allow creation of numerous selves: "heaven and salvation is not a Creation, but a Multiplication; it begins not when wee dye, but it increases and dilates it self infinitely then" (III.16.339.274-6). Instead of beginning with a whole that is divided into parts, as with a subject/object perspective, we end with multiplied parts each of which is a whole: a whole that is *replicated* into parts, through mirror image, artistic reproduction or metaphorical power.

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8 V.7.161.360-3; III.3.110.716-19; III.1.57.352-4; I.3.199.589-91. G.R Wilson discusses this in the poetry, in "The Interplay of Perception and Reflection: Mirror Imagery in Donne's Poetry", *SEL* 9 (1969) 107-21.

Plurality in general is an obsession of Donne's, and characteristically he approaches it, like the Trinitarian One God, from varying angles. At times he ascribes it specifically to God, whose "blessings in this world, are express'd so, in the plurall ... Good ways, and good ends are in the *plurall*, and have many examples; else they are not good; but sins are in the *singular*".[9] Elsewhere he contradicts this view, bemoaning "this plurality, this multiplicity of sin" and the ways in which "multiplicity disorders us, discomposes us, unsettles us, and so hazards us" (II.3.107.450-1; II.1.61.443ff). Community of individuals, *"two or three met together in his name"*, he similarly welcomes in the name of the Church (II.10.216.114-5; III.4.121.273-80) or warns against, depending on the situation: "Not solitude, but company is the scene of pride" (II.14.295.293-4).

The resulting ambiguity is something Donne recognizes and attempts to clarify: if

> the spirit of wisdome ... is *unicus multiplex, manifoldly one, plurally singular*: so the spirit of tentation in every soul is *unicus multiplex*, singularly plurall, *rooted* in some *one* beloved sin, but derived into infinite branches of tentation (II.1.62.485-8).

In the Latin he quotes, however, no difference appears between wisdom and temptation, which detracts from the subsequent English distinction. Unravelling the latter is not easy in any case, though Donne later offers it again as a joint derivation from St Jerome ("divers things in the singular number" indicate "things of grace") and St Augustine ("any one thing in the plurall Number" indicates "heavy and sorrowfull things") (III.10.228.124-7). We are clearly, if nowhere else, in the philosophical realm of the Trinity here, and Donne's account of a body of sin falls back specifically and blasphemously on Trinitarian terminology: though "one body of sin", it "will confesse a plurality, a *legion*" - "It is all, and yet it is but One" (II.2.89.622-32).[10] Once more, Donne's fascination with an idea transcends the appropriateness of his subject.

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[9] II.3.102.280-95; also I.9.305.169; II.13.270.40-5; II.2.86.531-4.

[10] At least one other preacher of the time was sufficiently free from Trinitarian angst to dispense with Augustine's dubious moral distinction altogether. Edward Maie, Donne's successor as Chaplain to the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, preached and printed *A Sermon of the Communion of Saints* in 1621, where he approved both the "plurall solitude" of solitary prayer (communion with the saints), and the "singular multitude" of group prayer. His similarly explicit analogy with the Trinity - "one for all, and all for everyone, for all are one" - is therefore unproblematical (D_4^r). For Donne's implication of a chthonic

4. The Trinity

The fact remains that Donne's ambivalence cannot be resolved. The respective virtues and vices of singularity and plurality cannot be kept apart when their defining paradigm, the Trinity, so confuses the issue. Requiring *both* subject/object and multiple-subject perspectives, the Trinity defies Donne's attempts to explain Persons who are simultaneously fragments and wholes. Setting them against time is impossible (V.2.64.227-34; II.16.334.323-8). All he can say is that they "have reference to one another *by Relation*" (I.3.184.28). Just as King and subject are defined only by mutual reference,[11] so here we fall back on an internally determined network of subject, subject and subject. This appears as familial metaphor - Father, Son and Holy Ghost - and in the traditional assignation of different attributes:

> As God, one *God* created us, so we have a soul, *one soul*, that represents, and is some image of that one God; As the three Persons of the Trinity created us, so we have, in our one soul, a *threefold impression* of that image, and, as Saint *Bernard* calls it, *A trinity from the Trinity*, in those *three faculties* of the soul, the *Vnderstanding*, the *Will*, and the *Memory* (II.2.72.19-73.24).[12]

Only in this way can we conveniently distinguish the Persons of the Trinity, although in absolute terms, as Donne reminds us, "those three Attributes ... be all three in all the three Persons of the Trinity" (III.15.327.539ff).

Once, however, this relationship is imagined, it has been imaged from without as a concept - as a *family*, or as *the rational* or *spiritual faculties of the soul*. Ultimately, a transcendent *idea*, a proposed but never expressed 'Jungian fourth',[13] appears to

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Trinity, cf. Jung on Dante's vision of Satan as three-in-one (*The Spirit Mercurius*, in *Collected Works*, edd. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler and William McGuire, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953-79, 20 vv., 13.283).

[11]See Chapter 2, p. 92.

[12]See also I.3.199.576-82; V.3.93.602-6; V.15.317.773-6.

[13] See *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 14.619, *Civilisation in Transition*, 10.738, *Psychology and Alchemy*, 12.26-31, 203-9; "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity" generally. Thus in "The Litanie", Donne follows stanzas I, II, and III on "*The* FATHER", "*The* SONNE" and "*The* HOLY GHOST" respectively, with a separate address to "*The* TRINITY"in stanza IV.

structure the network of Three-in-One. As Donne says in the *Essays in Divinity*, "there is needed also a Meta-theology, and super-divinity, above that which serves our particular consciences" (59.31-2). In an interesting passage in V.3, he asks, "when I have resisted Father, Son, and holy Ghost, is there a fourth person in the God-head to work upon me?" Of course his answer is in the negative ("If I blaspheme, that is, deliberately pronounce against the Holy Ghost, my sin is irremissible, therefore, because there is no body left to forgive it" [90.479-82]), but the idea has been raised, as so often in Donne, by suggestion. Jung notes the Greek tradition that associated quaternity as totality with deity, leading to the Gnostic heresy that "God is four" - also its vocal sixteenth-century opponent, the alchemist Gerhard Dorn, who saw this as necessarily raising to divinity the Devil or 'evil' in the form of the feminine (Mary).[14] Nonetheless, Alastair Fowler quotes Upton to the effect that the "quadrate or sacred quaternion, comprehended all number, all the elements, all the powers, energies, and virtues in man", and concludes that four remained a number of resolution, concord and harmony.[15] Significantly in II.12, Donne first proposes "four *Advents* or Comings of Christ" (250.14), which he then contracts to three:

> Take the word of Christs coming to us at the hour of death, or of his coming to us at the day of Judgment (for those two are all one to our present purpose, because God never reverses any particular judgment given at a mans death at the day of the general Judgment:) (II.12.252.59-63).

The initially proposed fourth advent beyond "the hour of death" escapes discussion, except insofar as it conforms to its preceding type, the third advent, with which it is identified. Donne eventually examines the text "in all three acceptations", the fourth having by this time disappeared completely from view (II.12.252.77; 251.33). Yet in a sense this fourth, Christ's "coming to us at the day of Judgment", recapitulates and contains all of the other three. It orders them as a progress, and its absence draws them towards a final reckoning. Within the sermon too, its exclusion from textual analysis serves by contrast to define what the text contains.

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[14]"Psychology and Religion", 11.62, 90-107; "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity", 11.246ff, 281, 290; *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* 14.237; all in Jung, *Works.*

[15]*Spenser and the Numbers of Time* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), 275, 24ff.

5. Binary Relationships

What this does, in effect, is to substitute for the Trinitarian relationship a *binary* relationship, between the text of three and the silence of a fourth, between the Trinity and the notion of the Trinity. Donne is happier with the interdependent and mutually defining nature of a simply antithetical relationship. While reason, as he puts it, accounts readily for "couple" relationships like father/son, husband/wife and master/slave, there are problems dealing with a third, equal and deriving person like the Holy Ghost.[16] Only faith can overcome a natural difficulty in accepting his existence (V.1.46.422-45). Thus as we have seen, Donne tends to translate the Trinitarian mystery into an argument between singularity and plurality, and their paradoxical conjunction, *unicus multiplex*. This in turn gives rise to the diametrically opposed translations of "*plurally singular*" and "singularly plurall", just as, Donne notes elsewhere with satisfaction, the same root in Hebrew can lead to "words of a contrary signification" (V.1.51.581-2).

Donne's fondness for paradox is directly related to this binary view of the world. The paradoxical writer says both one thing and its opposite: "one meaning can never outweigh the other, though weighed to eternity. The one meaning must always be taken with respect to the other ... its meanings infinitely mirrored, infinitely reflected, in each other".[17] There are numerous instances of Donne's attraction for antithetical pairings that paradoxically come together. "Powers, that dwell so far asunder, as *Heaven*, and *Hell, God* and the *Devill*, meet in an instant" in man's soul, where we find "a little of the *compassion* and *charity* of Hell ... the good nature of the *Devill*" (II.1.59.373-4, 57.318-20). The classic confrontation of East and West frequently represents unexpected reconciliation, whether by mutual agreement on disagreement - "One shoots *East*, and

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[16]Edmund Leach's study of myth systems argues for the innateness of binary oppositions to human thought (*Genesis as Myth*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1969, 9 and ff).

[17]Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: U.P., 1966), 6. Punning repeats this at the level of the word (see L. Elaine Hoover, *John Donne and Francisco de Quevedo: Poets of Love and Death*, Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1978, 63).

another *West*, but both these arrows meet in *him*, that means well, to defame him" (II.1.58.337-8) - or by mediation of the mutual element between them, the sea, which sees "East and West becoming neighbours; so by mercy, the most different things are united and reconciled" (V.12.238.262-4), or by an instant and magical overlapping, the gift of a dimension: "paste that flat Map upon a round body, and then West and East are all one ... thy West is East, thy Trouble of spirit is Tranquillity of spirit" (VI.1.59.727-33). The body/soul dichotomy similarly disappears. Donne views it sometimes in clear antithetical terms ("I have not body enough for my body, and I have too much body for my soul" [II.1.63.517-18]), sometimes less distinctly (arguing, for instance, that the senses "have more relation to the soul, then to the body" [III.3.110.726-7]), and sometimes rather as a united entity: ""it is the union that makes the man", "the *union* of this soul and body".[18] This meeting, again, takes place by mediation of a third element, the "spirits" - "a kind of middle nature, between soul and body" (II.12.261.420-2).

In II.11, Donne takes a different view of light and dark. God, he says,

> severed light from darkness ... not as two essential, and positive, and equal things ... but ... that a true religion should be established, and continue, and darkness be utterly removed; and then, and not till then, (till this was done, light severed from darkness) there was a day (II.11.241.217-24).

This contrasts with the King James version of *Genesis* I.4-5:

> 4. And God saw the light, that *it was* good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
>
> 5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

Donne ignores the binary implications of God's division, whereby day consists of morning *and* evening. He speaks as if day were daylight alone, as if division into two terms "utterly removed" one of them; whereas, of course, distinguishing one requires

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[18]IV.13.332.295-6; II.1.58.358-9. The soul itself shares some of the intangible mystery of the Trinity. Raymond Waddington argues that Donne subscribed to the doctrine of the indivisible soul, whereby the latter was considered present *in totality in every part of the body* i.e actually both divided and indivisible, a fragment and a whole: see "'All in All: Shakespeare, Milton, Donne and the Soul-in-Body Topos", *ELR* 20 (1990) 40-68.

distinguishing the other, with the result that they *do* become two "equall things". Day follows night as night day in the same way that "*prophecy* is but *antidated Gospell*, and *Gospell* but *postdated prophecy*" (IV.6.176.499-500). The earlier manuscript version of this passage shows Donne struggling less successfully to suppress this logical conclusion. God severed all,

> not ... that light should have a being here, and darkness a being there, but ... that light should have an essentiall being and darknes be utterly abolished. And this severing must hold in the profession of the Gospell too, not soe sever'd as that here shalbe a sermon, and there a mass, but that the true religion be really professed, and corrupt religion be utterly abolished (II.11.381.276-82: Appendix B).

The more detailed negative clauses reveal the repressed binary interpretation.

This contrived analogy of Donne's shows evident signs of strain. Elsewhere, he acknowledges the interdependency of binaries: "the more *lights* there are, the more *shadows* are also cast by those many lights" (III.17.353.184-5). In the event, the qualities of light and dark merge, so that "there is not so darke a thing as *light*" (III.17.356.311), and night and darkness have their bright side :

> Churches are best for Prayer that have least light:
>
> To see God only, I goe out of sight:
>
> And to scape stormy dayes, I chuse
>
> An Everlasting night.[19]

The argument between Reason and Faith is also more complicated, with Donne occasionally praising man's glorification of God precisely because he "is able to offer to God a *reasonable* sacrifice" (II.17.341.244-342.245, and ff), and occasionally emphasizing the limitations of such an approach.[20] The conclusion in the latter case, however, is that we must reasonably doubt *in order to* have faith (V.1.38.105-6). Reason and faith unite - "not continuall, but they are contiguous, they flow not from one another, but they touch

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[19] "A Hymne to Christ, at the Authors last going into Germany", ll. 29-32: also IV.6.174.412-20.
[20] II.17.341-2; III.17.359.404-5 cf. III.6.165.341ff.

one another" (IV.14.351.214-16) - to set up a more genuinely binary relationship between faith and doubt.

Donne, then, habitually formulates his world in binary terms, as a "Roll written on both sides, a History of Adversity, as well as of Prosperity" (IV.3.96.271-2). Neither side can exist without its obverse. Even where such mutual definition is absent, he tends to divide the world into twos.[21] I would like to suggest that all these pairings are the further vestiges of a shadow Trinity, of the kind praised by Donne in III.5: "it is a lovely and a religious thing, to finde out *Vestigia Trinitatis,* Impressions of the Trinity, in as many things as we can" (144.379-81).[22] For though he sees the natural world in twos, he tends to recommend the application of *human action* to that world as a third term, or in terms of threes - as he specifies in III.5, "a Trinity of Actions" (144.392): a thrice pulling of arrows, a treble Scriptural repetition, a tripartite weeping or a threefold baptism.[23] On one of the rare occasions when he justifies the division of God into three persons as (ironically) an aid to comprehension, it is in terms of the application we can make of it:

> though he be in his nature incomprehensible, and inaccessible in his light, yet this is his infinite largenesse, that being thus infinitely One, he hath manifested himselfe to us in three Persons, to be the more easily discerned by us, and the more closely and effectually applied to us (III.12.263.270-4).

That is to say, as the initial perception of the Trinity leads to the invocation of a "fourth person", a unifying quaternity that is suggested but not expressed, so the initial perception of the natural world as a binary system results in the suggestion (again by denial) of a "third object": "But because there is no third object for mans love, this world, and the next, are all that he can consider, as he hath but two eyes, so he hath but two objects" (III.1.48.29-31). Here the physiological analogy (quite illogically) determines the division of perception into two, and the opening clause is unnecessary; *unless* it be to suggest negatively the inexpressible that exists beyond what we can express as "this

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[21] I.9.315.536; II.13.279.362ff; V.12.237.220-1; V.14.287.724-5; and such divisios as IV.7.

[22] See Dennis Klinck on "*Vestigia Trinitatis* in Man and his Works in the English Renaissance", *JHI* 42 (1981) 13-27; also Robert Hickey, "Donne's Art of Memory", *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 3 (1958) 29-36, 29.

[23] II.1.64.564-65.565; V.4.100.142-51; IV.13.325.34, 343.725-6; V.6.149.692ff.

world, and the next".[24] The possibility is raised that, as Donne asserts bizarrely elsewhere, "There is a third heaven" (V.1.48.489) - some other object, a Holy Ghost that infuses and confuses every Father/Son pairing, serving to function as some consequent, subsuming entity that absorbs its precedent parts.

The use of the Trinity as such a reconciliatory principle opposed to the opposition implied by binary relationships was not unknown in the Renaissance.[25] Its combination, however, with the use of a fourth to in turn structure the Trinity complicates the situation. We find ourselves with a Trinity defined by a fourth, the relationship between which two is in turn defined by a third. The Trinity thus contains and is contained by the notion of itself, incorporating the problem of an external governing principle within its own tripartite structure. Three and One, the subsuming fourth, become the two elements subsumed by a third, giving us Three and One as One and as Three simultaneously.

Outside of paradoxical self-definition, this unified Trinity can be expressed only imperfectly, since expression is largely viewed as the origin of division. Donne's attitude to martyrs and heretics makes this clear:

> This is it that undoes us, that vertues and vices are contiguous, and borderers upon one another ... Many times, that which comes within an inch of a noble action, fals under the infamy of an odious treason; At many executions, half the company will call a man an *Heretique*, and half, a *Martyr*. How often, an excesse, makes a naturall affection, an unnaturall disorder? (II.1.59.389-96)

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[24] Cf. *Malone Dies*, where Macmann, looking at Moll's crucifix earrings, asks, "why two Christs, implying that in his opinion, one was more than sufficient. To which she made the absurd reply, why two ears?" As we might guess from Beckett's earlier hint to "not exclude a third hypothesis", however, she then adds: "Besides, they are thieves, Christ is in my mouth". The inexpressible lies within the instrument of expression; and, as Beckett cautions, "our concern here is ... not with the close of their relations, but rather with the beginning", so we may add, our concern is not with the close of Moll's mouth but rather with its opening (*The Beckett Trilogy*, London: Picador, 1979, 241-2).

[25] See Klinck, "*Vestigia Trinitatis*", 27. As Marjorie Reeves expounds the doctrine of Joachim de Fiore, one of its principal proponents: "in the history of mankind, from the work of God the Father and God the Son, there must proceed the work of God the Holy Spirit ... although Joachim certainly believed in the equality of the Persons, he did see the work of the Third Person as the culmination of history in the third *status*" (*Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1977, 5-6); compare Itrat Husain on Donne's view of the Holy Ghost as mediator between Father and Son, God and man: *The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne* (London and N.Y.: Macmillan, 1938), 64-6.

In this passage the two are differentiated, if narrowly, according to what is considered excess. This, however, is obviously subjective. A "*Martyr*" to one is a "*Heretique*" to another; only the name differentiates, and not the object, but the individual perception of it. An almost noble action falls but under *infamy*, a bad name, to be despised. Hence, given the name, "we see, that Heretiques, that give their bodies to the fire, are by the very law, infamous, and they are infamous in every mans apprehension" (I.1.159.303-5). But where the name is in doubt, there is little in principle to separate martyrs from heretics, or Jesuitical pseudomartyrs:

> them who colouring and apparelling treason in martyrdome ... forfeited their lives by one comming, they could come again and again... they are voluntary and violent pursuers of their own death ... the desire of death is a disease in them ... a little blood of imaginary, but traiterous Martyrs (II.18.360.443-66).

Elsewhere the same scene identifies both as equally guilty, though the spectators remain divided: "We see at Executions, where men pretend to dye cheerefully for the glory of God, halfe the Company will call them Traitors, and halfe Martyrs" (V.19.382.66-8).[26] What the reader sees is a collectively split (external, multiple) perspective that also harbours internal, anatomical implications; as Donne's syntax emphasizes, both audience ("halfe the Company") and, as a result, condemned men ("halfe Martyrs") are divided into two.

6. Insistent Distinctions

But Donne goes beyond the analysis of definition, or what J.B. Leishman calls "drawing necessary distinctions".[27] Often he seems to distinguish for the *sake* of distinguishing,

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[26]Donne himself prefers active protest: "God shall thanke no man, for dying for him, and his glory, that contributed nothing to his glory, in the actions of his life: very hardly shall that man be a *Martyr* in a persecution, that did not what he could, to keep off persecution" (III.8.201.506-9; II.1.53.153-6; II.18.358.362-8; II.2.77.178-84). Though he dutifully acknowledges the martyrs of the Church (II.10.219.229ff; V.6.133.92-3; V.2.66.307ff), he is ambiguous even in comparative self-denigration: "I live not in a time, or in a place, where Crownes of Martyrdome are distributed, nor am I sure my Constancy would make me capable of it if I did" (V.15.306.392-4).

[27]"The Sermons of John Donne", *RES* 8 (1957) 434-43, 439-40.

superfluously and bizarrely: "*Yeoman*, and *Labourer*, and *Spinster* are distinctions upon Earth" (IV.10.277.433-4). Strange categories are brought to our attention - 300 blind men, 700 left-handed Benjamites (III.2.126.455, 77.165) - as Donne proceeds to single out elements: "not a Jew in the world ... beares armes" (IV.11.292.319-20). God Himself, to Donne's mind, was wont to do so in the person of John, "towards whom Christ had certainly other *humane* and affectionate respects, then he had to the rest" (I.3.214.1154-5; V.8.179.405-6.)

On a larger scale, the world is divided in the first instance into Christians and non-Christians. Donne takes varying points of view on the topic of pagan salvation. II.12 asserts that some will be saved:

> the Gentils, and the Heathen, which are without the Church, and yet amongst them God hath some Servants ... To them that are lodged in these out-houses, out of the Covenant out of the Church, salvation comes sometimes, God doth save some of them (II.12.253.120-6).

Elsewhere, Donne allows only that they *may* be saved: "So that this is all that we dare avow concerning salvation, that howsoever God may afford salvation to some in all nations, yet he hath manifested to us no way of conveying salvation to them, but by ... preaching" (V.1.45.355-9; IV.2.78.549ff). The question is generally problematical (V.13.265.735-8), although in one sermon, they are certain to be damned in "strange confusion" on the Last Day, lacking "blessed meanes of preparation" (V.4.106.365-75). Donne is clearly interested in the question, if undecided; but his attitude depends on whatever point he is making about pagans in relation to Christians:

> The end of all is, that what punishment soever God reserves for them, who never heard of the Name of his Son Christ Jesus at all ... we that have heard him ... shall certainly have the heavier condemnation, for having had that which they wanted (II.7.177.489-95).

Whatever the outcome, he retains a segregationalist viewpoint between "them" and "we", even where this results in inconsistencies. Thus, for instance, he explains that "the book of Psalms is a *mysterious* book; and, if we had not a lock, every man would thrust in" (II.2.72.3-4). The Jews, however, he attacks for the very same exclusiveness, keeping

their "salvation shut up amongst themselves" (II.12.257.270). Their segregationalism is his excuse for segregating them in turn.

The same pattern appears in Donne's attitude to sectarians. While condemning them as separatists, "rotten boughs, gangrened limmes, fragmentary chips, blowne off by their owne spirit of turbulency" (III.1.87.540-2; V.6.134.140-65), he argues for their separation from the Church. He who was once "amongst ourselves, a brother", must be segregated: "wee must thrust him out: Put away from among you ... They must bee *cut off*, and ... *cast away*", in a "divorce ... a separating, and no redintegration". Donne's vehemence here in VI.1 exposes an ironically separatist consciousness; for the famous declaration that "No man is an island", he substitutes the separatist excuse, that it is "better to goe into Heaven with one, thy selfe alone, then to endanger thy selfe to be left out for thy companions sake" (VI.1.46.258-74; see also III.4.127.480ff).

Donne enacts therefore the very divisiveness he condemns, in passages that becomes self-referential and self-revelatory. Repeatedly in his routine attacks on other Christians, Donne criticizes them in a way that casts doubt on his own procedure. Differentiating Jesuits, he describes them as those "who put all the world, into differences" (III.7.176.187); singling out Puritans, he criticizes their processes of sub-division (I.3.189.206-25). Yet such labelling he expressly recognizes as the source of destruction (III.7.176.175-80).

All distinguishing names clearly had to be handled with caution; as Donne took care to add in a situation less politically fraught, "I hope the distinction of *Laytie* and *Clergie*, the words, scandalize no man", and again, "I hope no man is scandaliz'd with the names" (IV.15.370.244-5, 371.260). In an ideological context where names could lead to and denominate sectarian division, the only solution was to avoid distinguishing titles altogether. This, however, was easier done than said. Edward Maie, for example, in *A Sermon of the Communion of Saints* refused to usurp God by distinguishing between 'elect' and 'reprobate', but could not resist listing three 'types' of men excluded from

communion.[28] Donne sought in calmer moments to unite "Jew and Christian, Papist and Protestant, Puritan and Protestant" (II.11.237.76-7) under a common title that "will break downe this wall too, these differences amongst Christians" (II.3.111.616-17): the memory of God's mercies, the name of Christ or the all-encompassing name of catholic:

> The Church loves the name of Catholique; and it is a glorious, and an harmonious name; Love thou ... Those Universall, and fundamentall doctrines, which in all Christian ages, and in all Christian Churches, have beene agreed by all to be necessary to salvation; and then thou art a true Catholique (II.13.280.395-401).[29]

Public assertions and private, such as that in a letter to Goodyer declaring, "I never fettered nor imprisoned the word Religion, not straitening it friarly ... nor immuring it in a Rome, or a Wittenburg or a Geneva",[30] reflect a general trend in the 1620s, '30s and '40s to avoid name-calling,[31] which had its counterpart in all realms of expression. As different religious denominations are absorbed as "virtual beams of one sun ... not so contrary as North and South Poles, and ... all co-natural pieces of one circle",[32] so Richard Gardiner rejoices in the geographical loss of "those names of division" - Welsh, Scottish, Irish - and their submergence into the "ancient common name of all the inhabitants within this Ile".[33] Donne's whimsical vision of baptism describes it not as a bestowal, but as "a giving up of their Names, A Registering, a Matriculating of their Names in the book of the profession of the Christian Religion" (V.7.163.470ff). To enter the one Church, individuals symbolically cast off even their personal names, surrendering Christian names for the name of Christian.

Beside religious difference, there is another type of division that fascinates Donne, and cannot be so easily cast off: the difference between the sexes. This in many

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[28](London, 1621), D_4^v.

[29]Thus Donne's support for Anglicanism as "the preservation of the religion I was born in", constitutes a strong assertion of the essential unity of the catholic Church (Gosse, II.246-7).

[30]Gosse, I.226.

[31]See Horton Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1986), 334-5; also II.3.111.589ff.

[32]Gosse, I.226.

[33]*A Sermon Preached at St Maries in Oxford on Act Sunday last in the after-noone* (Oxford, 1622), D_2^v.

ways is nature's ultimate binary relationship, lending itself to all sorts of analogies with those natural antitheses already looked at; hence, for instance, "our flesh is the wife, and the spirit is the husband, and they two will never agree" (V.10.208.364-5).

As with these oppositions, however, agreement can be imagined. Just as the boundaries between light/dark, East/West, Heaven/Hell and body/soul become blurred in Donne's writing, so male and female meet and overlap in the figure of the "blest Hermaphrodite".[34] Sexual, like religious difference, could still be merged in a common form. Robert Ray in his Donne Dictionary describes "hermaphrodite" as "a person or thing in which two opposite qualities are combined';[35] we may perhaps view it in Trinitarian terms as a transcendent *third* that resolves a binary opposition, like the sea between East and West, or the spirits binding body and soul. In Virginia Mollenkott's words, Donne images "each individual lover as an androgynous blend of masculine and feminine elements and pictures their merging into one androgynous and indestructible third Being".[36]

In the sermons, this confusion of the sexes arises from man's relationship with Christ and the Church. As in the *Song of Songs*, man's spiritual marriage with Christ serves to feminize him, so that he is said to "conceive by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost ... (and) with the obedience of the blessed Virgin", marry and bear as a female soul, and seem to be in labour on the day of the Lord.[37] Janel Mueller's description of Donne, eschewing the father/child relationship with God beloved of Herbert in favour of "tenaciously figuring his maleness as adult manhood", thus skirts the evidence. More accurately, Donne insists on adult figuring in sexual terms, regardless of gender.[38]

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[34]"To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders", l. 54. See A.R. Cirillo, "The Fair Hermaphrodite: Love-Union in the Poetry of Donne and Spenser", *SEL* 9 (1969) 81-95.

[35]*A John Donne Companion* (N.Y. and London: Garland, 1990), 160.

[36]"John Donne and the Limitations of Androgyny", *JEGP* 80 (1981) 22-38, 34.

[37]I.8.294.323-5; III.11.251.358ff; II.18.355.247-51. Cf. for instance, Henry Smith in "The Young Man's Task": God "requireth the first labours of his servants, and as I may say, the maidenhead of every man" (Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud*, 101).

[38]"Women Among the Metaphysicals: A Case, Mostly, of Being Donne For", *MP* 87 (1989-90) 142-58, 149.

For Donne is by no means consistent in this application. On other occasions, perhaps partly as a result of resistance to the notion of a female soul,[39] he maintains the marriage of a *male* soul to God, transposing female qualities to the latter. As God's plurality affects not only Eve but Moses in his assumption of divinity ("*Moses* was to represent God, all God, all the Persons in God, and therefore it might as well be spoken plurally of *Moses*, so, as of God" [III.12.265.329-31]), so the image of man's hermaphroditism rebounds conversely onto God. Thus, "We are bound to suck at those breasts which God puts out to us, and to draw at those springs, which flow from him to us";[40] and thus, in what the editors call a "puzzling statement", Donne directly refers to Moses's calling of God "*Deam Iratam*", "an angry She God", although this does not appear in the Hebrew text or "original language" claimed.[41] The notion of a She God quite contradicts Donne's more familiar misogynist view that there is "no Queen-mother in heaven" (V.17.360.824-5). If it is "in the name of *Father* they understand all power" (III.13.282.299-300), it is as much a She-Father we have to deal with as elsewhere meets with Donne's derision: "*Brigid* and ... *Katherine*, and such She-fathers as those" (I.6.253.40-1).

The fact is that in practice, as Mollenkott observes, Donne's attitude to actual women differs substantially from his idealistic balance of male and female principles in hermaphroditic form: "the moment he begins to interpret those images in the awareness that he will be held accountable for the social implications of what he is saying, he upholds female subordination".[42] Even within the terms of the binary analogues drawn, the woman is generally regarded as the inferior aspect of the binary, flesh against spirit.[43] Admittedly Donne criticizes the Jews that "one of their sacraments,

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[39]See fn. 43 below.

[40]III.8.196.330-2. Compare the relationship of the soul to the Church, who will "reach out to that child, her spirituall *paps*" (V.7.166.551).

[41]I.5.239.114-6; see also p. 329 of the volume's Notes.

[42]"John Donne and the Limitations of Androgyny", 36. See also Mueller's observation that Donne posits equality of the sexes, but confined to a smaller, intimate stage ("Women Among the Metaphysicals", 146-7).

[43]See Mueller, "Women Among the Metaphysicals", 147-8. This ordering of the equation was peculiarly English, as Rosalie Osmond explains in "Body, Soul, and the Marriage

Circumcision, was limited to one sex, it reached not to women", but this is more to attack one faction than defend another (II.12.257.263-4). Donne too, after all, invokes cultural rather than natural reasons for subordinating women, freely confessing that while in a partnership a woman may be the "stronger in fortune, and in counsell too", still she should know her public role (II.17.346.411). Esther may be "Heroical" (V.11.217.19), but Mary is kept carefully in her place, if not denied it; V.5 reinterprets the three central relationships of God/man, Adam/Eve and Eve/son as those of master/servant, man/wife and *father*/children (V.5.114.22-5; III.1.48.22-3).

Donne's prime objection to women is that they distract him from the more selfless love of God. Still, he does not reject love of the creature without exception. Women may be loved as aspects of what they are not, "beames that issue from God, and glasses that represent God to us, and ideas that return us into him" (II.5.132.55-6; III.14.303.420-3). Donne's love for his wife can thus be justified, not regretted:

> Here the admyring her my mind did whett
> To seeke thee God; so streames do shew their head (Holy Sonnet XVII, ll.5-6).

Marriage as the realistic version of hermaphroditism is not, in the result, so very different from it. Insofar as "the love of God is the consummation, that is, the marriage, and union of thy soul, and thy Saviour" in all its detail - thus God did "betroth himself ... make jointures ... in a covenant of salt ... communicated his name ... which is an act of marriage" - secular marriage does become "a mysticall representation of that union of two natures in Christ", a genuine remedy to the initial division of woman from man and restoration to "one flesh".[44] Typologically, our secular marriage in Paradise anticipates a spiritual in Church and an eternal marriage in Heaven (III.11.241.22ff).

Relationship: the History of an Analogy", *JHI* 34 (1973) 283-90. On women's inferiority generally, see I.3.200.623-4; II.3.99.158-9; II.17.344.328ff; III.18.382.223-4; V.5.115.87ff.

[44]I.5.243.281-2, 240.140ff; II.17.340.184-5.

7. States of Union

Love, the attribute of the reconciliatory Holy Ghost, therefore offers in Rosalie Colie's words, a solution to "the fundamental metaphysical problem of the one and the many"; by unifying opposites - male, female - it also unites the Trinity (singular, plural).[45] More precisely, unification in these terms is metaphorically imaged in a further two ways: as a marriage of two entities - Alastair Fowler lists the three stages of Pythagorean creation thus:

> 1) undifferentiated unity;
>
> 2) the separation out of two opposite powers to form the world of order; and
>
> 3) the reunion of the opposites to generate life. This generative union of sundered opposites in the triad was often referred to as a marriage[46]

- or in the form of the hermaphrodite, the one entity who contains two sexes. Again, Donne alternates between the perspectives of multiple-subject and divided subject/object.

There is, however, a third perspective that then embraces these: less marriage *between* than *within*. Ultimately, married love celebrates the unique "union of two natures in Christ". In Edmund Leach's study of binary myth systems, he finds

> a 'mediation' of the paired categories thus distinguished ... achieved by introducing a third category which is 'abnormal' or 'anomalous' in terms of ordinary 'rational' categories ... This middle ground is abnormal, non-natural, holy.[47]

It is, in short, Christ, "a mixt person of God and man" but an "unexpressible mixture and union" (I.9.309.293, 306-7). Unlike the hermaphrodite or the married couple, he remains both one and two, compound and mixture; "God and Man, are in their natures still

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[45] *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 96.

[46] *Spenser and the Numbers of Time* , 18ff: 19.

[47] *Genesis as Myth*, 9-11: 11.

distinguished" (III.14.300.292-3) in him as in marriage, but also inconceivably blended, "that he should doe and suffer so many things impossible as man, impossible as God" (II.8.185.190-1).

The danger of heretical reductionism noted earlier resurfaces in this context of Christ's dual nature, as Donne warns against destroying the idea of an "entire Jesus", through "a dissolving of Jesus, a taking of Jesus in peeces, a dividing of his *Natures*, or of his *Offices*, which overthrowes all" (V.6.134.131-3).[48] In a plea to his brethren not to "*subdivide* him into lesse pieces ... least of all shred Christ Iesus into lesse scruples and atoms then these, Soul, and body" (V.5.123.362-80), Donne acknowledges the logically problematical premise of division in Christ and its infectious creation of scholastic controversy and division within the Church. For the Father too is infected, as Donne's observation of his Scriptural portrayal in human terms shows (V.7.158.262). There God is "invested, and represented in the qualities and affections of man" - anger, corruptibleness, prodigality, wastefulness, joy, scorn, "even inebriation" (II.14.288.55-91). Donne allows himself "to speak *humanly* of God, which God in his Scriptures abhors not": as a judge, as jealous - though "jealous persons are oftnest deceived, because that distemper disorders them, so as that they see nothing clearely" (an absurdity when applied to God) - and, most ridiculously, as a heavy sleeper: "God is content to be told, that he was in bed, and asleepe, when he should heare us".[49] But in the end, Donne declares it to be "an unseparable union betwixt God and the humane nature ... by the flesh instrumentally, visibly, he executes judgement" (II.15.322.421-8). The ambiguous knitting of the sentence enacts the union, since judgement operates, not only visibly upon the flesh of man, but through the visible flesh of God in the form of his Son, to whom he "hath committed all judgement".[50] Being one with Christ in this duality, God's divided nature is united both as human/divine and Father/Son. Division on one level is unity on another, and Donne's recommendation in the case of Christ's 'shredding'

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[48]See p. 163 above.

[49]II.17.342.250-1; IV.11.286.118-20; III.5.145.421-2.

[50]Text to II.15.

is, appropriately, to attend the voice of the Holy Ghost, returning *meum* and *teum* to the third Person, "the God of unity and Peace" (V.5.123.363).[51]

To conclude, division in Donne goes hand in hand with union. As he says of "affirmations, and denyalls, of omissions, and Comittings, of enioyning, and prohibitory commands, ever the one implyes, and enwraps the other."[52] Union between controversialists is achieved, not in spite of divisions but because of them, not simply by invoking the common mantle of the "Church Catholique" or "Religion", but in the very *nature* of those divisions:

> We are fallen into so slack and negligent times, that I have been sometimes glad to hear, that some of my friends have differed from me in religion. It is some degree of an union to be united in a serious meditation of God, and to make any religion the rule of our actions.[53]

There is in a sense no difference between setting up divisions and searching for unity. East and West are so far apart that they meet at precisely the same mystical point, when the flat map of our perspective is transformed into God's perfect globe: "reduce this flat Map to roundnesse, which is the true form, and then East and West touch one another, and all are one" (II.9.199.92-4). Through paradox, Donne's paradoxes lead all to the same place, the *coincidentia oppositorum* that is God. For Donne as for Pascal and Cusanus, "all oppositions must unite in transcendent deity ... (whose) truth embraces many contradictions".[54] Thus opposites "consist together, they are all one", "not onely contiguous, but continuall" (IV.13.343.701-2, 343.699).

In short, divisions are *necessary* for union. Though "This is it that undoes us, that vertues and vices are contiguous, and borderers upon one another" (II.1.59.389-90), yet

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[51]So, similarly, in Donne's celebration of the Scriptures' unity as "*Opus variegatum*, a work composed of divers pieces, curiously inlaid, and varied for the making up of some figure, some representation ... *Mosaick* work", "the Holy Ghost is the Workman" (I.6.252.13-16, 21-2; 253.41-3).

[52]*Biathanatos* , ed. Ernest Sullivan (London and Toronto: Assoc. University Presses, 1984), 96.

[53]Gosse, II. 137.

[54]Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 259-61: 261; see also her third chapter on Donne's use of paradox; and John Carey in *John Donne: Life: Mind and Art* (London: Faber, 1981) on Donne's desire for "simultaneous possession of contraries" (255, ch. 9).

the same cause brings both sickness and cure. It is necessary to be undone in order then to be done up. Michael McCanles argues of 'The Extasie' that Donne's

> means were to distinguish in order to unite. By distinguishing between body and soul, and lover and lover, he managed in statement and metaphor to convey this separation all the more precisely as a precondition of union.[55]

By contrast, James Holstun argues, the inability to distinguish between lover and lover in "Sappho to Philaenis" indicated to Donne a relationship of perfect symmetry or singularity, silenced, self-cancelling and uncreative, leaving no sign on history or culture.[56] While female and male generate a third entity (their hermaphroditic union), with female and female "all distance disappears between signifier and signified ... she melts back into a prelinguistic immediacy: without difference, no signification" (840). The love that *cannot* speak its name is the love that passeth all understanding, and Donne is only able to convey the relationship "in statement and metaphor" here because of the subsequent separation of the female entities: "A narcissistic or lesbian moment ... can be spoken of only indirectly and in the past tense by a speaker who has left it behind" (858). In the religious realm likewise, "love of man towards God ... [requires] a due consideration of greatness, a distance, a distinction" (I.4.234.414-16). As Schwartz insists, division *is* sacred - but for what it leads to, not simply where it led.[57] Mixtures are *not* abominations, but the joyous consequence of division; and the 'heinous confusion' implicit in Eve's aspiration to become "as the Gods" is vindicated in the ultimate satisfaction of her desire for divine union in the person of Christ. With the Fortunate Fall, Paradise Lost is more happily Regained.

Therefore, just as Christ unites maxima and minima, circle centre and circumference, Being and Non-Being and East and West, just as he receives his Commission in his dual capacity as Son of God and Son of Man, Donne too argues the case from opposite sides - "at this distance we shall never bring them to meet"

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[55]"Distinguish in Order to Unite: Donne's 'The Extasie'", *SEL* 6 (1966) 59-75, 74.

[56]"'Will You Rent Our Ancient Love Asunder?': Lesbian Elegy in Donne, Marvell, and Milton", *ELH* 54(3-4) (1987) 835-67, 842ff; further references in the text.

[57]See fn. 4 above.

(II.15.321.363-4), confronts the declaration, "it is easily reconcil'd" (II.15.321.367). Two sides of an argument are always essential, since God loves unity but not singularity.[58] The former excludes the latter, demanding plurality in order to join separate entities. Hence the creation of plural selves, pluralist approaches and antithetical concepts, for it is the metaphysical movement of bringing together disparities, the search for a transcendent unity, that is important.

On Judgment Day, then, the world-scattered body will "be recompact again, and be identically, numerically, individually the same man" (III.3.109.688-9; III.8.194.246-9).[59] Empathy and Donne's continental approach recall all mankind to one blood:

> If a man of my calling, or *profession*, doe a scandallous act, I feel myself concerned in his fault; God hath made all *mankinde* of *one blood*, and all *Christians* of *one calling*, and the sins of every man concern every man ... (II.4.122.112-15).

As Chapter 3 argued, Donne's very use of print enacts the theme of connection (III.17.359.424-8). The common experience of expression, of language founded on differences, is thus paradoxically a type of "that *Librarie* where every *booke* shall lie open to one another" (17M: 86.19-20). Implicitly as well as explicitly, typology links all times and all structures, "joyning ... these two walls" (I.8.289.136-7) of the now and the hereafter, and linking the ever-evolving series of nows that make up the text between in a "conference" of differences.

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[58]V.5.113.1-8; II.13.280.407.

[59]See Carey, *Life, Mind and Art*, 205ff, on Donne's obsession with bodily integration after the Resurrection.

B. The Structure Of The Sermons

1. Divisiones

> Be pleased therefore to give me leave in this exercise, to shift the scene thrice, and to present to your religious considerations three objects, three subjects ...
>
> III.11.241.20-2

> First then, ... Secondly, ... And then thirdly, ... And in all this (which is a fourth Consideration) ...
>
> V.9.185.37-51

As we saw earlier, correlation between matter and form was important to Donne.[60] Matter showed "purpose, and *intention*", while form was "the declaring, the proving, the *illustrating*, and the heightning of that purpose" (V.4.98.75-8). Division between the two, "between matter it self, and all her forms" (for one subject may be variously illustrated), symbolized the chaos of the Last Day (III.11.254.499ff). Where, therefore, division itself was so often the matter of the sermons, we may expect to find division in their form.

Donne's fondness for Paul's Epistles and the Psalms of David is well-known to be formally based: "they are Scriptures, written in such forms, as I have been most accustomed to; ... Letters, and ... Poems" (II.1.49.20-2). What underlies this preference and familiarity, I would like to suggest further, is his abiding attraction to *limiting* forms. A psalm, like a poem, calls for "a limited, and a restrained form", such as is "curious, and requires diligence in the making, and then when it is made, can have nothing, no syllable taken from it, nor added to it". The tightness of the structure is pre-eminent: "all the words are numbred, and measured, and weighed" (II.1.50.27-34). Letters, too, emerge from the constraints of circumstance; yet it is the close environment of Paul's Epistles, "written in Prison", which gives them their "holy vehemence" (I.8.286.33-4). Out

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[60]Chapter 2, pp. 58ff. Detractors focus on Donne's tendency to digress, which is to miss precisely the thematic importance of narrative delay. Laurence Stapleton, for instance, regrets the way "independent commitment to ... theme gives way to a predetermined commitment to doctrine and dogma" and what she calls "the overriding form of the sermon" (*The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose*, Princeton: U.P., 1973, 37ff: 39); but cf. Thomas Merrill, *Christian Criticism: A Study of Literary God-Talk* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V., 1976), ch. X.

of restriction comes freedom; within such closely bounded forms Donne locates the possibility of transcendence (II.1.50.40).

Limitation and constriction are less apparent in the more freely-flowing structure of a prose sermon, where words can easily be added or removed and the preacher's voice rings freely out across the church "As Angels out of clouds" ("To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders", l. 43). And yet strictures are again imposed, just as they are on the seemingly seamless passage of time and narrative,[61] by the tightly organized structure of division set out in each sermon's divisio. Insofar as contraction leads to more precise articulation (which then enables transcendance), structural division (ideally followed by a collection that is greater than its parts) is the sermons' conscious goal. Even where it seems not to obtain, Donne forces it upon his subject-matter:

> though it be hard to bring it within any compasse of a division, yet to take the largenesse of the Schoole, and say, that every calumny is either direct, or indirect, that will comprehend all, and then a direct calumny, will have three branches ... and then the indirect calumny will have three branches too ... collect then again, for that's all that we shall be able to doe (II.16.328.124-36). [62]

Similarly in V.3, there is division for its own sake and not the text's: "I would divide the Text, and fewer Parts then two, we cannot make, and this Text hath scarce two Parts" (78.20-1).[63] Donne draws constant attention to this division, for instance in his repetition of the Latin words of a text to signal the parts of a sermon;[64] generally the sermon's form is seen to depend upon such structuring. As the clean beast is defined by

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[61]See Chapter 3.

[62]Compare also III.5.153.721; division, as we have noted, is the prerequisite to such collection, cf. Stapleton, who considers that through the divisios, the "fundamental unity of the sermon is seriously jeopardized" (*The Elected Circle*, 37).

[63]This fondness for complex divisions distinguished metaphysical from Puritan preachers, according to Horton Davies (*Like Angels from a Cloud*, 66-8).

[64]See Michael Hall, "Searching the Scriptures: Meditation and Discovery in Donne's Sermons", in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Gary Stringer (Salzburg, 1977), 211-38, 220. As Judith Anderson notes, the use of Latin was symbolic rather than referential, giving the effect of substantiality (and hence structure) ("Patterns Proposed Beforehand: Donne's Second Prebend Sermon", *Prose Studies* 11(2) (1988) 37-48, 40ff). Thus W. Fraser Mitchell's *English Pulpit Oratory* records Dr Edward Pocock being reprimanded by his country congregation for his (deliberate) avoidance of Greek, Latin and Hebrew terms (London, 1932, 106). The words carried a sound and significance within their context beyond their actual meaning.

its divided hoof, and the prayer by its surrounding sections (VI.1.52.470-6, 489-90), so the oft-reiterated divisio makes the sermon a sermon. As Walter Davis observes,

> he goes over his division many times from many different angles ... he focusses his audience's attempts on the significance of the division, so that he achieves what is in effect a meditation on the division that keys us in to the whole sermon.[65]

Practically speaking, the divisio served to aid the preacher's memory; dividing the text by theme allowed easier recollection of key points in the argument. While allowing room for rhetorical improvisation, the constantly recapitulated skeletal structure guarded against the dangers of extemporal preaching (V.1.42.273ff).[66]

However, Donne's particular attention to divisiones can still be traced back to the preoccupation with Trinitarian doctrine discussed in the first part of this chapter. One tripartite divisio reflects this explicitly (IV.6.164.44-5), while others operate on implicit analogies - for instance, IV.3. Almost all the sermons from 1615-23 propose two or three main parts; five have four parts, and the remaining three have six, seven and eight parts simply through a phrase-by-phrase exegesis of the text (see Table I).

There is nonetheless considerable variation between the divisiones, both in Donne's manner of dividing the text and the structural metaphors he uses. V.1 is a beautiful example of close textual exegesis, carefully wrought and thought out throughout. IV.14 and II.10 by contrast are structured according to themes suggested by the text as a whole, rather than the words of the text taken individually; thus the former is divided into *scienta* and *modus* (345.4), and the latter is essentially a discussion of charity that serves the occasion in hand - the dedication of a new chapel at Lincoln's Inn (213.6-13). In IV.4 and IV.7, the second part of the divisio is branched out later, not laid out at the

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[65]"Meditation, Typology and the Structure of Donne's Sermons", in *The Eagle and the Dove: Reassessing John Donne*, edd. Ted-Larry Pebworth and Claude Summers (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986), 166-88, 182. Studies have similarly been made of Donne's exploitation of stanza divisions in his poetry to encompass meaningful events (Achsah Guibbory, "Donne, The Idea of Woman, and the Experience of Love", and Janel Mueller, "The Play of Difference in Donne's 'Aire and Angels'", both in *JDJ* 9 (1990) 105-12, 105; 85-94, 88-9).

[66]Mary Carruthers notes the importance of subtitles in traditional techniques of memorizing to give a "firm starting point" for the recollection of each section (*The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, Cambridge: U.P., 1990, 82-6: 86).

beginning with the first. So also IV.3 is of such length that the second and third branches of its divisio are not immediately outlined, since Donne assumes they will not be remembered. II.8 conversely omits a divisio for its first part, though its second part retrospectively assumes one. Finally, I.4 abandons a formal divisio altogether for a more experimental stream-of-consciousness style, setting forth a series of arguments that culminate in the text (the slipperiness of habitual sin; the perversity of reasons for habitual sin; the result that sinners lose wisdom with their fear of God). Unlike, say, I.3 which, while long and elaborate, remains disciplined, I.4's structure is lâche and off-putting.

Nonetheless, it uses one of Donne's most common structuring metaphors, that of the tree diagram, to create the semblance of a 'branching' organization (I.4.228.182). In more complex divisios, such branches even have "twiggs" (V.2.70.444). The double-sermon I.8-9 takes the metaphor furthest, anticipating in I.8 a gradual blossoming outwards and an organic propagation of Gospel through the root, tree and fruit of the text - though in fact, the I.9 divisio concentrates so much on subdividing the tree section that it fails to set out the process of the fruit.

Whether organic or inorganic, Donne's metaphors characteristically emphasize spatiality. Hence they "articulate the structure of the whole, to serve as knowable architecture"[67] in a solidly physical sense. They are also often literally architectural.[68] A two-part division, for instance, consists of "foundations, and upperbuildings, The *Text*, and a *Comment*" (III.6.157.33-4), while a three-part structure provides a building, foundation and prospect (VI.1.40.30-4). IV.5 proceeds through the "designe, and frame of our building, and the severall partitions, the roomes", furnishing them with details (146.22-4), while V.12 explores the "courts" of a palace (231.20ff). IV.10 emphasizes its "furnishing of particular roomes" (267.84) spatially on the page by centering its

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[67]See Stapleton, *The Elected Circle,* 28.

[68]Cf. mediaeval aide-memoires (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 71-9). See Judith Anderson on *Death's Duell* ("Life Lived and Life Written: Donne's Final Word or Last Character", *HLQ* 51(4) (1988) 247-59, 249-53).

subheading part dividers instead of marginalizing them, so that the text is visually broken up into parts. However, even less elaborate text layout occasionally collapses. In II.15, the divisio promises three topics (312.45-8), but in the actual text, no further "3. Part" appears in the margin to follow "1. Part" and "2. Part" - only italicized side-headings to accompany the three topics (although these do exactly correspond). Similarly in II.16, "Lastly", is accompanied only by the italicized side-title of "*Non ad internecionem*", which is specified in the divisio (326.35-51) to be the "3. Part" - but no explicit acknowledgement of this appears in the margin.

As this brief survey reveals, Donne's professed attitude to rigorous division is not always followed through to the end of a sermon. Some divisiones, of course, overlap several sermons. This draws attention to the division between, but also binds such sermons together. Thus in a sequence of six consecutive sermons on *Psalm* 38 (II.1-6), three of which are on the same verse of the psalm (II.3-5), what we perceive are 'artificial' lines of time drawn across what is essentially one, continuous address. Nor did the sermons need to be consecutive. Three others delivered at different, widely-spaced times in the Church year were explicitly linked by the same text, *John* I.8, which they approached from different perspectives.[69] Another series Donne planned, of which only II.15/16, survives,[70] combined formal and thematic division and union. It involved (binary) pairs of sermons on apparently contradictory texts, which were then shown to agree (II.16.325.6-14), thus creating a movement of resolution between both sermons and subjects:

> Now to collect both our Exercises, and to connexe both Texts, *Christ judgeth all men* and *Christ judgeth no man*, he claimes all judgment, and he disavows all judgement, and they consist well together (II.16.333.320-334.323).

Taken a step further, Donne's sermons as a whole can be viewed as a steady flow, a lifelong address with inter- and intra-sermonal interruptions. Even where not part of a defined series, many sermons give the impression of being set *in medias res*, taking their

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[69]III.17 (Christmas Day, 1621), IV.5 (Midsummer's Day, 1622) and IV.8 (October 13, 1622).

[70]See Editors' Introduction, II, 41.

cue from texts whose conjunctions reveal them manifestly to be extracts. FOR, for instance -"that particle not onely of *Connexion*, but of *Argumentation* too" (II.1.50.58-9) - elicits a digression on the reasonable nature of faith at the beginning of V.4 (102.208ff); THEN which begins the verse in II.10 is used to set the verse context, and identify its occasion (225.453ff); BUT plays a significant role in IV.10.266.45ff.[71]

The *Sermons*, then, divide up into individual sermons, which subdivide up into progressively smaller, individual parts. But if each piece is an extract or part, it is also an essence, or whole; as mankind is gloriously "the abridgement of all" (II.17.344.336-7),[72] and religion likewise "*Verbum abbreviatum*, A contracted doctrine" (V.1.55.756-56.757) - it is, specifically, "the honor of the Christian religion ... that it is *verbum abbreviatum*, an abridgement of all into ten words ... and then a reabridgement of that abridgement into two ... faith and works" (II.12.256.204-8) - so the text is interpreted as self-contained in that it is the ultimate site of this tendency towards not simply contraction but an ever-intensifying concentration: "the Gospel of Saint *Iohn* containes all *Divinity*, this Chapter *all the Gospell*, and this Text all the *Chapter*" (III.17.351.123-5).[73] Like the psalm title, it becomes the title of the sermon and its key, the distillation of what follows (II.2.72.2-12; V.14.271.105). Ultimately, Donne implies, the briefer the text, the richer and more highly distilled its message; for "Jesus wept", "an intire verse of these two words ... there needs no more for the exalting of our devotion to a competent heighth ... There is not a shorter verse in the Bible, nor a larger Text" (IV.13.324.20-325.24).

The ostensible point in all this is to focus meditation as closely as possible on God's original, unmediated and non-narratable meaning; in order that, in both Creation and the Bible, "we might see them al together, and so take better view and hold of them",

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[71] See also Hall, "Searching the Scriptures", 213-17.

[72] In the next step, mankind is abridged to the individual *Tu* addressed (III.10.227.91-5).

[73] Donne consistently expresses interest in Biblical division, into Historical and Prophetical parts, different kinds of Books (V.14.280.460-5); and "who divided the Chapters of the Old Testament into verses; ... who did it in the New Testament" (IV.13.324.17-19).

> all the light was gathered into the body of the Sunne, when that was made; so all that is written in our hearts radically, and diffused in the Scriptures more extensively, is reamassed, and reduced to the Ten Commandements, the Lords Prayer, and to the Creed (V.13.248.103-114).[74]

Yet having drawn our attention down to this point of discernment, this formal equivalent of the narrative "now", the sermon then proceeds to open it up: to unravel the narrative, to expound the text outwards into exegesis - "a Text is dilated, diffused into a Sermon" (V.1.56.766-7). Significantly, the practice of preaching now dilutes the Biblical text for the dissemination *of* a better understanding, opening out the process of contraction *while still dividing*: "Our division shall be but a short, and our whole exercise but a larger paraphrase upon the words" (IV.1.45.17-18). The division is again infinite; each point of the sermon, each word of the text, expands upon entry beyond our vision, a "circle widening towards infinity".[75] As with Paul's Epistles and David's Psalms, as with Pascal's atom, "to enter in these bonds, is to be free".[76] Such forms are inexhaustible. Donne indeed assures us, "I have no purpose to make you afraid of enlarging all these points: I shall onely passe through some of them, *paraphrastically*, and trust them with the rest, (for they insinuate one another)" (II.10.225.448-51). As with his divisios, projected divisions and parts occasionally fall through or disappear towards the end of a sermon in this manner. This reflects Donne's sense that an exhaustive conclusion can never quite formally be encompassed:

> I am not sorry, if either the houre, or the present occasion call me from speaking any thing at all, because it is a subject too mis-interpretable, and unseasonable to admit an enlarging in at this time. At this time, therefore, this be enough, for the explication and application of these words (II.17.347.439-43).

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[74]Hence Donne's apparent criticism of abridgement in V.12 - "to abridge or suck, and then suppresse other Authors, is not ever honest nor profitable ... *Justinian*, who distilled all the Law into one vessell, and made one Booke of 2000, suppressing all the rest ... And Aristotle after ... he had ingrossed all Authors, is said to have defaced all, that he might be instead of all" (241.393-242.401). Here it is concealment rather than distillation Donne objects to, the arrogant representation of a work as instantly complete and not progressively constructed. In any case, his interest in the process of compaction remains unmistakeable.

[75]Allen Tate, "The Point of Dying: Donne's 'Virtuous Men'", *Sewanee Review* 61 (1953) 76-81, 77.

[76]"Elegie XIX", l. 31; see pp. 187-8.

2. Endings

> we are continually released from some forms ... into an emotion whose shape is embodied by the whole poem; that is, we are never released from form.
>
> Thomas Sloane, *Donne, Milton and the End of Humanist Rhetoric*, p. 56

> it is the ability of the poems to complete themselves formally which checks the impulse to disintegration or even annihilation.
>
> George Parfitt, *John Donne: A Literary Life*, p. 99

In the final sermon of the period we are considering, Donne nevertheless describes the end as the most important part of a structure:

> the force of the whole piece, is for the most part left to the shutting up; the whole frame of the Poem is a beating out of a piece of gold, but the last clause is as the impression of the stamp, and that is it that makes it currant (VI.1.41.82-5).

In ending, the artist recapitulates instantly and with immediate force, in a symbolic imitation of divine creation. He simulates order over chaos depending on the success with which he bounds his narrative. Thus "'Tis the *end* that qualifies all" (IV.6.171.301), that stands in the same relation to the divided form of the sermon as the image of union does to perceived examples of division. It is of no use, Donne insists, "to have conceived some good Motions at the beginning, and to have given over all purpose of practise at the end of a Sermon" (I.8.294.319-21); where "a continuance and a perseverance ... must crown all this ... because that cannot be discern'd till thine end, then only is it safely pronounced" (II.12.265.570-266.572). In line with this emphasis on endings, Donne's own sermons of the period mark out and announce their final sections (see Table IIa).

Arnold Stein, however, has recently warned against the uncritical application of Donne's prose comments in general, and that of VI.1 above in particular, to his practice. In the latter case, he points out, Donne's 'aside' contributes "almost nothing to the interpretation of the sermon itself".[77] Its relevance is purely local, since VI.1, so far from

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[77]"Interpretation: 'Aire and Angels'", *JDJ* 9(2) (1990) 65-75, 71.

closing with resounding force, has one of Donne's weaker and less impressive endings. In the poetry, furthermore, Donne relies on a great variety of endings - not simply the heightened intensity of an absolute, stamped conclusion, but jokiness, simplicity, morality, the smart exit that "commands finality like an epigram but does not produce a lofty, memorable force" (72-3).

What VI.1 does indicate, notwithstanding, is Donne's *interest* in endings, in the *notion* of some "terminal privileged moment" from which the whole plot can be recapitulated.[78] If Christian history is traditionally "not conceived of as an indefinite progress, but as definitely finite ... determinate and circumscribed", Joseph Galdon can nonetheless only remark that "it points always towards the End".[79] So Donne's comments and sermon pointers only indicate their end, to the same limited extent that they evoke the vision of union: without necessarily being able to embody its ideal version - "the impression of the stamp" that concentrates "the force of the whole piece". If "shutting up" leaves "the best impression in the memory", this is not always (if ever) the best impression possible; the end may "qualify all" in more senses than one.

A look at Donne's sermon endings from 1615-23 reveals them to vary in tone as widely as those of his poems (see Table IIb). Certainly, there are the splendidly Baroque endings of apotheosis, which catch the critical eye: the "radiant vision" that "orientates the hearer" towards resurrection.[80] The final death-scene of II.12 rises lyrically to greet the Saviour (266.602-31), while no fewer than seven sermons close with a powerful evocation of "that eternall kingdom which thy Sonne our Saviour Christ Jesus hath purchased for us, with the inestimable price of his incorruptible blood" (I.5.251.547-9). But there are also sermons which rise to these heights only to fall away. IV.5 delivers a ringing affirmation of the events of the Last Day, using the first person to merge the language of Revelation with Donne's own (162.617ff); but then lapses into a summary,

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[78]See Chapter 3, pp. 112ff.

[79] *Typology and Seventeenth Century Literature* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 66.

[80] Thus Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, in "Time, Place and the Congregation in Donne's Sermons", *Literature and Learning in Medieval and Renaissance England: Essays Presented to Fitzroy Pyle*, ed. John Scattergood (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1984), 197-215, 213.

followed by a notice of continuance that is almost an afterthought. IV.6, too, works up to a rousing climax, only to give way abruptly and unexpectedly to a weak rhetorical question. Other sermons end explicitly fearing relapse (I.9.318.625-42), or feebly resort to repeating the text (for example, the lacklustre I.7: "We finde enough for our purposes, in taking it literally, as we see it in the Text" [283.572-3]). Still others conclude on a pedestrian secular note (I.4.235.461-6). Favourite quotations notwithstanding, Donne is clearly just as liable to approach endings with suspicion and a lack of conviction as otherwise: "They are but hollow places that return *Ecchoes*; last syllables: It is but a hollownesse of heart, to answer God *at last*" (II.17.338.124-5).[81]

The fact is that the teleological movement of the sermon to the end of its hour is also, as Chapter 3 showed, an approach to death. Donne speaks of him who was literally "borne when the glasse was turned, and dyed before it was run out" (I.8.294.318-9), but for all listeners, salvation "is brought neerer and neerer unto us, as we come neerer and neerer to our end" - the end of the sermon (II.12.266.602-3).

The significance of ending, then, is primarily another reflection of Donne's obsession with death, which he sees everywhere: "God hath placed an *Ecce*, a marke of my death, upon every thing living" (III.8.202.554-5). For the man thus haunted,

> every lying down at night is a funerall; and every quaking is a rising to judgment; every bell that distinguishes times, is a passing-bell, and every passing-bell, his own (II.2.84.460-2).

A proper awareness, however, is desirable:

> when in a faire, and even, and constant religious course of life, he enters into his sheets every night, as though his neighbours next day were to shrowd and wind him in those sheets; he shuts up his eyes every night, as though his Executors had closed them; and lies downe every night ... as though the Angels were to call him to the resurrection (II.8.186.249-187.255).

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[81]Christopher Ricks provides a rare focus on the unhealthy endings of Donne's love-poems, as evincing post-coital disgust and a revulsion from the generative process - as in the sermons, such endings stem from faithlessness ("Donne After Love", in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1988, 33-69).

Donne lived in a time steeped in apocalyptic Millenarianism, deriving from writers like Joachim de Flores who divided history into Trinitarian phases: the first Era, the Transition and the End. People saw themselves as constantly poised on the edge of forever - "No longer imminent, the End is immanent", in Kermode's phrase.[82] Donne took up residence in the eschatalogical moment, "a ce dernier tournant où la pensée vacille"; like Camus, he made "le véritable effort ... de s'y tenir au contraire, autant que cela est possible et d'examiner de près le végétation baroque de ces contrées éloignées".[83]

Since he could not, however, "see how my body looks in the dissolution" (III.3.110.717-18), eventually he simulated almost exactly the image of II.8, according to Walton's deathbed account. (Although Walton has Donne posing upright as the statue is now displayed in St Paul's, the drapery suggests the possibility that it was supposed to be horizontal, perhaps 'sleeping', as II.8 implies).[84]

This anticipation of death can be viewed in two ways, for it reflects Donne's ambivalence. On the one hand, it reveals Donne as Carey's "martyr manqué" with his "need to practise dying".[85] On the other, it is Camus's enduring dramatic gesture, which "se prépare dans le silence du coeur au même titre qu'une grande oeuvre".[86] As Carey recognizes, Donne inanimates death to defuse it; he is "giving the void its colours", magnifying and negating at the same time.[87] By posing for his death statue, supposedly in preparation for renouncing the world, Donne ironically affirms worldly materialist,

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[82]*The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: U.P., 1968), 12-13, 24-30.

[83]*Le mythe de Sisyphe* (Gallimard, 1942), 22-3. Translated: "at that last crossroad where thought hesitates ... the real effort ... to stay there, rather, in so far as that is possible, and to examine the odd vegetation of those distant regions" (*The Myth of Sisyphus*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955, 15-16). This, Kermode suggests, accounts for some of Donne's appeal; we readers, too, "hunger for ends and for crises. 'Is this the promis'd end?' we ask with Kent in *Lear*; if not, we require that it be an image of it" (*The Sense of an Ending*, 55).

[84]Gosse simply assumes from the drapery that the sculptor worked only from a drawing, but if we reject Walton's story, there is no need to assume the statue was ever designed to be upright. There were ample precedents for horizontal "sepulchrall statues" ("The Extasie", l. 18) of the kind Donne describes in II.8 and elsewhere (for example, II.12: "lye upon that bed, as a Statue on a Tomb" [267.626]). (But cf. VI.1's reference to bodies from the grave facing East, "fixed in that posture" and standing: 60.766).

[85]*Life, Mind and Art*, 34ff, 199, 201ff.

[86]*Le mythe de Sisyphe*, 16-17.

[87]Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 103; Carey, *Life, Mind and Art*, 215.

humanist values as well as his desire to remain integrally present in the face of bodily disintegration.[88] The statue represents the form from which we are never released, even *as* its completion "checks the impulse to disintegration or even annihilation".[89] If, furthermore, it was designed to be upright, then Donne stands death itself on its head with an image of instantaneous resurrection ("we shall rise there, in a lesse *Minute*, then any one dies here": 2E: 13.24-5).[90]

For in devout as well as worldly terms, Donne's dwelling on death is in the final outcome a *choix de vivre.* As Thomas à Kempis pleaded and the *ars moriendi* tradition insisted, "Ah dearest, from what a great peril you can free yourself, and from what great fear be delivered, if only you will be apprehensive and regardful of death".[91]

3. Fear of Death

> the house of death that stands in two worlds, may trouble a good mans resolution. As death is a sordid *Postern*, by which I must be thrown out of this world, I would decline it: But as death is the gate, by which I must enter into Heaven, would I never come to it?
>
> VII.14.359.368-71

Nonetheless, Donne is torn between his natural desire to escape death and the command to "conform thy self in some measure, to thy pattern, Christ Jesus" (II.1.60.431-2)and die a sacrifice - "in the pulpit ... the sooner by occasion of my former labours".[92] Though, he observes wistfully, "God doe deliver me from eternall death, due to mine actuall and habituall sins, yet from the temporall death, due to Originall sin, he delivers not his dearest Saints" (II.4.121.86-9). Donne seems almost more intent on avoiding temporal

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[88]Thus Louis Martz, *The Wit of Love* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 57-8.

[89]See headnotes.

[90]See Nigel Foxell's argument for the deliberate incongruity of the drapery: *A Sermon in Stone: John Donne and his Monument in St Paul's Cathedral* (London: Menard Press, 1978), 3ff.

[91]*The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Edgar Daplyn (London: Lakeland, 1979), 46. Cf. VIII.6.168.405-7: "not to feele death is Immortality; and onely hee shall never feele death, that is exercised in the continuall Meditation thereof".

[92]Gosse, II.268.

than eternal death, for, given the choice, he opts rather to be rid of original sin. At times, indeed, he appears to believe he *will* avoid it, by outliving "the last minute of the world, when we that remain shall bee caught up in the clouds" (III.3.102.432-103.433).

Yet if Donne is afraid of death, its temporal torments are "but Types and Figures of those greater, which God will inflict upon thee after death" (I.6.265.472-3). God is frequently associated with such fearful projections: the dark, midnight, solitude and silence. Fear of death is therefore fear of God, fear of ending, fear of relinquishing consciousness and speech; hence Donne's reluctance to end his sermons with a clear-cut "shutting up", and his tendency when faced with the end to not only trail away, but trail on. In V.18, he postpones the end explicitly, announcing first, "This is too lovely a Prospect, to depart so soone from" (371.258), and then, "I am loath to depart my selfe, loath to dismisse you from this ayre of Paradise, of Gods comming ... Therefore we consider againe ..." (V.18.372.287). On a number of occasions, as Table IIa reveals, sermons also have more than one ending marker:

> But, to conclude ... Lastly ... All ends in this (I.4.234.422, 235.440, 235.455)
>
> To end all ... And to conclude (II.6.163.693, 163.699)
>
> To end all ... Now to make up a circle, by ... (II.11.247.455, 248.475)
>
> We have done; Adde we but this, by way of recollecting (III.4.132.675)
>
> Tis time to end ... Let mee charge your memories but with this note more (IV.15.378.15-17, 378.35-6)
>
> And to end with the end of all (V.14.293.929)
>
> And then lastly ... For to end this (VI.1.61.805, 61.807)

By protracting his farewells "for to end yet again", Donne delays the moment of departure even as it looms large before him (something which further bears on the implications of Table IIb by detracting from the force of the final ending). As he writes

to Sir Henry Goodyer, "I profess to you truly, that my loathness to give over now, seems to myself an ill sign that I shall write no more".[93] Such "subtle disconfirmation and elaborate peripateia"[94]again echoes Millenarian practice. Donne's announcement in III.7, for example, "But to come to our last note", stretches itself into a further six pages.

This assiduousness is partly justified by the preacher's duty to promulgate the spirit of the Gospel; as John Freccero notes of the Bible, "Material breath is transformed by speech into *spiritus*, the God-given *efflatus* (*Gen.* 2,7), which is the symbol of humanity".[95] Donne adds, "*Breath is speech*; but *Breath is life too*" (IV.9.254.648). By continuing to speak, he prolongs the moment of narrative consciousness, "a sinne of feare". Edward Said points out that the use of words actually commemorates Christ's death, that man may live:

> every instance of writing signifies his death, or at least the transfer of his spoken words to a written document ... his presence is transmuted into or sacrificed for words, just as, conversely, he was the Word made flesh ... Christ's death makes possible the presence of an apostolic community forever stained with guilt.[96]

Like the house of death, the 'prisonhouse of language' stands in two worlds. Donne's alternating desire for and abhorrence of it constitutes what Stanley Fish calls linguistic bulimia, a constant gnawing dissatisfaction.[97] Donne recoils from the implications of silence: "a *silence*, and a reservednes ... make the foole and the wise equall" (V.7.153.88-9).[98] We require the distinction of speech - Augustine's "*non ut illud*

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[93]Gosse, I.197.

[94]Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, 30. Cf. the nineteenth-century taste for epilogues, formal narrative extensions whose significance specifically derives from their projection "beyond an agreed textual space" (Pat Rogers, "The Parthian Dart: Endings and Epilogues in Fiction", *Essays in Criticism* 42 (1992) 85-106, 105).

[95]"Donne's 'Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", *ELH* 30 (1963) 335-76, 358 and fn. 59.

[96]*Beginnings - Intention and Method* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1978), 210-11.

[97]"Masculine Persuasive Force: Donne and Verbal Power", in *Soliciting Interpretation*, edd. Elizabeth Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 223-52, 223.

[98]See Carey on Donne's obsession with the criminalized silence associated with *la peine forte et dure* (*Life, Mind and Art*, 26-7); also "Elegie: Death", l. 6.

diceretur, sed ne taceretur" ("not that that can be said, but that it cannot be kept silent).[99] Or as Donne seeks to end IV.6,

> There remaines a word more; 'Tis scarce well said; for there remaines not a word more. There is not another word, and yet there is another branch in the Text ... God in ... glory (176.477-89).

Yet the silent levelling of the grave is something Donne subscribes to elsewhere, as Chapter 2 argued. In Christ's (and Erasmian) teaching, the fool and the wiseman *were* equal before God.

The two impulses of speech and silence, the two worlds of life and death, once more resolve in that figure of the holy "triple Foole", Christ. For, according to some commentators, Christ too was afraid of death, and spoke out against it on the Cross. Contrasting another of Christ's speeches to this seminal moment, Donne calls that not

> a prayer for his own ease, as that in his Agony seemes. It hath none of those infirmities, which curious schismatikes finde in that. No suspicion of ignorance, as there ... No tergiversation nor abandoning the noble worke which he had begunne, as there (V.12.233.92-6).

From a *seeming* to a schismatical *finding* to a *suspicion* and finally an outright accusation of "abandoning ... as there", Donne focuses gradually on Christ's own words of fear. He need no longer be divided between the *imitatio Christi* and a desire to escape death, since the former includes the latter. Even Christ, "the perfect pattern of all wisdom", cried out, "*Eli, Eli, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* and that fear deliver'd him over to a present assurance, *In manus tuas Domine*" (I.4.233.381-234.383). The quotation of Christ's spoken words in written form, not only signifying his death symbolically but explicitly marking its moment, is associated with hope; countering Said, words also commemorate Christ's resurrection.

Fear then, Christ shows, is the *way* to assurance and speech to silence, just as division leads to union and the sermon structure divides, only to recollect in conclusion.

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[99] *de Trinitate*, v. 9.

Each element creates the other in a binary relationship of the kind we have seen; fear and text emerge like "light out of darkness ... Musick out of silence" (IV.3.103.515-6). Ending and not ending, or "our mortality, and our immortality", represent furthermore the *key* binary structure for Donne: "the two reall Texts, and Subjects of all our Sermons" (II.18.361.485-6). The longer the sermon is seen to go on (the more its end is postponed and our guilty mortality extended), the more sharply its ultimate vision of endless silence is thrown into relief.[100] As Calvino writes, "silence can also be considered a kind of speech ... the meaning of this silent speech lies ... in what is, from time to time, actually said, giving a meaning to what is unsaid."[101] The possibility that God exists is the gift of the text.

Though resonant in its empty form in postmodernist writing, this inscription of the dualism of speech and silence stems at least as far back as mystical thought. Kent Emery describes the view of the French mystic, Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples (1460-1563):

> whereas in rational philosophy, typified by Aristotle, one finds many words, in intellectual philosophy, typified by Paul, Dionysius, and Nicholas of Cusa, silence is act and speech is privation.

This, Emery notes, establishes a "typological relation between Aristotle and Cusanus":

> One should begin ... with a study of the natural philosophy and metaphysics of Aristotle, proceed to a reading of Scripture and the fathers, and finally strive for the heights of contemplation ... the Aristotelian disciplines should not be scorned; they are necessary for one who wishes to rise from the sensible world and imagination to the 'second degree of rational philosophy'.[102]

In a similar way, Donne's echo of Christ's words is necessary, and foreshadows the "present assurance" of a positive silence to come: the possibility of ending and a final reunion with God.

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[100]See Mary Ann Radzinowicz on Donne's "intentional" silences ("The Politics of John Donne's Silences", *JDJ* 7(1) (1988) 1-19, 2). For later play with post-narrative silence, see D.A. Miller, *Narrative and its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel* (Princeton: U.P., 1981), x-xi, 265ff.

[101]*Mr Palomar*, trans. William Weaver (London: Secker and Warburg, 1985), 94.

[102] "Mysticism and the Coincidence of Opposites in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France", *JHI* 45 (1984) 3-23, 5. Like Donne's, this approach implicitly favours Aquinas's over Aristotle's approach to thought and sensibility (11-12); and cf. also its obsession with division and abridgement (9).

4. Art of Dying

> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
>
> Every poem an epitaph
>
> Little Gidding, V. 851-2

This foreshadowing, however, unlike the mystical use of Aristotle, is endless. By justifying itself, the human expression of fear also perpetuates itself and prevents mystical transcendence. The antitype is marked by death alone, which eludes the textual structure.[103] It is no coincidence that even literary epitaphs of the time were turning away from the end-pointed conclusions of Martial and Jonson, choosing instead to remain open and project the reader beyond the text. In his study of Herrick's epitaphs, D.H. Parker comments that

> death is less an absolute ending than an entry into uncertainty, a movement from 'light' into darkness and sleep. They are brief enclosures of images whose meaning causes a sense of spaciousness.[104]

Like Donne's contracted Pascalian texts, they give rise to endless division of meaning, in an endless approach to certainty.

Donne's open-endedness of form has been observed across the range of his work. Susan Linville discovers the Holy Sonnets to be invoking extra-poetic truths for the poetic reconciliation of conclusions that fail the logical grain of their poems' arguments, while maintaining a vital instability of meaning;[105] Ronald Corthell distinguishes the open-ended 'disclosure' of the familiar letter as one of its main attractions for Donne;[106]

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[103]See Bruce Henricksen on "Donne's Orthodoxy" in *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 14 (1972-3) 5-16, 8.

[104]Unpublished thesis, *The Literary Epitaph in the Seventeenth Century* (Trinity, 1970), B. Litt. (Oxon.) D.1511., 114.

[105]'Contrary Faith: Poetic Closure and the Devotional Lyric", *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 20(2) (1984) 141-53, 143.

[106]"'Friendship's Sacraments': John Donne's Familiar Letters", *SP* 78 (1981) 409-25, 420-1.

and at least one of Donne's poems is explicitly unfinished.[107] Another is argued to draw on an unfinished series of Platonic dialogues, "lacking the fourth, on consummation".[108]

The missing fourth was, as I have already argued, not unknown to Donne's work. It reflects the prophetic Pauline perception of history as having three measurable stages - *ante legem* (Creation to the Commandments), *sub legem* (under Mosaic Law) and the still worldly *sub gratia* - plus a fourth, imagined addition, *in gloria.* Alternatively, the Millenarians imagined six World Ages, with a seventh (Sabbath) outside time.[109] With the absorption of the seventh into the eschaton, an eighth was subsequently added.[110] Donne's own prophetic mode similarly depends on perpetual extension, beyond the widening gyre of language. The resolution of paradox, for instance, occurs outside it, projecting "a unity of truth beyond fragmentary human expressions of it".[111] In her article on Donne's prophetic rhetoric, Patricia Howison goes on to argue that he shows

> paradox glossed by paradox - and, in terms of Scripture, the paradox of words, with all their ambiguities and inadequacies, glossed finally by the paradox of the Word, the Incarnation.[112]

This is the "hidden comprehensiveness ... to be realized fully only outside the text, outside the historical and literary contexts it invokes, in the apocalypse itself";[113] it is also Spenser's "anticipated-but-deferred-wholeness" in the unfinished *Faerie Queene,* Berkeley's ubiquitous spectator-God who lends the world coherence[114] - death and the

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[107]"Resurrection, Imperfect" - see Ruth Falk's note on the correlation between the incompletion of the poem and that of history (*Explicator* 17 (1959) item 24).

[108]Thus Arthur Barker, on Gardner's attribution of "The Extasie" to Leone Ebreo's humanistic Jewish Platonism ("Recent Studies in the English Renaissance", *SEL* 1 (1961) 121-57, 140).

[109]See Marjorie Reeves, "The Development of Apocalyptic Thought: Medieval Attitudes", in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature,* edd. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Manchester: U.P., 1984), 40-72, 41.

[110]Anne Higgins, "Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time," *JMRS* 19(2) (1989) 227-50, 244-5. Higgins points out that these linear projections are founded on perceived rhythms in human events, ages being correlated with *kinds* of event structures (247-8); nonetheless the constant projection signifies a strong linear impetus.

[111]Patricia Howison, "Donne's Sermons and the Rhetoric of Prophecy", *English Studies in Canada* 15(2) (1989) 134-48, 134.

[112]"Donne's Sermons and the Rhetoric of Prophecy", 146-7.

[113]Howison, "Donne's Sermons and the Rhetoric of Prophecy", 136.

[114]See Borges, "A New Refutation of Time", *Labyrinths* (Penguin, 1970), 252-70, 264.

Apocalypse (the promis'd if not realized End), which complete the narrative structure from a distance, as a vanishing point organizes spatial perspective in drawing.[115]

Stanley Archer contends that Donne's concern with this final vanishing point is reductive of life's journey, which characteristically only begins for Donne near the end of life.[116] Yet as I have already argued in Chapter 3, Donne's writing displays a strong sense of progress within its own terms. It would be more accurate to say that Donne's journeys begin *alongside* the end of life, for, far from being restricted to the deathscene as Archer assumes, the journey of ending is long:

> Wee are all conceived in close Prison; in our Mothers wombes, we are close Prisoners all; when we are borne, we are borne but to the liberty of the house; Prisoners still, though within larger walls; and then all our life is but a going out to the place of Execution ... we sleep all the way; from the womb to the grave we are never throughly awake; but passe on with such dreames, and imaginations as these (II.9.197.14-23).

We begin dying at birth:

> Doth not man die even in his birth? The breaking of prison is death, and what is our birth, but a breaking of prison? Assoon as we were clothed by God, our very apparell was an Embleme of death. In the skins of dead beasts, he covered the skins of dying men.[117]

Thereafter, as Donne cites Seneca, life consists of stages of dying that culminate only in "the death of Death it self in the death of Christ" (II.9.202.203-8).[118] We die with every "*Expiratio*, a breathing out" (IV.1.53.311-12), eternally and indivisibly: "We die every day, and we die all the day long; and because we are not absolutely dead, we call that an eternity, an eternity of dying ... that is the state of hell it self, Eternall dying, and not dead" (IV.1.52.272-6). Such "deadly immortality" is strikingly Beckettian in character (II.11.247.454-5). For, however doubtful the positive rewards of death, however prone

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[115]See Miller, *Narrative and its Discontents*, 4.

[116]"The Archetypal Journey Motif in Donne's *Divine Poems*", in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Stringer, 173-91, 176.

[117]IV.1.52.262-6.

[118]Cf. Holy Sonnet X, "Death, be not proud".

modern writers are to regard it simply as the "utter removal" of life, still in Larkin's line, "beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs". From *Richard II*'s

> But whate'er I be,
> Nor I, nor any man that but man is,
> With nothing shall be pleas'd till he be eas'd
> With being nothing (V.5.38-41)

to Freud's claim that the death instinct is "present from the very beginning of life and working as continuously to unbind connections, to destroy, to return what is living to a null but peaceful inorganic state",[119] we find writing that yearns for attenuation to nothingness, for the draftsman's "vanishing point" of eternity.

Thus we have a dying drawn out, a draft of death, an art of dying. Donne is attracted by the drama cast over *each* moment as possibly one's last chance to repent; "It is ill to take two Physicks at once; bodily, and ghostly Physick too, upon thy Death-bed" (I.3.197.532-3; II.11.239.159-60). Instead, God requires "an even, and constant course of Sanctification" (I.1.156.204-6): "This life is not a Parenthesis, a Parenthesis that belongs not to the sense, a Parenthesis that might be left out, as well as put in " (III.13.288.512-13). Only about a year earlier, however, Donne had used the same metaphor to claim the reverse: "Our whole life is but a *parenthesis*, our *receiving* of our soule, and *delivering* it back againe, makes up the perfect sentence; Christ is *Alpha* and *Omega*, and our *Alpha* and *Omega* is all we are to consider" (III.8.188.24-7). In this image, life as a constant dying is ignored; it is the deathscene and birthscene alone that matter. Elsewhere also, Donne stresses the endpoints of existence, "the Font at first, and the death-bed at last" (V.3.86.317). Nor was this unusual. Helen Gardner notes it as common medieval practice,[120] and Shakespeare for the purposes of tragic effect did much the same in *Hamlet* and the tragedies.[121]

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[119] A. Alvarez, *The Savage God* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1971), 98.

[120] "The Religious Poetry of John Donne", in *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 123-36, 123.

[121] See Ricardo Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1972), 397-8. See, again, Chapter 3, p. 112 on Donne's focus on a privileged terminal point from which to review narrative.

To understand this contradiction in Donne's thought, we must look at the evolving tradition of the *ars moriendi*.[122] The fact is that the earliest works in the genre did tend to focus almost entirely on the deathscene.[123] Thomas Lupset's *Waye of Dyinge Well* first equated dying well with living well in 1534, and Thomas Becon followed suit in *The Sicke Mannes Salve* (1561). In their debate of 1582-4, however, Robert Parsons and Edmund Bunny ferociously revived what Nancy Beaty calls "the absolute medieval dichotomy between the deathbed drama and all the rest of life".[124] Not till 1651 did Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying* elide the distinction between the two.

As Beaty notes, Lupset's Christian humanist (dying well equals living well) yielded to Taylor's humanistic Christian (living well equals dying well).[125] Significantly though, even for Taylor who wrote after Donne, the deathbed towards which the reader is led (and discussion of which occupies half the treatise) remains the "dramatic focal point".[126] This then is typical of the tradition, even at its most evolved. Thomas à Kempis, popularizer of the *Imitatio Christi*, might preach, "all lies in the dying, and there is no other road to life ... but the way of the holy cross and of daily dying to self",[127] but he too instinctively gave the actual deathscene its due: "Blessed is he who always keeps the hour of his death in sight".[128] Like his immediate predecessors in the field, Donne believed in preparing daily for death, but was simultaneously attracted to the grandeur of 'the final hour'. As usual, asymptotes and the absolute proved irresistible, and in practice, life often did assume the betwixt and between nature of parenthesis (defined by Ricks as "a voice subdued to a kind of silence").[129]

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[122]For the account that follows, I am indebted to Nancy Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the* Ars Moriendi *in England* (N.H.: Yale U.P., 1970).

[123]Thus the original mid- fifteenth century *Book of the Crafte of Dyinge* , on which see Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well* (N.Y.: Columbia U.P., 1942); the *Orologium Sapientae*, and *The Lamentation of the Dying Creature* (see *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, ed. Frances Comper, London: Longmans, 1917).

[124]*The Craft of Dying*,182.

[125]*The Craft of Dying*, 216-7.

[126]*The Craft of Dying*, 223-4.

[127]*The Imitation of Christ*, 68.

[128]*The Imitation of Christ*, 45.

[129]*The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 304.

Thus Donne veers between two conflicting approaches. Life is and is not merely a parenthesis; deathbed repentance should be observed and yet avoided, practised yet 'practised' before. Whichever perspective Donne takes, however, the circular image underlying his interpretation remains the same. In both cases, birth and death overlap. Where all living is discounted, they quite clearly meet in Christ as Alpha and Omega where we 'end as we begun' (VI.1.60.780; "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"). Where life is part of the whole process, birth heralds the beginning of dying, of returning to itself. In one, death is instantly recapitulative, in the other progressive, but in both the process becomes at once *complete* and *identical* at the point that closes up the circle.

5. Life in the Round

> So consider mans life aright to be a Circle ... In this, the circle, the two points meet, the womb and the grave are but one point, they make but one station, there is but a step from that to this ... birth, and death is all one.
>
> Their death was a birth to them into another life, into the glory of God; It ended one Circle, and created another; for immortality, and eternity is a Circle too; not a Circle where two points meet, but a Circle made at once; This life is a Circle, made with a Compasse, that passes from point to point; That life is a Circle stamped with a print, an endlesse, and perfect Circle, as soone as it begins. Of this Circle, the Mathematician is our great and good God; The other Circle we make up our selves; we bring the Cradle, and Grave together by a course of nature.
>
> II.9.199.94-200.114

Images of life as a completed process occur in the sermons in Donne's descriptions of individual deaths. Arnold Stein in his article, "Handling Death: John Donne in Public Meditation", discerns two variant and opposed patterns of dying, whose relationship we can now clarify. Taking as his norm the standard pattern of the "good death" described in Devotion 17, Stein finds at one end of the scale the "perfect" death of VIII.7, where, omitting a carefully staged approach to dying, the individual is translated imperceptibly across the threshhold.[130] Holy living in this abstract case is Taylorian holy dying, and "this Picture of that dying Man, that dies in Christ, that dies the death of the

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[130] *ELH* 48 (1981) 496-515, 503-4; further references in the text.

Righteous, that embraces Death as a Sleepe, was graving all his life" (VIII.7.190.590-2). Stein notices "a combination of unspecific content and assertive comparisons which are declared to be fully identical in heaven as on earth, and a closed, fixed completeness of the form" (504). In other words, even as the notion of continual dying is implicit, Donne images a *fait accompli*, a perfect circle whose Alpha and Omega are no longer distinguishable. Christ appears "in every point of that great compass, in every arch, in every section of that great circle", for this is "not a Circle where two points meet, but a Circle made at once ... stamped with a print, an endlesse, and perfect Circle", God's "circle that hath no pieces, but is one equall everlastingnesse".[131] As Donne specifies, this picture that "had many dayes, weeks, Moneths time for the graving" is "deliver'd in a minute, from a print upon a paper" (VIII.7.190.588).

At the other end of the scale, Stein locates the two funeral sermons Donne preached for Lady Danvers and Sir William Cockayne. Here, he observes, Donne finds it more appropriate to "create a sense of movement and the suggestive equivalent of comparison by marking, or shading in stages; and to reserve for the approach to death a sense of full inwardness at the last stage" (504). The sense of continuity between life and death remains, with Lady Danvers's spiritual life framing her death (500-2, 505-6) and the stages in Sir William's approach progressing to the point where his "good death" becomes less remote from the commendable struggle of his life (506ff); but essentially Donne treats these deaths as a measurable, step-by-step advance to the final moment (508-10). This, I would suggest, is Donne's 'pieced-up' circle (V.14.294.967-9), the "other Circle we make up our selves" where "we bring the Cradle and Grave together by a course of nature". By tracing in the cases of these two individuals who were known to him the course by which they approached the final moment of closure, Donne places them in the

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[131]III.9.216.378-9; II.9.200.108-111; V.14.294.967-9; IV.3.96.246-54. For Donne's use of 'Circle of Perfection' imagery, see Marjorie Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the 'New Science' upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (N.Y.: Columbia U.P., 1960), ch.2, and Milton Rugoff, *Donne's Imagery: A Study in Creative Sources* (N.Y.: Russell and Russell, 1962), 64-73.

still-warm context of their lives.[132] We see them not in the impersonal, retrospectively perfected state of the theoretical individual of VIII.7, but as we might see ourselves, but recently winding a "Serpentine line ... to get up to God, and get into God by such degrees" (V.17.347.337-8), following the curve of a massive circle that still appears as no more than a continuing arc :

> Upon this earth, a man cannot possibly make one step in a straight, and a direct line. The earth it selfe being round, every step wee make upon it, must necessarily bee a segment, an arch of a circle (VII.9.244.272-4).[133]

Donne thus conceives of human progress towards God as a laborious and unfinished circle, one "made with a Compasse, that passes from point to point". From womb to grave, the incomplete circle to the circle that has always been, "there is but a step", yet until we take it we remain bound to apparently infinite progression. Interestingly, Christ in this overlaps with man, experiencing growth and process even in his miracles, as he too chases the closing circumference.[134]

The two *ars moriendi* perspectives, then, distinguished by the varying emphases they place on life and its actual close, reform themselves into two types of circles. Where living is inseparable from dying, the deathscene has no part to play and life tends to be viewed retrospectively, as an instant circle; this is the ideal case. But where life is a suspended parenthesis between birth and death, the moment of death marks grammatical relief and a goal in prospect, the end of a circle whose progress can be measured; this, in practice, is Donne's experience of the human condition. Repeatedly in his work we find these two types of circles linked, the human and divine, the progressive

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[132]Such lives thus assume the nature of a "mixed parenthesis", as Donne called letter-writing to friendship: "it may be left out, yet it contributes, though not to the being, yet to the verdure and freshness thereof" (Gosse, I.168).

[133]Thus the rectilinear journey of "Goodfriday 1613" conceals a circular "subtext of form" (Sibyl Lutz Severance, "Soul, Sphere and Structure in 'Goodfriday 1613. Riding Westward'", *SP* 84 (1987) 24-43). See also Michael Hall's account of Donne's sermons as structures of "circular progression": "Circles and Circumvention in Donne's Sermons", *JEGP* 82 (1983) 201-14, 209-14. Terry Sherwood places this in the context of Christian history, "an irreversible circle of sequential events from beginning to end" (*Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought*, Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1984, 13).

[134]V.1.37.87-94 (cf. III.17.791ff); III.8.9-15 (cf.V.1.38.95-100).

and the instantaneous: "all acquired knowledg is by degrees, and successive; but God is impartible" (*Essays*, 21.4-5). Their common source is St Augustine's holy circle, on the one hand, "a motion perceived in time (in which one phase must be seen as a prelude to the other)", on the other seen "from the perspective of eternity (when the completed Motion can be seen to have been all along one motion)".[135] Donne's shifting awareness can lead to confusion in what he describes as a circle. Though in the *Essays*, he notes that God is "no circle", having "no ends to close up" (15.23-4), in VI.8 he declares that "God is a circle himselfe, and he will make thee one" (175.251-2). In the earlier work, Donne is comparing God to the human figure, "perceived in time"; in the later sermon, he clearly has in mind the ideal image of "an endlesse, and perfect Circle" (II.9.199.111) seen from our future retrospective of eternity ("he will make thee one").[136]

As we might deduce, the double-vision evoked in Donne's imagery and content finds a correlation in form, notwithstanding the latter's necessary limitations. Just as Donne was able to represent the perfect death, the closed circle, within the ongoing process of his own sermon of VIII.7, so too he could anticipate formal perfection in his sermon structures.

Reflecting the circular structures he describes - the psalms ("*David* makes up his Circle, he begins, and ends in prayer" [II.1.50.51-2]), the Lord's Prayer (a "circle of praise" that opens and closes acclaiming God's glory [V.14.271.108-22]) - a number of Donne's sermons are themselves "imaged forth as spheres and circles with text as center and circumference".[137] In addition to the ending markers listed in Table IIa, several explicitly refer us back to the sermon's beginning:

> Now to make up a circle by returning to our first word, remember (II.11.248.475)

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[135]See Margaret Maurer, "The Circular Argument of Donne's 'La Corona'", *SEL* 22 (1982) 51-68, 60.

[136]Maurer describes a similar conflict in "La Corona", between its ingenious circular structure - "the self-conscious attempt of a human soul to describe an inhumanly perfect motion" (57) - and the abstract perfection of its Christian paradoxicality, as the (pre-Newtonian) difference between "constrained" and "virtual" circularity ("The Circular Argument", 56-8).

[137]Hall, "Circles and Circumvention", 207-9 .

> This is the last word of our Text; but we make up our Circle by returning to the first word (IV.3.130.1530-1)
>
> To end all in that metaphor which we mentioned at beginning (V.1.56.771-2)
>
> Therefore, as we said at first (V.15.316.734)

Nine other sermons silently 'make up' circles by ending with repetitions of their opening texts (see Table IIb). These stand in contrast to the majority which, as we have seen, lead more or less linearly into silence, although their final tone varies from the apocalyptic to the anticlimactic, from strong Baroque crescendo to dying fall. The latter we can now interpret as unfinished, or progressive circles, segments of our earthly progress; the "final step" that rounds them off is yet to come. We move linearly forward through their structure - "First then, ... Secondly, ... And then thirdly ..." - only to realize beneath it a buried and subdued 'fourth' that underwrites the simultaneous unity of all its parts: "... And in all this (which is a fourth Consideration)" (V.9.185.37-51). The "scene" to be shifted "thrice" can only present "three objects" that are also "three subjects", if it ends by directing us roundly back to its beginning.[138]

The underlying circularity of these performances is further reflected in their broader pattern of cyclical recurrence. Just as Boyd Berry argues that repetition in the *Devotions* of narrative linear movements which themselves, individually, involve no repetition, nonetheless generates cycles suggesting "the circularity of divine vision",[139] so too Donne's 'unfinished circle' sermons, individually linear but repeated weekly, create a larger cycle. Liturgical time schemes in just this way converted change to changelessness, operating on two levels simultaneously. The seven canonical hours that measured the progress of the liturgical day also numerologically imaged timelessness; each incident in the liturgical year was thus both local *and* symbolic of the whole redemptive work of

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[138]III.11.241.20-2. See headnotes to section B1 above.

[139]*Process of Speech: Puritan Religious Writing and Paradise Lost* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1976), 192ff: 198.

Christ, *in medias res* and retrospectively perfected at the same time.[140] Donne's sermons need to be read in the same way, locally as individual structures but also within the overall symbolic structure of the *Sermons*, our textual record of the weekly series. Like Elizabeth Drury who is both Woman "as she was" *and* "the Idea of a Woman", each sermon works to hold actual and ideal together - "by making full perfection grow,/ Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so" (*The second Anniversary*, ll. 507-8).

Thus Donne writes as always between two perspectives, two worlds, merging aspects of the linear and the circular - narrative progress and the *nunc stans*, fear of ending and desire for endlessness, divided human perception ("lattices of eies") and instantaneous vision of divine unity ("thou straight know'st all").[141]

It has been suggested that, rather than the unfinished circle I have propounded, Donne saw the spiral as his ideal fusion of linear and circular.[142] Perhaps the most persuasive evidence for this comes from Freccero's interpretation of "A Valediction; Forbidding Mourning", whereby the compass's circle is really a spiral that converges on its own centre (346). This spiral too aims at a perfect circle, insofar as its movement is an infinite approach to the centre that parallels Zeno's infinite approach to the closing of the circumference. As Terry Sherwood argues,

> The spiral that constitutes human and temporal circles translates the perfect, unending circularity of God into motions appropriate to creation. The spiral pulls the natural rectilinear movement of matter towards the centre, which is God. The spiralling circles become increasingly fulfilled the closer they transcribe the circular fullness of God and Eternity.[143]

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[140]See Chambers, "*La Corona*: Philosophic, Sacred and Poetic Uses of Time", in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Stringer, 140-72, 144-52.

[141]For the historical background to reconciling linear and circular views of history, see Herschel Baker, *The Race of Time: Three Lectures on Renaissance Historiography* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1967), 60-4; Higgins, "Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time".

[142]For precedent, see Higgins, "Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time", 249. Colie associates the spiral with paradox generally (*Paradoxia Epidemica*, 519); Jill Baumgaertner detects it in "La Corona" ("Harmony in Donne's 'La Corona' and 'Upon the Translation of the Psalms'", *JDJ* 3(2) (1984) 141-56, 155, cf. Maurer, "The Circular Argument", 68); M. Thomas Hester in "Satire 3" ("John Donne's 'Hill of Truth'", *ELN* 14 (1976) 100-5); and Freccero in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning".

[143]*Fulfilling the Circle*, 205 fn. 23.

And, as with the unfinished circle, the believer achieves fullness "not absolutely, only in the condition of fulfilling, on the circumference of time".[144]

Thus in some ways, this spiral bears the same relationship to the divine circle as the figure of the unfinished circle. Likewise naturally opposed as infinitely progressive to already-All,[145] it yet finds itself paradoxically fulfilled in the latter. The portrayal of God - central point, closed-up circle - is arrived at through the human rhetorical process of "necessary indirection, by steps and degrees, through circumvention", whether by converging spirals or curvature of cirumference.[146]

Graham Roebuck, however, observes that the "Valediction"'s closing spiral movement is still associated with the closing up of an unfinished circle:

> when the outer foot comes home to join the fixed one in a single point, then, paradoxically ... a perfect circle in a higher plane is created for the mind's contemplation. It is the circle created at the apex of 'circle' compasses when closed, in a vertical plane ... in effect, a great circle ... the pure circle of contemplation ... the death of a good man transforms the linear to the circular.[147]

The fact is that in one fundamental respect, the spiral will not alone serve as Donne's guiding metaphor for the "dynamism of humanity".[148] The figure it traces, fatally, does not in itself contribute to the final image of God it envisages. A purely parenthetical means to an end, it contributes nothing to the sense (cf. III.13.288.512-13). By contrast, the unfinished circle not only progresses towards realization of the divine circle, but composes it. In the instant that it completes itself it becomes, in its entirety, something else: "It ended one Circle, and created another". Thus in "Upon the Annunciation and Passion Falling Upon One Day. 1608", Christ's own birth and death are not only drawn circularly together on one day, but that circle creates the image of a new beginning, since

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[144]*Fulfilling the Circle,* 14.

[145]See Chapter 1, pp. 33-4.

[146]See Hall, "Circles and Circumvention", 202-4.

[147]"Donne's Visual Imagination and Compasses", *JDJ* 8 (1989) 37-56, 53-4.

[148]Freccero, "Donne's 'Valediction'", 339.

the Day is also New Year's, the 25th of March.[149] It is, furthermore, only because the two circles of becoming and being are consubstantial that the latter can be a "perfect Circle, as soone as it begins" (II.9.200.111) - that is, as soon as the human circle has been completed, and can be recognized for what it is. In the two perspectives of Augustine's 'holy circle', the first is a type of the second; the difference between the two figures is one of degree, not kind. Drawing on the same background, Beckett shows Watt a circle,

> obviously described by a compass, and broken at its lowest point ... In the eastern background appeared a point, or dot ... [giving] the illusion of movement in space, and, it almost seemed, in time.[150]

The "point" that, like Christ, appears in the east, is at once the missing "lowest point" of the circle and the circle's antitype, the end and the beginning, Omega and Alpha. Our dual focus on it gives the illusion of movement between the two circles, though suspended between time and eternity.

An essentially typological relationship of reflection and causality, cyclical recurrence and historical evolution, applies therefore between the human and the divine. One circle leads to the other, but also figures it; the ending of the first is the beginning of the second but also a return to its own beginning. Christ, as both divine antitype of the Old Testament Prophets and human type of his glorified self, shows therefore "simultaneous resolution and developing movement in time",[151] approaching perfection even as he already represents it. Donne too, within his sermons, combines narrative flow with the instantaneous *nunc stans* to create a *nunc currens* that makes "full perfection grow" (*The second Anniversary,* l. 507).

It is this mutually defining relationship that cannot be established between the circle and the spiral, or indeed any other figure differing in kind from it, such as Kepler's

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[149]Noted by Hugh Kirkpatrick, "Donne's 'Upon the Annunciation and the Passion Falling Upon One Day. 1608'", *Explicator* 30 (1972). Item 39.

[150]*Watt* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1963), 126-7.

[151]Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle,* 13.

imperfect human ellipse.[152] For the same reasons that Donne, like Herbert and the 'classical' poets, prefers to express God in terms of rings, spheres and globes - images of 'contained infinity' - he also chooses more often than not to express man's relationship to the divine in terms that reflect it: mystical microcosms, metaphors to fit.[153] Spiral movement insofar as it also suggests expansion outwards or escape upwards carries an appeal more to the succeeding Trahernian temperament. Compare, for instance, Beckett's juxtaposition of the image of a watch-hand and its shadow in "seemingly endless parallel rotation round and round the dial"[154] with the unrelieved journey of his wandering human figure:

> Having covered in your day some twenty-five thousand leagues or roughly thrice the girdle. And never once overstepped a radius of one from home (85).

Where Donne's figure closes up his circle to "bring the Cradle and Grave together" (II.9.200.113-14), Beckett's is doomed to trace an endless temporal circle, with his one hope of escape a spiralling, Dantesque transcendance: "waiting to be purged the old lutist cause Dante's first quarter-smile and now perhaps singing praises with some section of the blest at last."

Central to Donne's thought, then, is the equation of beginning and ending, and the saving compass of time. Anne Higgins's spiral, "oriented toward the end of the world and of time",[155] may suit mediaeval and contemporary structures of thought, but it ignores the essential notion of return embedded in the idea of a "Renaissance".[156] As Cassio declares in *Julius Caesar:*

> This day I breathèd first. Time is come round,

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[152]See Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle,* 154, for Kepler's explanation of the 'New Astronomy' in terms resembling Donne's distinction of divine and human circles.

[153]See Chapter 1, pp. 27ff.

[154]*Company* (London: John Calder, 1980), 81-3.

[155]"Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time," 249.

[156]Thomas Greene discusses the age's conscious attempt to define itself against the myth of "medieval entombment" in *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1982), 3, 92.

> And where I did begin, there shall I end.
>
> My life is run his compass (V.3.23-5).

Donne's sermon-hour is likewise a "Compasse", a temporal narrative of "all Ages" circumscribed in miniature, which finds its circular resolution every week in returning to the silence from which it began, "the death of the houre".[157] But unlike the classical circle, Donne's hour begins again, every week; for perhaps the central, underlying, Christian paradox for Donne is the concept of death as rebirth, that Christ

> should looke graciously on them at last, that when their sunne sets, their eyes faint, his sunne of grace should arise, and his East be brought to their West ... that when their last bell tolls, and calls them to their first Judgement, (and first and last Judgement to this purpose is all one) the passing bell, and Angels trump sound all but one note (II.8.182.80-6).

The rhetorical antitheses here are first balanced, then merged. Donne also finds metaphors in nature, for if death is everywhere, so is resurrection (III.9.219.480-2; III.3.97.230ff). At the same time that we die in stages, we experience a series of rebirths (I.4.231.318; IV.3.126.1373ff). Baptism may be "our Crosse, and our passion, and our buriall", since it marks our death to sin (V.7.165.533-4), but more significantly, it bestows simultaneously "an inchoation and beginning" (V.7.166.576). And, as all our life is a dying, so, in some respects, "our whole life is a baptisme" (V.7.161.375-6). IV.1 represents the whole tripartite structure of 'deaths' from original sin, physical-spiritual relapse and literal death as a "threefold Resurrection", in the form of baptism into new life, return to health (repentance) and final Resurrection (IV.1.56.415ff: 427).

Thus man's life, like the overall circle of collected *Sermons* that records Donne's own, consists of a series of smaller circles, weekly resurrections of individual sermons, that prefigure his final translation to glory. As too, Donne's tendency to divide and subdivide led him to conclude that death occurred not only in formal stages but as "*Expiratio,* a breathing out" every minute (IV.1.53.312), so each accompanying *Inspiratio*

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[157]IV.15.378.519-20; II.10.203.215.

finds its metaphorical, and indeed literal equivalent in Donne's style. Within each sermon are smaller circles still, the periods which Joan Webber has characterized as circular without being Ciceronian: rather, "the period opens imaginatively at the same time that its pattern reaches completion."[158] Opening wheels within opening wheels, or as the *Devotions* puts it, "*Natures nest of Boxes*" (10M: 51.1-3).

Essentially, these microcosms stand in the same relationship to the main circle of the text as that text does to its as yet unrealized antitype, the divine circle of the textless future into which it imaginatively opens. The period achieves completion as the sermon containing it achieves completion as, in turn, the collected *Sermons* themselves approach the climactic *Deaths Duell.* Each opens out into another opening out, to be ultimately resolved only in death, "that transmutation which admits no re-transmutation" (I.1.164.497-8). The same tripartite structure appears in Donne's more conventional use of typology, in his progressive application of the text in hand to Old Testament type, ourselves/Adam (semi-recapitulative) and finally New Testament antitype, Christ.[159] The chronological progression is clear; but in the light of Trinitarian parallels with this typological structure,[160] we can readily reread their implications into the overall movement of Donne's writing.

Defining the trinity of textual circles is the final, confirming, atextual fourth, which leaves the binary relationship between the two worlds to be in turn defined by a third - the amphibologous view of the reader, caught in "the illusion of movement".[161] Thus the Trinity, as we have seen before, reconciles itself, in a self-contained and self-containing present. The move out towards infinity is accompanied by a reverse focus inward, and the reading contains the reader.[162] Of course, the circles in which that

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[158]*Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1963), 34.

[159]II.1.69.748-56; II.2.75.113ff; II.3.97.96-8; II.5.137.217-20; II.6.161.624-6.

[160]See p. 189 above.

[161]See pp. 174, 215 above.

[162]We cannot place ourselves outside the world, as Donne quoted "the Mathematician"'s fallacy: "he could make an Engin, a Screw, that should move the whole frame of the World, if he could have a place assigned him, to fix that Engin, that Screw upon" (V.18.365.26-30).

reader moves are validated by the divine circle to come, and but they are nonetheless themselves indistinguishable from it. Like the opposites we saw at the beginning of this chapter, they are "not onely contiguous, but continuall" (IV.13.343.699 and ff) - like women, both "glasses that represent God to us, and ideas that return us into him" (II.5.132.55-6). For it is here in the text that all double-perspectives are fused; as speech, fear and parenthesis progress towards silence, assurance and sense, so at the same time they embody them in their entirety. The divided perception that saw a Father and Son, a martyr and a heretic, here sees parts as wholes and wholes as parts, in the Trinitarian, microcosmic layering of the text. Division and multiplication, Trinity and beyond-Trinity, are One, and the sermons become a *coincidentia oppositorum*, the unifying site of the Holy Ghost. It is this ability to participate in two natures that justifies the sermon as sacrament, creating an effect both linear and circular, progressive and recapitulative. God like the End is both imminent and immanent, though in the end, this returns us - ironically but humanly - to an anticipation of the 'time' when even this distinction will no longer exist.

CHAPTER FIVE

Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions

Study me then, you who shall lovers bee
At the next world, that is, at the next Spring:
For I am every dead thing,
In whom love wrought new Alchimie.

The Trinitarian structures of division just examined return us full circle to the "*three* Births" of the *Devotions*, and the structure proposed for that work in my Introduction. The resonances of the title-page, indeed, offer clear, unmistakeable "*vestigia Trinitatis*";[1] immediately below the title, Donne announces the digestion of the *Devotions* into

1. Meditations upon our Humane Condition
2. Expostulations, and Debatements with God
3. Prayers, upon the severall Occasions, to him.[2]

The first segment represents the initiation of an occasion, the *initial fall* which results in the human condition. This is the province of God the Father of the Old Testament, concerned with damnation and man's (the text's) birth. The second segment explores a series of arguments, typically in Donne the means to truth ("true religion" lies in the *seeking*).[3] This is Christ's mode in the New Testament ("I am the *Way*"), concerned with salvation and rebirth, and characterized by the opening address of Christ on the cross, "My God, My God". (The centrality and general dominance of this segment reflect the concentration on Christ and Resurrection, common to theological commentators since St

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1 Chapter 4, fn. 22.

2 Cf. the complicated and largely irrelevant debate that has raged over the extent to which this division was influenced by Ignatius Loyola's tripartite *Spiritual Exercises* (summarized by Raspa with the conclusion that Donne's precise layout is 'original': *Devotions*, xxxix).

3 *Satire 3*, l. 43.

Augustine).[4] Finally, there is the third; where the Meditation is self-addressed, and the Expostulation a debate "*with God*", this segment "*to him*" acknowledges his absolute power. We can only pray, and in this offering up of breath, Donne formally commemorates the Holy Ghost of inspiration through whose means eternal rebirth can be envisaged. When we "give up the Ghost", man is translated to spirit, his text to silence.

This, however, accounts only for the internal structure of each Devotion, over whose coherence no real argument exists.[5] For most critics, the problem lies in relating one Devotion to the next in a way that is consistent with the coherent analysis of each individual Devotion. Sparrow, for example, viewed his edition merely as a series of fragments,[6] while later critics who have connected up the narrative of Donne's illness as an ordered devotional progression, based on the Table of *Stationes* (a plot summary in verse), then fail to clarify the relevance of the title-page's inter-Devotional structure.[7]

As my Introduction suggested, it is, appropriately, the page between title-page and Table of *Stationes* that provides the link. The *Epistle*'s opening declaration of "*three* Births" immediately echoes the title-page's Trinitarian division. "*One,* Naturall, *when I came into the* World" is the first birth, of fallen man into original sin and the text into Meditation: "Naturall" or pre-Christian. The second, "*when I entred into the* Ministery", is Donne's "Supernatural" (Christian) birth into salvation and the second person of the Trinity, who made salvation possible. It mirrors each Devotion's second birth into an Expostulation that sustains the Way of the text. Thirdly, Donne celebrates "*a* preternaturall Birth, *in returning to* Life, *from this* Sicknes" - the sinner's recovery into Prayer. But these "*three* Births" are more than metaphorical reinforcements; as three

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4 See Nancy Beaty on Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying,* in *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the* Ars Moriendi *in England* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1970), 219; also Itrat Husain on Donne's general Christocentrism (*The Dogmatic and Mystical Theology of John Donne,* N.Y., 1938, 137-9, 59ff.)

5 Raspa, *Devotions,* xxxv.

6 (Cambridge: U.P., 1923), xviii.

7 See, for instance, Gerard Cox, "Donne's *Devotions*: A Meditative Sequence on Repentance" *HTR* 66 (1973) 331-51. Cox typically refers to the "continual process of repentance" within each Devotion, but without locating it in his overall "journey towards assurance" (350-1).

stages of a Christian life, they also literally outline the thematic structure of the *Devotions* as a whole, the grouping of the following Table's '*Stationes*' into episodes.[8] Corresponding to Meditation, Expostulation and Prayer are the three 'births' of Devotions 1-4, 5-8 and 16-19, into the natural, public and relational worlds respectively: the narrative equivalent across the sequence of each Devotion's tripartite structure.[9]

The preceding chapters have surveyed Donne's discussion of associated themes in the sermons before the *Devotions*. I would now like to show how his scattered but characteristic approaches to beginning, authority, (time)[10] and structure converge in this central text in such a way as to recognizably organize it into the trinity of births foreshadowed above.

Devotions 1-4: Nothingness and Beginning

For his art did expresse
A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and leane emptinesse

Devotions 1, 2, 3

Turning to the first Devotion, the outbreak of the main text, we find ourselves plunged immediately into the thick of Donne's thought: "Variable, and therfore miserable

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8 Kate Gartner Frost in her recent full-length study of the *Devotions* has allowed them an importance in the construction of the autobiographical narrative, but without tracing them thematically through episodes (*Holy Delight: Typology, Numerology and Autobiography in Donne's* Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, Princeton: U.P., 1990, 146ff). For Donne's use of dedicatory letters to introduce themes, see Isaac Elimimian on the *Epicedes and Obsequies* ("The Dedicatory Letter as a Rhetorical Device: The Example of Donne", *Classical and Modern Literature: A Quarterly* 6(2) (1986) 127-36).

9 For Donne's insistence on correspondence between matter and form, see Chapter 4, p. 187.

10 Occupying the gap between second and third births: see Introduction, p. 3.

condition of Man; this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute" (7.5-6). The very minute Donne clings to overwhelms him, even as it compasses his loss of state:

> in a minute a Cannon batters all, overthrowes all, demolishes all; a *Sicknes* unprevented for all our diligence, unsuspected for all our curiositie: nay, undeserved, if we consider only *disorder*, summons us, seizes us, possesses us, destroyes us in an instant (7.11-15).

Out of this annihilation Donne begins again, more formally - literally, in fact, from nought: "*O* miserable condition of Man" (7.15). The violent 'arms and the (condition of) Man' opening - poetically formal, *in medias res* - is succeeded by what A.D. Nuttall contrasts as a 'natural' beginning,[11] with Donne now invoking the "*coale* ... *beame* of *Immortalitie*" extinguished "by our first sinne" (7.16-18).[12] This more considered, 'deep' beginning corrects Donne's opening impetuosity: far from the disease being "undeserved", "wee beggard our selves" (7.18-19); far from it being "unsuspected", we are "pre-afflicted, super-afflicted with these jelousies and suspitions, and apprehensions of *Sicknes*, before we can cal it a sicknes" (7.21-3). But this is to place Donne still "before" the sickness; and furthermore leads to the assertion that such "pre-apprehensions and presages, prophecy those torments" in a way that is self-fulfilling (7.28). Man

> hath inough in himself ... to presage that execution upon himselfe: to assist the sicknes, to antidate the sicknes, to make the sicknes the more irremediable, by sad apprehensions (8.4-7).

The anticipation of illness becomes inseparable from the event, as conception from birth: "our *dissolution* is conceived in these *first changes, quickned* in the *sicknes* it selfe, and *borne* in *death*" (7.29-31). Thus the problem with defining beginning again arises ("this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute"). As with Milton's attempt to begin *Paradise Lost*

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[11] *Openings: Narrative Beginnings from the Epic to the Novel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 26-7; as for example, with the *Aeneid*, though there the natural beginning is suppressed until the end of Book I (*Openings*, 205). Perhaps closer in structure as well as time is the *Commedia*, where as Nuttall notes, an *in medias res* opening is strikingly succeeded by a classical invocation of the Muse (57); Donne's second opening is also an invocation, albeit more gloomily addressed.

[12] Appropriately for the Meditation, which marks the "huge natural *principium*" of man's initial birth into damnation (see Nuttall, *Openings*, 94).

'naturally' with the Fall, Donne's causal chain translates the beginning of sickness into *medias res*, generating from it a "system of echoes and pre-echoes".[13]

For Donne therefore, this Devotion is both "*The first alteration, The first grudging of the sicknesse*", and yet prefatory to the sickness itself; a beginning, yet also an anticipation of beginning. In textual terms, moreover, the discussion of anticipation appears in the initiating Meditation of the initiating Devotion, heralding Expostulation, Prayer, and the twenty-two remaining Devotions. It is the whole text we look forward to, even as we have already begun; presages succeed presages, and beginning lies constantly ahead. In fact, the Meditation ends still trying to begin, with another repetition of 7.15's pseud-o-opening invocation, "O miserable condition of Man" (8.13-14).

In the Expostulation furthermore, the pattern begins again, as Donne wonders whether he "might speak unto the *Lord*" (8.16; by contrast, the Meditation refers only once to God, and then in a negative clause [7.15-16]). Only after justifying this form of expostulation does he then address God with the standard opening of the later Expostulations, "*My God, My God*" (8.23-4).[14] As in the first ten lines of the Meditation, a prologue or abortive start produces a delayed or second beginning. Donne now resumes the interrupted argument of the Meditation. In deference to the change in segment, however, he shifts from physical to spiritual, and also reverses his complaint in the application:

> Why hath not my *soule* these apprehensions, these presages, these changes, those antidates, those jealousies, those suspitions of a *sinne*, as well as my body of a *sicknes*? (8.24-7)

At 9.12, another reconsideration takes place ("but ..."), marked by a reintroduction of the invocation, "*O my God*". Donne admits to "a *pulse* in our *Soule*, but we do not examine it; a voice in our conscience, but wee do not hearken unto it" (9.14-15). Correspondence between physical and spiritual is resolved. The pattern of the first

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[13]Nuttall, *Openings*, 95.

[14]Cf. the *Aeneid*'s two 'professive' and 'invocative' openings (Nuttall, *Openings*, 3-4).

segment, where the "unsuspected" disease becomes only too well-apprehended, recurs here in the second; God does not "Infuse his first *grace*, & not second it" (9.22-3). The Expostulation closes, fittingly, with a reference to renewal.

The Prayer as third birth recapitulates the physical and spiritual, indeed "all the beginnings" (10.9). In praying "to looke forward to mine end, and to looke backward to, to the considerations of thy mercies afforded mee from the beginning", Donne associates the two ends of the "*direct line*" of man's journey (10.1-4). Both are, in this dual perspective, more accurately beginnings:

> my beginning in this world, when thou plantedst me in the *Christian Church*, and ... the beginning in the other world, when thou writest me in the *Booke of life*, in my *Election* (10.5-8).

The first birth into sin shadows the last into salvation; the text arising from it is not only the verbalized fever of life's illness, something born of "presage" and "sad apprehensions", but itself a presage of health to come. Donne therefore looks both forward and backward to beginning, praying for "thy *mercy*, in the beginning of all my actions here; That in all the beginnings, in all the accesses, and approches ... I may heare and hearken" (10.8-11). Even as the first Devotion closes, he continues to anticipate a new beginning ("raise me againe" [10.26]).

Devotion 1, then, is very conscious of its position as introduction to the text and disease. In the word is the beginning; and not only of the text as written, but the text as read.[15] In Devotion 2 the establishment of rhetorical structure continues, except that what has been treated as a general technique of anticipation now becomes explicitly typological. The three 'births' or segments of the opening Devotion conform retrospectively to St Augustine's "triple typological structure", where "the Old Testament figure is a type of the New Testament fulfillment which it foreshadows. But both these terms are at the same time prefigurations and foreshadowings of similar events at the

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[15] As Thomas Sloane remarks, "This process of making, this parodying of God, is unquestionably meant to include creating the reader by *in*forming him with the text" (*Donne, Milton and the End of Humanist Rhetoric*, Berkeley: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1985, 206).

end of time".[16] Thus the Expostulation recapitulates the Meditation while anticipating the Prayer, which itself looks forward to a final beginning. The essential concept of such a typological design is the perception of continual renewal. According to Walter Davis, "separate times and separate structures are said to run together seamlessly, so much so that the past is made to look to the future, the present back to the past";[17] exactly as in his first Prayer, Donne hopes "to looke forward to mine end, and to looke backward to, to ... the beginning" (10.2-4).

The second Devotion continues the quest for a succeeding "*Originall*" (11.29-31), but in typologically orienting reader and writer within the sequence of births, introduces characters rather than structures. Donne's initial comparison to Adam (12.1-6) - everyman, original man, sinner - situates us in an historical and, for the purposes of the text, rhetorical context, moving towards an *imitatio Christi*, the second Adam:

> As the first *Adams* sweat surrounds my face,
> May the last *Adams* blood my soule embrace.[18]

The Expostulation, however, suggests another forebear, more specifically suited to the nature of the text. It opens like Expostulation 1, with a lengthy discussion of the possibility of speaking to God (12.8-22). Having talked himself into relative worthiness, Donne can again begin (rebegin) the Meditation's subject of sensory failure: "*My God, My God*[19] ... Why dost thou melt me, scatter me, powre me like water upon the ground so instantly?" (12.24-6, cf. 11.12-15). A.C. Partridge refers to the "Job-like querulousness"[20] of Donne in such passages of formal complaint as that which follows, and in fact Donne's question here bears remarkable similarity to *Job* 10:10 ("Hast thou not poured me out as milk ...") and 16:13 ("he poureth out my gall upon the ground"). It

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16 Joseph Galdon, *Typology and Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Mouton: The Hague, 1975), 48.

17 "Meditation, Typology and the Structure of Donne's Sermons", in *The Eagle and the Dove*, edd. Ted-Larry Pebworth and Claude Summers (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986), 166-88, 171.

18"Hymn to God My God in my Sickness", ll. 24-5.

19 Cf. 1M: 8.23-4. Only from Expostulation 6 does Donne feel capable of *opening* with this cry.

20*John Donne: Language and Style* (London: Deutsch, 1978), 200.

was a habit of Donne's to imitate the style and manner of scriptural figures in his sermons,[21] and that is clearly what he is doing here. The admonition of 13.4, "thou wast not wont to come in *whirlwinds*" is a direct reference to *Job* 38.1 ("Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind"), while at 13.10-12, Donne explicitly compares their afflictions. Like Job, he has justified his complaint by comparative assertion of worth (12.8-24) - "I am not inferior to you" (*Job* 13.2) - and persisted in his address: "Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God" (*Job* 13.3). The comparison with Job himself now lends Donne courage and conviction. As he ends the Expostulation, he anticipates God's "recollecting, and reuniting this *dust* againe at the *Resurrection*" (13.20-1) with a triumph that recalls *Job* 19.26, the text which struck him so powerfully that he used it for his final sermon ("And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"): "Though I be dead, I shall heare the voice ... and all shall rise there in a lesse *Minute*, then any one dies here" (13.22-5).

The text, therefore, is redolent with echoes of *Job*.[22] Its very movement reflects Job's method of expostulation: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him" (*Job* 23.8). For it is not simply here that Job is important: rather Donne establishes the suffering expostulator as a pattern for the *Devotions* overall. Job is an Old Testament type of the ultimate anti-type, Christ,[23] while Donne intervenes as "semi-recapitulative".[24] Barbara Lewalski attests this Protestant tendency to regard the "contemporary Christian and the events of his life as correlative types with

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[21]See Paul Harland, "Dramatic Technique And Personae in Donne's Sermons", *ELH* 53 (3-4) (1986) 709-26.

[22]Reinhard Friederich notes offhand the frequency with which *Job* is cited in the *Devotions* ("Expanding and Contracting Space in Donne's *Devotions*", *ELH* 45 (1978) 18-33, 31 fn. 5). In another article on "Strategies of Persuasion in Donne's *Devotions*", he notes that "the biblical work whose method comes closest to such a search for the right kind of fear probably is *Job* ... Success comes after a complete commitment to the question, and not within a logical or emotional system for getting answers" (*Ariel* 9(1) (1978) 51-70, 57-8).

[23] Though this was not a common precept — it does not appear, for example, in Thomas Taylor's *Christ Revealed*, a fairly comprehensive summary of types of Christ — Donne in III.3 asserts there to be an "unanime acknowledgement (at least, tacitely)" that *Job* is a justifiable prefiguration of the New Testament (99.320ff).

[24]Galdon, *Typology*, 94.

Old Testament personages and events, both exemplars existing on essentially the same spiritual plane and alike looking for fulfillment at the end of time".[25]

A particular feature of *Job* is the insistence on speaking: "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth: I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (*Job* 7.11). Donne finishes by evoking the voice that shall rouse him from death: "Though I be dead, I shall heare the voice; the sounding of the voice, and the working of the voice shall be all one" (13.22-4). Actually (though Donne be dead), it is the reader who hears Donne's voice in the following Prayer; as we read on past the Expostulation, we are guided through the resurrection Donne there invokes, and the speaking text fulfils its holy purpose of salvation at the brink of silence - "Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands / Thy words have upholden him that was falling" (*Job* 4.3-4).[26] Or as Donne puts it, "Thy breath in the *Congregation*, thy *Word* in the *Church*, breathes *communion*, and *consolation* here, and *consummation* heereafter" (13.6-8). Just as Job insists on speaking, Donne persists in writing energetically, fighting against the failure of his words, despite looking forward to death and the Word which logically require their failure. The voice of God eventually silences Job ("Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further" [40.5]), but Donne, though he imagines God's voice at the Resurrection, cannot hear him yet. Like Job, he has spoken twice[27] - this is the second segment of the second Devotion - but must proceed to the argumentatively superfluous Prayer.

Having said this, the Prayer remains structurally important in its imaging of the last Resurrection, to complete the formal typological parallel with Devotion 1's tripartite structure of anticipation. Where the Expostulation looks back to Job, the Prayer applies

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[25]*Donne's* Anniversaries *and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode* (Princeton: U.P.,1973), 160, fn. 39; see also Lewalski, "Typological Symbolism and The 'Progress of the Soul' in Seventeenth-Century Literature", in *Literary Uses of Typology from the Late Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: U.P., 1977), 79-114.

[26]The use of *Job* in *ars moriendi* manuals is exemplified by Thomas Becon's popular *Sicke Man's Salve* (1561), with its dramatic Job-like dialogue and comforters (Beaty, *The Craft of Dying*, 113).

[27]And compare Job's absent-minded, self-correcting style - "Once ... yea, twice" - with Donne's.

ahead to Christ (14.22-4). However, it concludes with Donne's increasingly desperate, because unfulfilled, demands, "Interpret ... call ... transferre my sinnes ... appeare unto me ... *Doe* this, *O Lord*" (14.14-22). Lacking God's appearance at the end of *Job*, Donne is left, still doubting, still unrelieved in his complaint, still calling aloud for relief.

The third Devotion, strictly speaking, completes the first birth of the narrative. If the second Devotion establishes Job as a pattern for Donne, the third erects David — Donne locates himself between the righteous expostulator (Job / John) and the penitent psalmist (David / Donne). Donne's predilection for tracing the typological movement from David to the Christian to Christ in his more meditative sermons has already been examined by Walter Davis,[28] and I would argue that this movement also appears in the *Devotions*, determinatively in Devotion 3.[29]

Initially, the headnote suggests a narrowing of sphere ("*The Patient takes his bed*") - a condign punishment for illicit lust (David and Bathsheba, Donne and his mistresses). Donne's praise, however, for man's "erect, ... upright form" (15.1), and sympathy for him who "must practise ... lying in the *grave*, by lying still, and not practise ... *Resurrection*, by rising any more" (16.3-4), is couched in terms that suggest a disjunction, not between horizontal sexual activity and moral-physical uprightness, but between the horizontality of impotence ("lying still") and the verticality of male sexual arousal - "rising", a practice for "*Resurrection*" ("Wee dye and rise the same, and prove/ Mysterious by this love").[30]

Although we remain in the infancy of the disease - "Is there a verier child than I am now?" (16.9-10) - Donne's "sucking ... creeping childe" lacks innocence (16.11-12). Instead the discussion moves from childhood to adultery in its focus on the bed of sin, about which Donne, like the "Sunne Rising", revolves continually: "Whither shall I come

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28 "Meditation, Typology and the Structure of Donne's Sermons", in *The Eagle and the Dove*, edd. Summers and Pebworth, 177ff.

29 See Janel Mueller on the stylistic influence of the Seven Penitential Psalms on the work ("The Exegesis of Experience: Dean Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*", *JEGP* 67 (1968) 1-19), 2, 8ff); also Bettie Anne Doebler, "Donne's Debt to the Great Tradition: Old and New in his Treatment of Death", *Anglia* 85 (1967) 15-33, 19.

30 "The Canonization", ll. 26-7.

to thee? To this bed? ... shall I find thee in bed? Oh, have I alwaies done so?" (16.13-15). With this last question, Donne intimates that God may indeed be "in bed", in which case earthly love is a type of divine love and geocentricity, theocentricity. Sexual activity becomes a means of discovering God, so that, although Donne castigates himself for past carnality - " Is not this to hang a man at his owne dore, to lay him sicke in his owne bed of wantonnesse?" (16.18-19) - there is an indication that through sin comes salvation. If "the bed is not *ordinarily* thy *Scene*, thy *Climate*" (16.15-16), the adverb asserts the exception; the description, "thy *Scene*, thy *Climate*", recreates the bed as a world, recalling the celebratory "The world's contracted thus ... / This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere" ("The Sunne Rising", ll. 26-30). David's penitence is invoked and imitated (16.21-3), but where he builds a House for God, Donne dedicates this construction of the bed.

Through David's penitence, Donne now moves to identify with Christ: "thou carriest me thine own private way, the way by which thou carryedst thy *Sonne*" (17.20-1). The cyclical progress of Christ, who "first lay upon the *earth* ... and then had his *Exaltation*, as himselfe calls his *Crucifying*, and first *descended into hell*, and then had his *Ascension*" (17.22-4), becomes the repeated Baroque movement of the *Devotions* — Donne is laid flat in bed, exalted, brought down and raised again.

Such 'rising' is the cue for Donne's familiar divine eroticism, as he shifts his flesh-anchored view from the horizontal plane of the Meditation and David to Christ, from empathy with man's impotence to a full and excited desiring of omnipotent God:

> make me [Christ's] *Deacon*, to minister to him in a chereful surrender of my body, & soule to thy pleasure, by his hands. I come unto thee, *O God, my God*, I come unto thee, (so as I can come, I come to thee, by imbracing thy comming to me) ... That which way soever I turne, I may turne to thee; And as I feele thy hand upon all my body, so I may ... see all my ... *refreshings* to flow from one, and the same, and all, from thy hand (18.14-23)

This is surely the language of masturbation, as Donne works himself up to a pitch of arousal. The repetition of "I come unto thee" attains climactic intensity, finding release in the end-flow of a final, melting period.

Donne's prayer ends in post-coital exhaustion. God has "burnt up that bed, by these vehement heates" — inflamed with desire[32] — and "washed that bed in these abundant sweats" (18.31-2) — allowed Donne the image of that desire's consummation. All that remains is eternal rest, the peace of detumescence: "thou hast made these *feathers, thornes* ... so, *Lord,* make these *thornes, feathers* againe, *feathers* of thy *Dove,* in the peace of Conscience" (18.23-5). Now "discharged from further *anxietie*" (19.6), he wants only to "*be still*" (19.2, cf. 16.3). Fittingly, he closes by fusing with God in a syntactical ambiguity (19.7-10).

These first three Devotions therefore orientate the reader by self-consciously introducing the work's method and parameters. Devotion 1 draws attention to the nature of introduction or beginning, while Devotions 2 and 3 orientate the writer between the two types he is to follow and their common anti-type, Christ. This, in other words, fulfils the first birth (or birth of births) of the rhetorical text. As man is first born naturally into original sin, so here "*This* Childe ... *this* Booke" (3.11) is first born, imperfect and disease-ridden, *from* Donne and also *with* Donne, since its creation creates him ("a verier child") as both writer and patient, subject and object. Registration of these first births also implies the first birth of the reader.

Narratively and structurally too, this section functions as an initial unit. Narratively, it marks the onset of illness before the physician officially validates the occasion, and so forms a prologue to the disease. Structurally, all three Meditations conclude distinctively with an apostrophe of man's misery. The division also provides a

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32 Cf. the medieval use of fire in the bed as a figure for lecherous desire (D.W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, Princeton: U.P., 1963, 450); see also II.17.340.175-6. Later, as here, however, Donne allowed this figure a virtuous religious analogy: "every flaming is not a burning" (III.11.244.101-34: 106).

pleasing symmetry, with the three births into Meditation, Expostulation and Prayer paralleling the births into Devotions 1, 2 and 3. Finally, Devotion 4 serves very largely as a summary or 'afterbirth', prepatory to launching into more general matters.[33]

Devotion 4

Briefly, this fourth Devotion recapitulates themes already raised. Like animals that makes themselves sick to be well, Donne treats himself through "A strange kind of *vomit*", a regurgitation of previous images (20.26-7). The Meditation's expansion of man as a "*little World*" (19.14, quoting 1M: 7.32) is followed by contraction to "a close prison" (20.5), and the puncturing realization of dependence: "we shrinke in our proportion, sink in our dignitie, in respect of verie meane creatures, who are *Phisicians* to themselves" (20.23-5). Having started by 'inlarging' his Meditation (19.28), Donne ends by seeking to "bring it downe" (21.1), and the movement from swollen self-assertion to shrivelled humility (man "shrinkes himselfe ... to a handfull of dust" [21.2-3]) both reflects the general nature of the disease[34] and recalls the sexual pattern of Devotion 3.[35] Indeed, Donne adds a summary to his 'main' text, after the order to "Call back therefore thy Meditations again" (20.35-21.1) — the irony being that of course he hasn't, and cannot, without the following summary becoming the main text. It is not simply content that matters; the juxtaposition of the larger discussion with its abbreviated version forms a structural parallel to the expanding - contracting movement of the language, while mirroring Devotion 4's recapitulation of Devotions 1-3.

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[33]Basing her structure on the Latin narration of the *Stationes*, Mary Arshagouni also makes Devotions 1-4 her first episode in that "framework of occasions", since its headtitles form the first single sentence, in "a parallel series" ("The Latin 'Stationes' in John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*", *MP* 89 (1991) 196-210, 207).

[34] See Friederich's analysis of the *Devotions'* imagery: "contraction and expansion both become nightmares of pressure and heat as the fever is pulsating through a tense and exhausted body" ("Expanding and Contracting Space", 18-22: 20).

[35] Also the nature of language itself, which Donne views as the interaction of logic ("a *hand* contracted into a *fist*") and rhetoric ("a *hand* enlarged, and expanded") (20M: 105.26-7).

The fourth Expostulation now recalls Devotion 2 ("I have not the *righteousness* of *Job*, but I have the desire of *Job, I would speake to the Almighty, and I would reason with God*" [21.9-10]); Devotion 1, in a debate on God's possible anticipation of original sin "even from the beginning" (21.14-21); and Devotion 3 ("I pray, and pray thy servaunt *Davids* prayer" [22.14-15]). A discussion of method concludes (22.9ff).

I have postulated these opening Devotions as collectively the first of Donne's "*three* Births": "*One*, Naturall, *when I came into the* World", the involuntary act dealing with the universal "*Humane Condition*" of natality. In both subject matter and position, Devotion 1 marks more precisely this sense of a beginning, as the first birth of the first birth; Meditation 1, the first birth of the first birth of the first birth, approaches it more nearly still. Even so, this segment, in which much of the discussion of beginnings is concentrated, seems strangely irresolute. There are repeated attempts at beginning midway through the text, but when we trace our way back through them to its actual opening, we find ourselves still *in medias res* - "a convention that burdens the beginning with the pretense that it is not one", to use Edward Said's definition.[36] Propelled further back still, we find the Table of *Stationes*; beyond, the *Epistle Dedicatorie*; beyond that, the title-page; and beyond that, blank loose papers or possibly, if the work was bound with others, another work by another author. Finally, nothing.[37] Despite the text's obsessions - and as Rosalie Colie remarks, "all literature is in part the record of man's ideas about the beginning of things"[38] - absolute beginning eludes observation. In Foucault's words,

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36 *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1978), 43 (cf. the extracted texts Donne often chose for his sermons: Chapter 4, pp. 191-2). The finer distinctions Nuttall draws between natural and formal openings (see fn. 11 above) ultimately are not important for Donne; his order of a "fugitive, *shyer* beginning()" raised artificially to prominence, followed by a "culturally prominent, publicly baptized beginning()" seems merely designed to call attention to the repetition (*Openings*, 211-12).

37 Compare what Nuttall calls 'Virgil's technique of over spilling significance, which permits the curious syntactic joinery" between ostensible opening and possible prefatory matter in the *Aeneid* (*Openings*, 22).

38 *Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton: U.P., 1966), 61.

> C'est toujours sur un fond de déjà commencé que l'homme peut penser ce qui vaut pour lui comme l'origine. Celle-ci n'est donc pas du tout pour lui le commencement, - une sorte de premier matin de l'histoire à partir duquel se seraient entassées les acquisitions ultérieures. L'origine, c'est beaucoup plus tôt la manière dont l'homme en général, dont tout homme quel qu'il soit, s'articule sur la déjà commencé du travail, de la vie et du langage. [39]

Thus we have Donne's familiar *series* of beginnings or rebeginnings, all of which remain relative. The preambles to the text read as repeated attempts at beginning - title-page, *Epistle* and Table lead eventually to the opening of the Meditation which is no opening; sending us on to other attempts at beginning, which send us on to still further beginnings in the Expostulation, Prayer and "new" Devotion(s) ahead. "DEVOTIONS/ 1." is succeeded by "1. MEDITATION", "1. EXPOSTULATION" and "1. PRAYER".

Meditation 1 deals, furthermore, with the problematical nature of anticipation, explicitly comparing it to the conception that precedes birth (7.29-31). As Chapter 1 showed, the notion of conception persistently undermines for Donne any idea of birth as beginning.[40] Just as, in the sermons, man's search for his origin only results in assimilation with God's eternal pre-conception of him, so here the disease merges with the idea or anticipation of it in the patient's mind. In neither case is a conclusive beginning possible.

One explanation for this, I suggested in Chapter 1, is the Renaissance view of the artist as imitative Creator. In IV.2, Donne noted that "Poetry ... makes things that are not, as though they were" (87.902-3); but as he declares here in Expostulation 2, so also "*God calls things that are not, as though they were*" (12.22-3). This leads initially in Meditation 4 to an identification of the artist as God, absolute "*Creator*" of thoughts that "reach all, comprehend all": "any one of my *Creatures*, my *thoughts*, is with the *Sunne*,

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[39] *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Gallimard, 1966), 341. Translated: "it is always against a background of the already-begun that man is able to reflect on what may serve for him as an origin. It is not therefore the beginning for him - a sort of first morning of history from which his ulterior acquisitions would have accumulated. The origin is rather more the way in which man in general, any man, articulates himself on the already-begun of labour, life and language".

[40] See pp. 9-12.

and beyond the *Sunne*, overtakes the *Sunne*, and overgoes the *Sunne*" (20.3-6). The overweening vision is punctured, however, by a recollection of helplessness, and Donne concludes, "We *have* the Phisician, but we *are not* the Phisician" (20.22-3). His thoughts are God-given, his creations only emulations of an earlier creative act.[41] The many beginnings are none. Donne's framing of the *Devotions*' first birth enacts this paradox of making as remaking, since he depicts not simply a representation of creation but representations of recreations: an imitation of imitations that becomes infinitely regressive.[42] Devotion 1 rewrites *Genesis*; Devotion 2, *Job*; and Devotion 3, David's *Psalms*, in the tradition of heuristic imitation outlined by Thomas Greene:

> Out of the indefinite number of texts stretching behind it in endless regression, the humanist poem singles out one text as its putative genesis and it defines itself through its rewriting ... It sketches an incipient myth of origins but refuses to posit a "great Original" which has to be remembered liturgically ... The poem becomes a kind of *rite de passage* between a specified past and an emergent present[43]

(that is, semi-recapitulative).

Yet paradoxically, as Greene argues, such conscious dependence on the past results in conditional independence: "By perpetuating the past, by reproducing (it) ritualistically ... we are actually exposing its pastness, pointing to its anachronism, putting it from us". Through a self-conscious act of memory, remaking becomes making, and imitation merges into creativity, "that grey area of contradiction".[44] The concept of

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[41]See Chapter 1, p. 7.

[42]Anthony Bellette argues that this paradox is explicitly stated in the *Anniversaries* , which also depend on presenting poetic creation as an imitation of the original creative act ("Art and Imitation in Donne's *Anniversaries*", *SEL* 15 (1975) 83-96). As Bellette's argument implies, here too the exemplary human activity is to perpetuate the chain of testament. The original act is imitated by Elizabeth Drury's soul, which represents the Idea of the Word; this is imitated by the poem, which rewrites the idea of Elizabeth Drury in its own words; and the poem as didactic piece then requires imitation by the reader, who subsequently becomes an exemplar to others.

[43]*The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1982), 41. Alternatively, in G.W. Pigman's "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance", Donne's rewritings conform to the category of "emulation or eristic imitation", whose correction stems from the writer's awareness of the historical difference between present and past (*RQ* 33 (1980) 1-32, 32).

[44] *The Light in Troy,* 195. See Chapter 3, pp. 133ff.

a 'renaissance' yields to Greene's "historical solitude"; the search for an origin, as Greene's own 'follower', David Quint remarks, blends into originality.

It might be argued that the creative anxiety surrounding the location of a "great Original"[45] did not extend to religious works which clearly reinscribed the prior Word of the Bible. Quint specifies, for instance, that originality only arises where "the claim to historical priority is vitiated", where for the work in question no other work could be considered "absolutely prior, originating outside of history" (4). Some might call the Bible precisely such a source - the prestigious, absolute Origin of revealed truth that stamps its explicators as recensions. It could also be argued, however, that as a translation of a transcription, the Bible partakes of Quint's classical, humanist canon in its dependence on history. Donne's practice of paraphrasing freely and deploring mistranslations hardly indicates an unshakeable reverence for the *letter* of the Bible.[46] Rather he alludes in the *Essays* to the possibility that Moses may not be our earliest author, and *Genesis* not absolutely prior: "Moses ... Who, because he was principal Secretary to the Holy Ghost, (I dispute not other dignities, but onely priority in time) is very credible, though he be his owne Historiographer" (11.27-31). Though he decides in favour of Moses's effective primacy, the case is stated in historical terms. In the *Devotions*, furthermore, the wide discrepancy between English and Latin headnotes highlights the unreliability of translation. If Christianity has been particularly dependent on translation "from the beginning",[47] Donne shows that it has also been dependent on translation with *regard* to the beginning; the opening of *Genesis* is in many ways as indeterminate as that of the *Devotions*, since linguistically it lies at several removes from the origin it tries to image.

But without an implied, authorized Origin, without the acknowledged priority of God, we are left with neither time sequence nor ordered syntax. Chaos and Milton's

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[45]See Quint on Renaissance preoccupation with the Source topos: *Origins and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 1983), ix.

[46] See Mueller, "The Exegesis of Experience", 3.

[47]Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (London: Ark, 1983), 3-4.

Satan reign.[48] Donne's solution to this situation resembles Milton's (as seen by Quint), up to a point. Like Milton, he desacralizes his source so far as to "assert the human secondariness of the literary tradition which precedes (him)... and ... separate it from a divine origin" (216). In other words, he dissociates the spirit of the Bible from the imperfections of its letter. But he does not, like Milton, aspire to replacing the errant tradition with his own restored, original, sacred narrative. The latter, for Donne, was a contradiction in terms; narrative was inherently secondary. Instead, the *Devotions* reflects, compounds and *multiplies* the secondariness of the tradition, making a virtue of necessity. Although rewriting extends the search for an Origin, Giordano Bruno provides this solution: that "True understanding of the divine derives from the allegorical act itself, the poem that points beyond its own letter in an act of signification which can never be completed" (146-7). In a similar way, Donne's prophetic, ever-anticipatory text re-enacts Rabelais's "ongoing spiritual quest" to reconcile the posited, authorized Origin with his own individuality; asserting that the Holy Spirit within each interpreter internalizes access to the Source, Rabelais presents his literary creation as prophetic interpretation, so justifying the individuality of his style (204). Natural origin and artificial opening are combined; by making of making a remaking, Rabelais and Donne both make of remaking a making.

This is not to undermine Donne's continued fascination with the theoretical, absolute origin, and what underlies it. The second part of Chapter 1 explored his drive toward beginning as primarily a symptom of his attraction to the nothingness beyond. Transparently here in the *Devotions*, we see Donne "strive too/ To bring (himself) to nothing back" (*The first Anniversary*, ll. 156-7). The prevailing subject is bodily "*destruction*" and "discomposition": "a Cannon batters all, overthrowes all, demolishes all; a *Sicknes* ... summons us, seizes us, possesses us, destroyes us" (1M: 8.11, 8.13, 7.11-15). Solid flesh is melted, scattered, poured out like water or smelted brass (2E: 12.25; 2M: 11.9ff), vomited (4M: 20.26-7) and discharged (3P: 19.5-6). Through repeated

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[48] Quint, *Origins and Originality*, 208-11; further references in the text.

images of dissolution, Donne evokes the body "*as not being*" - "I, who am as though I were not" (4E: 22.25-6; 2E: 12.23).

Annihilation is also progressive through Devotions 1-4. As Meditation 2 traces a fever that "doth not only *melt* him, but *Calcine* him, reduce him to *Atomes*, and to *ashes;* not to *water*, but to *lime*" (11.14-15), so Meditations upon the 'clogging' earthly body refine themselves into Expostulations on the soul (3E: 17.29), and the Devotions contract to the "prison" of a bed (3M: 15.15-19). The contrary, infinite inflation of man in Meditation 4 reveals itself as dangerous and pointless (Traherne's 'endless dilatation'), and the subsequent shrinking to a "handfull of dust" substitutes a typical image of contained infinity (4M: 21.3).[49] Again, Donne describes this approach to nothingness as the approach to God, who causes the "*dissolution*" (2E: 13.8ff): "dissolution ... toward thee", "apprehension of thee" (2P: 14.2-5). Again, too, the robustness of his approach betrays a conflicting passion for life.[50]

The quest for a beginning in Devotions 1-4 therefore appears alongside an obsession with annihilation. The patient's gradual bodily disintegration is reflected in the text's desire to return through birth to nothingness, merging the "looke forward ... and ... backward to" (1P: 10.2-3); but the impossibility of reaching the goal is endlessly reiterated in the process of imitative (re-)creation.

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[49] See Chapter 1, p. 25ff.

[50] Chapter 1, sections C-D.

Devotions 5-8: The Art of Politics

He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence ...

In *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham lists "*Genethliaca*" or "songs natall" as being particularly useful for "the nativities of Princes children".[51] If the *Devotions* is Donne's version of *genethliaca* and Devotions 1-4 mark the "Naturall" birth of the autobiographical text ("*when I came into the* World"), then Devotions 5-8, the second song in the sequence, signal the writer's birth into the public realm. These Devotions form a natural group, dealing with the arrival of "the Phisician" and official verification of the disease.[52] The patient encounters authority in increasing measure, from one physician to several; finally in Devotion 8, the King's own Physician appears. At this point, Donne specifically recalls the "second Birth" of the *Epistle* when, under the guidance of the King, he "*entred into the* Ministery". From it he emerged the 'Prince's child', not only 'led' to but 'sustained' by a "Royall Father" in a way of life that was essentially political; the "Ministery" linked God's Kingdom with man's, and provided the means whereby an individual practised religion, not for his own salvation merely, but to serve the State and others. These Devotions, then, allow Donne to explore the nature of secular authority, and its role in the journey towards health.

Devotions 5, 6, 7

As the headnotes to Devotion 5 indicate, the patient here enters simultaneously the official theatre of illness, represented by the arrival of "The Phisician", and its accompanying world of solitude ("*Solus adest*"). Solitariness supplies the Devotion's

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[51] Ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: U.P., 1936), 46.

[52] As Arshagouni observes, their Latin headnotes are also grammatically linked, with Devotion 8's "*et*" completing the period ("The Latin 'Stationes'", 207).

topic, translating the sickness into "an *excuse* ... an *inhibition* ... an *Outlawry*, an *Excommunication*" (25.8-12). The confusion of prefixes (*ex-*, *in-*, *Out-*, *Ex-*) conveys the patient's sense of dislocation; barred within his sickroom, he is also thrust outside the law that denominates society.

In the Expostulation, Donne backs up his distressed solitary self with other, Biblical exemplars of loneliness, creating an assembly of solitary complainants (27.20ff). Sudden panic - "But comes not this *Expostulation* too neere a *murmuring*?" (27.28-9) - leads to a compromise, from the Biblical "two are better than one" to 'two is one': Physician and "faithfull *friend*" come "both in one person" (28.7-8). But we remain one short of the Trinity in this second birth, and Donne's generally unsatisfactory conclusion here reflects his seesawing currents and singular logic.

In the Prayer, Donne returns to "the assurance which my selfe <u>& others</u> have had" (28.24). A potentially isolated and doubtful future is reassured by recognition of a shared past. Yet this is still only an invocation of others. There continues a withholding, a refusal of the responsibility involved in participating in society, and a fearful attempt at self-closure lest visitors bring not true, but Catholic comfort: "Open none of my *dores*, not of my *hart*, not of mine *eares*, not of my *house* ..." (28.26-7). For it is not until the end of the Prayer that patient and physician actually meet. Up till this point, the entire Devotion has been occupied, not by the vacuity of Devotion 1, but "so neere a degree towards *Vacuitie*, as *Solitude*" (25.4-5). *"Medicusque vocatur"* in Devotion 4, but "The Phisician comes" in Devotion 5 only at its close. Hitherto conspicuous by his absence, he only now becomes demonstrable ("this Man" [29.2]), and the comforting symmetry of "I come to him in thy name, who, in thy name comes to me" enacts, in the approach of the two ends of the sentence towards each other, the convergence at last of the two bodies (29.3-4). In a sense, the very absence of the Physician has given rise to the Devotion since it provoked anxious introspection; by anticipating the end of solitude, Devotion 5's headnote creates a space for the exploration of present absence. Practically, of course, the arrival of company in turn heralds the end of the Devotion.

Present listener replaces projected reader.[53] But the concern of the Devotion has also temporarily been answered, and it can close naturally - though the silence of reader's respite and patient's solace is short-lived.

With his visitor's departure, Donne relapses into fearful textuality. The situation has in fact worsened, since Donne's worry has been externalized, his fear confirmed in the objective view of the physician. The wry humour of Devotion 6's opening, "I observe the *Phisician*, with the same diligence, as hee the *disease*" (29.12), derives from this objectification, in which the observed disease has assumed an identity separate from the observing "I". The mutual gaze has been replaced by a circle of unequal regard - a circle that becomes symbolic of Donne's futile attempts to escape his situation.

For, though in the context of disease the physician is the ultimate authority figure, and of all visitors should orientate the lonely patient towards the outside world, the very *fact* of his pre-eminence fails to inspire comfort. Donne's position has deteriorated because his source of authority is a repository of knowledge, but not trust. Having confirmed the grounds for fear, the physician appears helpless before that which his identification has formally created. Thus company can be inimical to comfort, and the circle of regard, vicious. Shunned by others for fear of contagion, Donne catches from them the contagion of fear: "I see hee *feares*, and I feare with him: I overtake him, I overrun him in his feare, and I go the faster, because he makes his pace slow" (29.12-13).

Fear is unequivocally the key to this Devotion ("*Metuit*"/ "The Phisician is afraid"). Able to "disorder the effect, and working", not only of the physician's practice but of Donne's own language, it manages to "insinuat itself in every *action* or *passion* of the *mind*" (29.18-21), generating a chaotic series of thoughts and images.[54] The

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[53] Joan Webber associates this new form of conscious self-presentation with Donne: *The Eloquent 'I': Style and Self in Seventeenth Century Prose* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1968), ch.1. The stylistic implications of an absent reader do not apply to the spoken sermons, designed for that very present listener who obviates the need for the *Devotions* (as the *Devotions* obviate the need for companionship). It is the latter as text that, "as a presence ... occupies a place actively" (Edward Said, *Beginnings*, 197).

[54] See Sharon Cadman Seelig's analysis of this opening passage ("In Sickness and Health: Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*", *JDJ* 8 (1989) 103-13, 105) .

confusion of the battlefield is vividly evoked - "the sound of *Drummes*, and *Trumpets*, and *Shot*, and those, which they seeke to drowne, the last cries of men" (29.29-31) - and Donne's prose recreates this desperate cacophony. Amidst it all, Donne finds himself sinking deeper and deeper through successive layers of uncertainty, unable to gain a foothold on fact: "I know not, what fear is, nor I know not what it is that I fear now" (30.2-3). As in Devotions 1-4 where he continually failed to arrive at beginning, so the uncertainty into which fear thrusts him now leaves him even more generally without reference points. A series of balanced oppositions that attempt to define fear by relation cannot contain Donne's sliding, self-qualifying, licentious prose - "every declination is not a running away, every debating is not a resolving, every wish, that it were not thus, is not a murmuring, nor a dejection, <u>though it bee thus</u>" (30.3ff: 10-12). Fear not only fuels this anxious debate, but justifies itself within and through it, making the absence of fixed perimeters precisely its centre ("every debating is not a resolving").

It is no coincidence then that Expostulation 6 is one of the longest segments in the *Devotions*, with 117 lines. The fear that has, as catalyst, implicitly underlain all discourse preceding, surfaces in this Devotion as explicit topic. As the physical disease has been objectified in the gaze of the physician, so the spiritual disease is verbally projected here before the reader. The result is a discussion that constantly regenerates itself through short, sharp questions, speculations and hurried corrections ("can I ...? ... Dare I ...? no men? No. Whom? ... *Great enemies*? not *great enemies* ... Why ...? ... may we not ...?... Never? ... may they not ...? *Wherfore* ...?... No?" [31.12-30]). Yet again, attempts to identify a source find as little ending as beginning, and it is in the inability to rest that apparent certainty betrays itself.

By Devotion 7, the topic is no longer so clearly defined. The first sentence suggests a continuation of Devotion 6's topic ("There is more *feare*"), but the new reference to "others"/ "*socios*" in the headnotes leads to a discussion on plurality reminiscent of Devotion 5. The parameters that distinguish Devotions from one another as well as providing them with internal coherence are blurring at the edges, an

encroaching dissolution reflected in the short, worried periods, irrational connections ("There is *more feare*, therefore *more cause"*), and sudden swings of mood in the opening lines: "There is a grouth of the *Disease*, then; But there must bee an *Autumne* to; but whether an *Autumne* of the *disease* or *mee*, it is not my part to choose; but if it bee of *me*, it is of *both*" (35.4-7).

Admittedly, trappings of logic resurface ("Howsoever ... if ... And if ... not"), and legal metaphor summons a sense of order (35.8-11). But the search for a stable focus dissipates itself as Donne passes distractedly from one possible authority to another. He cites in turn the Monarch, God and the Romans - secular, religious and classical authorities - but fails to construct an argument in the process, emerging without a satisfactorily logical and externally based conclusion.[55] That is, he asserts first that the monarch loses no dignity through delegation. Secondly - apparently as an elaboration - that "*God* hath not made many *suns*, but he hath made many *bodies*, that *receive*, and *give* light" (35.14-16). This is presumably to equate monarch and sun, but the hierarchical relationship between the "sun" and "bodies" is unclear; if anything, the latter appear more powerful in their ability to both give and receive, and furthermore, God as ultimate authority is clearly depicted as Maker, not Delegater. Thirdly, Donne notes that the Romans changed from one, to two, to one ruler "in extremities"; which has no relevance to delegation but leads him to the assertion that, "whether in one, or many, the *soveraigntie* is the same" (35.17-18). This not only undermines the concept of monarchical power, but effectively renders the term meaningless. Having raised the many to equivalence with the one, Donne then unconvincingly (and self-contradictorily) tips the balance still further: "the danger is not the more, and the providence is the more where there are more *Phisicians*" (35.18-20).

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55 So Joan Webber: "Grammar appears to give thought formal status independent of writer or hearer"; without it, "the clauses, which must have something to relate to, seem to conform themselves to the movement of the perceiving mind, or to the movement of the mind producing them. Thus this style is shaped to emphasize interior rather than exterior meaning, and blurs the esthetic threshold" (*Contrary Music: The Prose Style of John Donne*, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1963, 41). Donne's failure to formulate his thoughts 'grammatically' here is symptomatic of his loss of objectivity.

Fragmentation characterizes this oligarchical state, which is "the happier, where businesses are carried by more counsels, then can be in one breast, how large soever" (35.20-1). Yet multiplicity carries with it a risk of conspiracies and counterplots (35.21-4). Donne attempts to reimpose logic and law (36.6-8), and regain a sense of orderly structure by returning to his headnote (36.15ff) but eventually closes up the Meditation by turning imaginatively outwards:

> How many are sicker (perchance) then I, and laid on their wofull straw at home ... How many are sicker (perchance) then I, and thrown into *Hospitalls*, where ... How many are sicker (perchaunce) then all we, and have not this *Hospitall* to cover them, not this straw, to lie in, to die in, but have their *Grave-stone* under them, and breathe out their soules in the eares, and in the eies of passengers, harder then their bed, the flint of the street? (36.26-37.6)

The music and rhythm of this passage order Donne's thoughts as logic could not.[56] Further, its comparative construction allows him to reorientate himself with regard to external reference points; it is less a depiction of the poor as subject, than a painting of borders that reconcentrates the artist's increasingly diffused consciousness.

We must await, therefore, the third birth of Devotions 16-19 for a genuine identification with others. Expostulation 7 refers us only as far as Christ's "second birth" (appropriately its own status within the Devotion) (38.17). It now resumes the Meditation's earlier anxiety with regard to authorities, finding the Bible itself resistant to interpretation: "I see the *Grammar*, the word signifies so, and is so ever accepted ... but I see not the *Logique*, nor the *Rhetorique*" (37.21-33). Ideally, the passage from "*signe*" to "*thing signified*", word to meaning (39.13-16), should be smooth. Yet as the sermons concluded, no sense can be made of such Biblical narratives in objective terms; they refuse context, communicate no clear truth.[57]

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[56] A wealth of rhetorical devices produce this effect, including *repetitio* ("How much sicker"), rhyme ("to lie in, to die in"), alliteration ("the flint of the street"), *adjunctio* (37.7-9), *interrogatio* (three structuring questions), *expositio* (37.6-9, 36.26-34), conceits (street as gravestone) and simile (36.35).

[57] See Chapter 2, pp. 60-4.

In desperation, Donne prays for absolute divine authority - not polysemous Manna, "bread so condition'd, qualified so, as that, to every man, *Manna tasted like that, which that man liked best"*, but "*daily bread*, to tast so to me, not as I would, but as thou wouldest have it taste". That is, God is to "conform my tast, and make it agreeable to thy will" (39.24-9). In the absence of such direction, Donne remains caught between two "*signification(s)*":

> which of these is the *Originall*, and which is the *Translation*, whether thy *Mercy* or thy *Correction*, were thy primary, and original intention in this sicknes, I cannot conclude (40.16-20).

Like the Romans "in extremities", Donne veers from "*one* ... to two ... to *one*" (1 "2" 2 "2" 1) (35.16-17) - unable to nominate any particular starting point in this circular structure above another, unable still to find an objectively-determined signification in the events of his illness that will locate him firmly in a logical context.

Devotion 8

In Devotion 8, a higher authority yet arrives: "The King sends his owne Phisician" (40.24-5). With this royal representative comes a more rarified atmosphere; the Expostulation and Prayer particularly convey an air of deliberate fashioning. Donne expresses himself, for instance, in formal terms: "I offer to speak of *Kings*" (42.12). Acknowledging that "Royal Instrument(s)" may deface God in their person, if not their power - and for once the argument is clear, objective logic is resurfacing - he concludes, gracefully and not without a sense of his own privileged vocation, that James is nonetheless a worthy "*Vicegerent*" of God: "And I give unto thee, that which is *thine*" (42.30-1). He then proceeds, still formally, to thank God for this King (42.31ff), specifically drawing attention to the artifice with which he does so: "But let me stop, *my God*, and consider; will not this look like a piece of art, & cunning ... a shew of *humilitie*, and *thankefulnesse* (that) I magnifie my selfe more then there is cause?" (43.1-5).

The removal from occasional (spontaneous) to general (measured) continues with what is, for Donne, a rare example of autobiographical detail, reaching past the present moment of illness. Though citing at length examples of soveraigns who have personally tended the sick (43.10-33), Donne touches only briefly on his present "assisting to ... bodily health" by the King's physician (43.34). This immediate reason for gratitude is subordinated to the Devotion's real *raison d'etre*, as "but the twi-light of that day, wherein thou, thorow him, hast shind upon mee before; but the *Eccho* of that voice whereby thou, through him, hast spoke to mee before" (43.35-44.3).[58] On "that day", the King cured Donne of a "vertiginous giddines, and irresolution" by proposing him for the Church: "when I asked a temporall *office*, hee denied not, refused not that, but let me see, that hee had rather I took this" (44.8-14). The very recollection of this cure serves to correct the same giddiness and irresolution that have characterized Devotions 5-7. While the King proves "not only to send *Phisicians* for temporall, but to bee the *Phisician* for *spiritual* health" (44.17-18), he also in Devotion 8 restores textual health, replacing the narrative in an historical context.

With its formal, elaborate style and self-consciously artificial construction, therefore, this Devotion invokes a different world and a different perspective, embodying the writer's rather than patient's public gratitude for his appointment in life. The direct occasion may be the arrival during illness of the King's physician, but its source - the originating occasion and, by implication, its current remembrancer - lies outside the timescale of the work. We are thus born into the larger world outside the *Devotions*, as Donne recreates a second time his "second Birth" "into the Ministery", through the account of Devotion 8. As the Expostulation emphasizes, however God's "first *image*" is defaced by sin, his "second *Image*" is "imprinted indelibly" (42.18-20).

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58 The other end of the perspective from "A Hymn to God the Father", ll. 15-16; "sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne/ Shall shine as he shines now". Here at the end of the day, the sun indeed shines now as he shone then. As this later assistance of the king's echoes that earlier, so also the image here may be a twilit memory of its use in the earlier poem, with lingering emotional resonance.

The Expostulation's elevated tone continues in the long, elaborate opening of the Prayer. A brief inter-clausal analysis reveals the care with which it has been constructed:

O eternal and most gracious *God*
<who
<though thou have reserved thy tresure of perfit joy, and perfit glory,
[to be given by thine own hands then,
<when
<by seeing thee
as thou art in thy selfe,
and knowing thee,
as we are known,>
wee shall possesse in an instant,
and possesse for ever,
[all that can anyway conduce to our happinesses,]>]>
yet here also in this world, givest us such *earnests* of that full payment,
as by the value of the *earnest*, we may give some estimat of the tresure,>
humbly, and thankfully I acknowledge,
that thy blessed *spirit* instructs mee,
to make a difference of thy blessings in this world, by that difference of the *Instruments*,
[by which it hath pleased thee
to derive them unto me]

[ ] = embedded clause

< > = nested clause

Clause-complex formula: a {b {axb { xb {1{axb } ^+2 {axb}}^ a {1+2 {a^=b}}}}} ^+a {axb} "b" g[59]

Logically and semantically, the passage is carefully balanced. Further emphasizing its distancing effect, the Prayer acknowledges the King's "publicke, and ... private favours too" (45.10-11), recalling a sense of power presently quite foreign to the patient: "I have had my portion, not only in the hearing, but in the *preachingof thy Gospel*" (45.11-12).

And yet all this is enclosed within the hapless world of the text, for the Prayer ends as the Meditation began, with a reminder of the king's shared vulnerability. Just as

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[59] Using Halliday's terminology: letters for hypotaxis and numbers for parataxis; expansion indicated by '=' (elaboration), '+' (extension) or 'x' (enhancement), and projection by " (locution). (See M.A.K. Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London: Edward Arnold, 1985, ch. 7).

the Meditation concentrated on absorbing kings into the sphere of misery inhabited by mankind generally - introduced as "*Gods*, but *sicke gods*", they become "*Gods* that are so sicke, as that they cannot sleepe ... in an infirmer condition"; until eventually their deity is effectively cancelled, as being "better expressed in their *humility*, then in their *heighth*" (41.15-29) - so the final lines of the Devotion pray for the king, "in all distempers of his body, in all anxieties of *spirit*, in all holy *sadnesses of soule*" (45.20-2).

The pattern in this section of the *Devotions* is therefore quite different to that in Devotions 1-4. There we were concerned with beginning, the launch outward from nothingness. Devotions 1-3 consequently flowed linearly into Devotion 4, the measure of their essential progress. Here, however, the borders of the journey are constantly exposed; again and again, the patient's attempts to move laterally from the text into the outside world are frustrated. The movement can be clearly followed. Devotion 5 is a study of solitude; Devotion 6 marks the arrival of a representative of the outside world, the physician; Devotion 7 brings several such figures (*socios*); and Devotion 8 brings the royal physician, representative not only of the outside world, but that which constitutes the heart of its power and influence, the Court. Gradually, it seems, the individual is being 'resocialized'. As the physician takes charge of Donne's body, the State or public sphere reasserts its rights over individual privacy. And yet the feudal search for reassurance and context, the desire to vest in external authority some certainty fails, just as it did in the sermons, through the inadequacy of that authority. The physician is afraid, the physicians multiply fear and cause, and not all the king's men can do better. If it is "the happinesse of *Kings*, to confer, to transfer, honor and riches", it is only "(as they can) health" (42.4-5). The individual circling patterns of Devotions 6 and 7 reflect the overall pattern of Devotions 5-7's shift from solitude, through fear and back to solitude. The narrative leads nowhere, and the patient fails to escape the imprisoning, self-locked circle of his initial, chaotic state. Devotion 8 seems to point beyond this, suspending the frantic obsession with self and sickness for a formal, impersonal interlude that steps back to pay tribute to the King, and bestow Ministerial "blessings

upon this *State*, and this *Church*" (45.15-16).[60] It enacts the stylistic conquest of reality over fantasy, world over word (an arousal from "The Dreame" to "broad-waking"). Almost, it seems, the glorious monarch provides "a theame/ For reason, much too strong for phantasie", whose timely appearance in the eighth Devotion will return the writer to his right social context: as a member of society with public duties to perform.[61] However, the world of social order and responsibility evoked, the world of preaching, power and preferment where "the patient" becomes "the subject" - not the focus of attention but part of a hierarchical whole - is contained within the levelling sphere of illness, between the assertions of universal vulnerability that open and close the Devotion. Just as Donne's first external reference point, the physician, is only re-internalized at the level of Donne's own consciousness (he himself is *solus, metuit* and *socios sibi iungier instat*), so his last, the King, is "subject" to sickness "equally, with ... subject" (8M: 41.10). We have only fallen into a larger circle within the same microcosmic text; where "*Man is a World*" "intire of itself", he loses all context and his "*forme*" is "*misery*" (8M: 40.27-41.6).[62] To recapitulate Chapter 2's conclusion on the sermons, Donne's 'Mannerist' texts which gesture beyond their own frame - the Bible, his own sermons and now the *Devotions* - prove ultimately to be comprehended by the self-contained 'Renaissance' text, as the aesthetic sphere subsumes the referential.[63]

Indeed, the man-as-microcosm image that opens Meditation 8 directly returns us to Meditations 4 and 1. This second birth closes like the first, like the very first segment of the first, with the patient still locked into an obsessive concentration on the self. This is,

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60 Robert Cooper's politicization of the entire *Devotions* as a web of instructive and anti-Papist advice to the king fails to distinguish between the different modes of different sections - the contrast, for instance, that clearly exists between Devotions 5-7 and Devotion 8. Inevitably, much of Cooper's evidence derives from Devotion 8 ("The Political Implications of Donne's *Devotions*", in *New Essays on Donne*, ed. Gary Stringer, Salzburg, 1977, 192-210).

61 "The Dreame", ll. 3-4. Arthur similarly appears in various eighth cantos of *The Faerie Queene*, heralding delivery and regeneration (see Alastair Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, 53).

62 So Carey describes Donne's tendency in his poetry to "expand the woman into something of universally acknowledged importance", as, for instance, "a continental land mass" ("To his Mistris Going to Bed", ll. 27-30). The effect of such language is to "enclose the public sphere in the private" (*Life, Mind and Art*, 93). Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 75-6.

63 See Chapter 3, p. 102.

for Donne, the very condition of sickness, the essential situation dramatized by the *Devotions*. As he declared in II.2, "in *sicknesse*, I lack my *self*. And, as the greatest misery of war, is, when our own Country is made the seat of the war; so it is of *affliction*, when *mine own Body*, is made the subject thereof" (80.287-90). The nation contracts to the boundaries of the individual's body, and the ultimate concern of State - war - to the measure of personal affliction. Perception is egotized, and the patient's body "made the subject" of not only war but his entire contemplation. In sickness, Donne says, he lacks his self, but in one sense this is all he has; what he lacks is a sense of anything else. Alternatively, the "self" he has lost is that which receives its definition from society and active participation. As David Biro argues in his study of "The Rhetoric of Pain", the experience of suffering provides a uniquely commonplace illustration of phenomenological reduction, oneself observed in extreme isolation from the world.[64]

In their self-scrutiny, then, these Devotions find no truth outside themselves. Reading ends in the text, where Donne, like the useless monk, "converse[s] with no man" but himself (5M: 26.6-7). His language is autonomous, self-consuming and fulfils no apparent responsibility to society. Not surprisingly, both religious and secular traditions of thought condemned this type of linguistic self-love, or logorrhea. The Scriptures presented the warning of Babel, which Donne echoed in a sermon of 1621: the "Towre of Babel it self, in the confusion of tongues" comes again in "so many severall sounds as are uttered and mustered against God, and his Religion" (III.12.256.2-4). The *Devotions* manifests this confusion in the discrepancies between Latin and English headnotes,[65] and the unsettling consequences for not only textual originality but Biblical interpretation are marginally noted in Expostulation 7: "*So al*, but our Translation take it" (37.21-4).[66] If Devotions 1-4 began the journey from Chaos into form and silence into Word, Devotions 5-8 collapse from Word into words, from form into Babel.

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[64] "The Rhetoric of Pain: Literary and Theoretical Representations of Bodily Suffering", unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford (Ms. D. Phil. c.10698), 10.

[65] See p. 236 above.

[66] For the sermons' consequent unseating of the Bible as an objective guarantor of truth, see Chapter 2, sections A. and B.

Of the Church Fathers, Augustine is equally critical of "an abundance of words", but blames it more generally on "the poverty of our human intellect (where) ... more talk is spent in search than in discovery".[67] The fear that generates Donne's prolixity in Devotion 6 especially is related to this lack of wisdom,[68] and in the mediaeval *artes moriendi* was already a recognized danger. Thus the mid-fifteenth century *Book of the Craft of Dying* warned that man's soul "by impatience and murmuration ... is lost and damned", and therefore "should all sicknesses of the body by reason be suffered patiently, without murmuration".[69] Often those who suffer "through an accidental sickness; as a fever" die unprepared, "so impatient and grutching, that other while, through woe and impatience, they become wood and witless".[70] Madness in this context was therefore a very real concern, long before Hobbes associated it with the over-abuse of ornate words.[71] Donne himself spoke of the danger of *insanire cum ratione*, of going "out of thy wits, by having too much, and to be mad with too much knowledge" (I.2.171.112-14), while the link Hobbes developed between prolixity and excess of imagination, which he called "the decay of Sense",[72] already underlies the distorted sense impressions of Devotion 7.[73]

That Donne knew and subscribed to these traditions is clear, not only from such details but in the ironic frame of illness that moralizes the text, and the patient's anxiety for a truth that is associated with the outside world, 'reality'. For as Biro notes of sickness generally, even as "the body progressively appropriates the contents of consciousness (and) the world beyond the body contracts in inverse proportion", there is

> an equally powerful feeling within the individual to move in the opposite direction, towards the world ... It is this dialectic, thrusting the individual inward

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67 *Confessions,* trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (Baltimore: Penguin, 1981), 281 (XII.1).

68 Cox designates Devotions 5-7 the 'fearful' stage of repentance ("Donne's *Devotions*", 340-2).

69 Ed. Frances Comper (London: Longmans, 1917), 16, 18, 62-3. Cf. "Comes not this *Expostulation* too neere a *murmuring?*" (5E: 27.28-9; also 5P: 28.10-12; 6M: 30.11-12).

70 *The Book of the Craft of Dying,* 15-16.

71 See A.C. Howell, "*Res et Verba*: Words and Things", *ELH* 13 (1946) 131-42, 136-7.

72 *Leviathan,* I.2, ed. A.R. Waller (Cambridge: U.P., 1904), 3 and ff.

73 See Raspa's Notes to l. 20; also Partridge on Donne's stylistic borrowings from mediaeval fantasy (*John Donne,* 208).

> at one moment and outward the next, that more closely approximates the experience of bodily suffering.[74]

The failure of Donne's quest worldwards is characteristically Baroque; L. Elaine Hoover comments on the darkness of Baroque painting, "making indistinguishable the precise point in which background becomes foreground, in which the subject merges into his surroundings". She adds of Baroque writing, that "more than any other period ... one of (its) dominant features is a twilight atmosphere which exaggerates man's fundamental inability to actually distinguish between reality and the world of illusion, fantasy, and dreams".[75] The failure can also, however, be viewed as deliberate and exemplary. Just as Barten Holyday, in a sermon preached just before the *Devotions* was written, relates how "David in the extremitie of wit and banishment disguises himselfe in a false madnesse, making it the best use of his reason to seeme to have lost the use of his reason,"[76] so Donne in the *Devotions* is arguably following a similar policy to display the dangers of solipsism. This is not the clear day of public commission, but its "twi-light", not the King's 'real' proposal, but a receding "*Eccho*" (43.35-44.2). Donne's solipsism may furthermore be useful in a positive sense, his "best use of ... reason"; for, only by first evoking such extreme isolation or reduction can the patient then recreate himself-in-the-world. Here in Biro's words, "one stands, so to speak, at the threshold of emergent meaning, one is present, so to speak, at the birth of language ... the birth of creation".[77] The passage to this second birth (as to Donne's first) is more problematical than Devotion 8 at first indicates, yet *through* "pestilentiall sicknes (that) averts ... from the beginning" (5M: 25.14-15) Donne does at least create the *possibility* of an entry "into the Ministery", the public world. In a sense, as with the sermons, his continual efforts to approach this world in themselves constitute political engagement.[78]

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[74]"The Rhetoric of Pain", 8.

[75]*John Donne and Francisco de Quevedo: Poets of Love and Death* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1978), 156.

[76] *A Sermon Preached at Pauls Crosse, August the 5, 1623* (London, 1626), $B4^{V}$.

[77]"The Rhetoric of Pain", 9.

[78]Chapter 2, pp. 99-100.

The question arises, however, as to whether he saw any direct path from art to reality. Where even a Biblical text, despite his best efforts, resists interpretation (7E: 37.21ff), the whole relationship of sign to thing signified, word to reality, is rendered problematical. Donne might well have feared that no context could be derived from any one text; or that any context referred to by a text risked being subsumed by it. The vision of society glimpsed "through a glass darkly" in Devotion 8 is contained by the text that surrounds and undermines it, and it is also *itself* text, "not the lesse brittle, because a *Kings* face is represented in it" (8M: 41.11). It constitutes what Chapter 2 called a *contextual layer*, a destabilized secular truth shadowing and moving out towards a reality that can never be expressed.[79] In the act of discussing issues of text and context, Donne hints there may be no 'real' escape from the former; the question is where to draw the line.

Critics: A Liminal Space

Liminal, (adj) : threshold [> Gk *limen*]

To threshold, (vt) : to set a limit above which everything is considered to be picture and below which everything is considered to be background [*OED*]

As Carey observes in his "Afterword 1990" to *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, recent Donne criticism divides into two main schools of thought on precisely this question. The first, 'theoretical' school of criticism, represented by Thomas Docherty, draws well-wrought antecedents from the New Criticism;[80] it privileges postmodernist play, and a

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[79] p. 91.

[80] A lack of foresight in labelling that has reappeared in a 'new' guise - the 'new' historicists ironically failed to learn the lesson of history their approach raises to prominence. See

Saussurian self-involvement with language and style that is essentially interiorized.[81] The line is drawn between what is and is not literary. Like the self-generating circle of Devotions 5-7, this school detaches the language it studies from all referents - likewise perfectly reflexive, it draws little distinction between itself and its object of study.

Some members of Carey's second school of thought agree with this last point on a wider scale, arguing that criticism should collapse boundaries between different forms of writing, by broadening its basis of study to include all aspects of a culture's discourse and incorporating a high degree of self-awareness. However, this historicist school, represented by Arthur Marotti, divides over whether to take a diachronic or synchronic approach. Broadly speaking, it aims, like the patient of the *Devotions*, to socialize a specific text by placing it within extra-literary contexts. "New" Historicists, though, tend to view the text relationally within a period, across the *static spectrum* of its immediate cultural context, whereas "Old" Historicists like Leah Marcus fear a loss of historical perspective without the traditional diachronic tracing of cause and effect right up to a particular text's production.[82] The tendency to emulate Foucault's archaeologist, who "remains at one site, digging in all directions, unearthing the specificities of a particular discourse",[83] by arbitrarily designating historical periods as these representative or homogenous sites ignores the effect of change, risking inaccurate, monolithic generalization.[84] The debate over time between Old and New methodologies

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James Turner's concern over the "current tendency to fetishize up-to-dateness, to flatten and trivialize academic discourse by reducing its own history to a sequence of ready-made and rapidly discarded fashions" ("Historicism, New and Old: Excerpts from a Panel Discussion", *'The Muses Common-Weale': Poetry and Politics in the Seventeenth Century* , edd. Ted-Larry Pebworth and C. Summers, Columbia: Univ. of Missouri, 1988, 207-17, 216-7).

81 See Edward Pechter in "The New Historicism and its Discontents: Politicizing Renaissance Drama", on the perceived link between formalism and deconstruction (*PMLA* 102 (1987) 292-303, 292).

82 See "Historicism, New and Old" in *'The Muses Common-Weale,'* 207-10.

83 Mark Poster, "The Future According to Foucault: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and Intellectual History", in *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspectives,* edd. Dominick LaCapra and Steven Kaplan (Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1982), 137-152, 145.

84 Thus Howard criticizes Greenblatt's use of 'illustrative examples" ("The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies", *ELR* 16 (1986) 13-43, 38-9): a technique long discarded from American historical writing (for an account of which see Michael Kammen, *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States,* Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P.,

seems to be leading to compromise,[85] but not before time. Donne himself explores both historicist approaches in the Devotions we have looked at: trying in Devotions 5-7 to relate synchronically to the world going on outside his sickroom, and in Devotion 8 to anchor himself diachronically at the end of an historical process.

Of course, Donne fails in his attempts to get beyond the text. Unsuccessful historicist methodology leaves us, like the projection of Devotion 8, stranded in postmodernism. This is unsurprising; Donne's delight in language and awareness of imaginative enclosure made him a natural star in such formalist developments.[86] Nonetheless, the attempt is made in Devotion 8 to step back from this play and contextualize it - to, in effect, politically colonize the whole retrospectively. There coexists, with the triumph of the text, an element of historicist consciousness.[87]

1980, 19-46, 41-2), and whose dangers, be it noted, are recognized in Greenblatt's anthropological sources (for instance, Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, 21ff). See also Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier's "Introduction" to *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 10 - as Dubrow points out in her essay in the same volume, "'The Sun in Water': Donne's Somerset Epithalamium and the Poetics of Patronage" (197-219, 214), privileging the synchronic contradicts New Historicists' much-vaunted antistructuralism. Her fellow-editor, Strier, elsewhere compares it to the totalizing danger of New Criticism ("Historicism, New and Old", in *'The Muses Common-Weale'*, 214). Along related lines, Martin Jay assesses post-structuralist disregard of diachrony ("Should Intellectual History Take a Linguistic Turn? Reflections on the Habermas-Gadamer Debate", 86-110, 89); while Mark Poster examines Foucault's structuralist sympathies ("The Future According to Foucault", 151); both articles in *Modern European Intellectual History*. E.M. Henning in the same volume, however, observes a discrepancy between what Foucault says and does in diachronic-synchronic terms ("Archaeology, Deconstruction and Intellectual History", 153-96, 182-3).

[85] See Marcus's argument that it is necessary both to "articulate large cultural patterns" and "to reconstruct highly detailed cultural transactions" through causal research (which refinement of the 'local' is simply 'thicker' description) ("Historicism, New and Old", *'The Muses Common-Weale'*, 210); also Dubrow and Strier's "Introduction" to *The Historical Renaissance*, 2-4). This general compromise parallels the call in intellectual history for a combined synchronic and diachronic approach (see Roger Chartier, "Intellectual History or Sociocultural History? The French Trajectories", in *Modern European Intellectual History*, 13-46, 42-3).

[86] But see Katharine Eisaman Maus and Elizabeth Harvey's historicist revision of Donne (*Soliciting Interpretation*, Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990, xiii-xvi).

[87] Achsah Guibbory notes the interest in history-writing and increased historical awareness from the second half of the sixteenth century (*The Map of Time: Seventeenth-Century English Literature and Ideas of Pattern in History*, Urbana and Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1986, Introduction).

The position can be clarified by a closer examination of the critical thresholding of text and context. If postmodernists tend to ignore the division altogether by concentrating their forces on the literary-textual side of the line, the approach of historicists seems more complex, requiring a determination of the level at which individual imagination and social forces interact. But insofar as history is as much a construct as literature and so can no longer be used to ground textual meaning, the logical tendency is to blur the distinction between "text" and "context".[88] In this sense, historicism is actually formalist;[89] only the terms have been redefined, so that investigation deals not just with the literary text as an integrated whole but the entire cultural "discourse" of a period, which includes literary expression.[90] An extreme view, then, in this school, would also eradicate the division, and reconcile the two schools.

For practical purposes, however (similar to those which render Docherty's position untenable, for Carey), a fine line must be constructed: less of a line, in fact, than a point of "considerable historical specificity",[91] at which social and literary texts can be caught in the act of shaping each other. The individual's unique and otherwise

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[88] Howard, "The New Historicism", 24-5 (cf. her earlier interpretation of the school in "Old Wine, New Bottles", a review of Goldberg's *James I and the Politics of Literature*, *SQ* 35 (1984) 234-7, 236). Greenblatt thus does not distinguish between historical and literary figures - discourses of the self are equally manifested "both in literary paradigms and in the construction of actual lives" (Howard, "The New Historicism", 38). For an opposing view of what Greenblatt does in practice, see Pechter, "The New Historicism and its Discontents", 293-5. Goldberg supplies a similar critique of Jameson's eloquent argument for the necessary prior (re-)textualization of history ("The Politics of Renaissance Literature: A Review Essay", *ELH* 49 (1982) 514-42, 520-1).

[89] Marcus compares its synchronic approach to the formalist analysis of a lyric poem, in that it "captures a given moment in spatial rather than temporal terms by demonstrating connections among clusters of meaning that seem to occur together" ("Historicism, New and Old", in *'The Muses Common-Weale'*, 208).

[90] Or as Dominick LaCapra etymologically redefines "text", it should cover the "network of relations interwoven with the problem of language" (*Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*, Ithaca and London: Cornell U.P., 1983, 19). Jay is even more overt, following Ricoeur in advocating the reading of contexts as texts ("Reflections on the Habermas-Gadamer Debate", in *Modern European Intellectual History*, 108). Cf. Richard Helgerson, who argues in *'The Muses Common-weale'*, that we lack the formalists' transcendently autonomous cultural icon ("Historicism, New and Old", 211); but this is because with the breakdown of boundaries (which he acknowledges) there is nothing for it to be autonomous *from*. Walter Benn Michaels argues that there never has been ("Against Formalism: The Autonomous Text in Legal and Literary Interpretation", *Poetics Today* 1:1-2 (1979/80) 23-34).

[91] Howard, "The New Historicism", 27.

unrecoverable experience of reality certainly shapes a literary text, but so may that individual literary text aid in "constructing a culture's sense of reality".[92] Donne, as we have seen, dramatizes this interactive process between the text and the real in the dialogue between the patient's world and the world of society. The real here, to use Roger Chartier's definition, is "what the text itself poses as real in constituting it as a referent situated beyond itself"[93] - except, of course, that on a wider level, this referent is also situated within the text (the *Devotions*). Texts and contexts, in Donne's depiction, do partake of one another, eliminating the 'point' simulated in Devotion 8.

The historicist is then concerned with taking a *further* step back outside those terms in order to contextualize Donne's contextualization, to pass from Donne's contextual layer into his actual context. At the same time, s/he should bear in mind and hopefully anticipate successive views on her/his own contextualization, such self-reflexive methodology (what Alan Liu calls a "supremely *self-conscious* embarrassment ... the sense of history become one with what we might call the interpreter's intentionality of embarrassment")[94] being the only way the New Historicist's less-than-objective view can justify itself. The self-consciousness of Donne's own search, however, forestalls the critic. His specific complaint is the inaccessibility of the external world to the text, and the text, finding nothing,[95] gives nothing away. Even Devotion 8's reference to the historical event of his ordination arguably refers only intertextually to the *Epistle.*

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92 So Howard, "The New Historicism", 25; Dubrow and Strier, *The Historical Renaissance,* 3; and Pebworth and Summers who in their "Introduction" unite their beliefs in both human essentialism and history's enormous shaping power under the more humanist term of "cultural poetics"('*The Muses Common-weale*' , 2-4). Following this more flexible approach, Goldberg privileges the individual figure of the King as the source of the period's discursive practices, rather than the culture shared by him and his subjects in *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and Their Contemporaries* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1983) - as Howard charges in "Old Wine, New Bottles" (236-7). Cf. Pebworth and Summers's "vanguard New Historicists", who follow Greenblatt's theory of social constructionism, where human identity is solely the result of "impersonal historical forces largely inimical to individual control" (Howard, "The New Historicism", 38). These would include Dollimore's cultural materialists, whose agenda opposes the idea of a "transhistorical human condition" (*Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism,* edd. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, Manchester: U. P., 1985, 4).

93 "Intellectual History or Sociocultural?", in *Modern European Intellectual History,* 39-40.

94"The Power of Formalism: The New Historicism", *ELH* 56 (1989) 721-72, 745.

95Or in the case of the sermons, nothing unconflictingly absolute.

For this reason, it is difficult to construct another 'point', and distinctly locate the *Devotions* in juxtaposition with an historical context. We might speculate from the language itself; as Heather Dubrow shows, formalistic techniques can be adapted to reveal socio-political tension.[96] The *Devotions* was written in 1623, a month after Charles arrived home from Spain. The Prince had been away eight months in what were widely regarded as enemy hands, and his return, uncorrupted, was hailed by contemporary chroniclers as "this great miracle of our latter age".[97] It seems possible that the *Devotions*, with its dedication to Prince Charles and reference to births in this, the nation's ninth month of anxiety, was intended to form part of the literary celebration that attended the event, in which a number of Donne's coterie, including his own son, were involved.[98] Possibly too, as the resurrection of Christ was the great Biblical miracle of the former age, so this reappearance of the Prince's child, Charles regained, was a royal nativity worthy to be sung in a work of imitative *genethliaca*, if not indeed its formal inspiration. By all accounts, the *Devotions*' climactic realization of the unity of mankind reflects the national fervour that greeted Charles's return:

> the people ... seemed to lose their own being, and to forget that they were themselves: men, women, and children made but one consort, and the music of that consort, sounded nothing but, 'the prince is come, our Charles is come'.[99]

The text is furthermore obsessed with absences and waiting, warning such as the errant Prince of the dangers of Catholicism (as Donne notes in 16M, "There is a way of correcting the *Children* of great persons, that other *Children* are corrected in their *behalfe*,

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96 "'The Sun in Water'", in *The Historical Renaissance*, edd. Dubrow and Strier, 197-219, 213. See also Jonathan Crewe's defence of close formal reading in a New Historical climate ("Introduction" to *Trials of Authorship: Anterior Forms and Poetic Reconstruction from Wyatt to Shakespeare*, Berkeley and L.A.: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1990).

97 *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes, 1622-1624*, ed. Elisabeth Bourcier (Paris: Didier, 1974), 164; David Cressy summarizes the various ecstatic accounts (*Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989, ch. 6).

98 Robert Fallon notes the link between Donne's subsequent elegists and the contributors to *Carolus Redux* (1623), one of whom is John Donne Jr. ("Donne's 'Strange Fire' and the 'Elegies on the Authors Death'", *JDJ* 7(2) (1988) 197-212, 200ff; see also Geoffrey Keynes's *Bibliography of Dr John Donne*, 4th ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, 249, item 195).

99 "The Ioyfull Returne of the most illustrious Prince, Charles ... from the Court of Spaine (London, 1623), 37-8, in Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 99. Cf. p. 275 below.

and in their *names*, and this workes upon them, who indeed had more deserved it" [82.12-15]).[100] Problems of authority, too, inform the search. Admittedly there is little of the figure of Charles in the text, but Robert Cooper suggests the invocations of David refer directly to him, and certainly the association had been made.[101] In any case, we might regard Charles's appearance in the Dedication as less that of a figure than a figurehead. Jonathan Goldberg in his analysis of the iconography of James's triumphs emphasizes the king as their symbolic rather than active centre: aloof image rather than participant, he is "the spectacle although hardly seen, and when seen, hardly offering himself to his viewers." For Donne's loyal readers too, "His presence gives them life; his absence robs them. Their existence depends upon him. ... The king's presence confers meaning".[102] We might compare Louis Montrose's New Historicist reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture":

> whether or not Queen Elizabeth was physically present at the first performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, her pervasive *cultural presence* was a condition of the play's imaginative possibility ... in the sense that the royal presence was itself *re*-presented within the play, it may be said that the play henceforth conditioned the imaginative possibility of the Queen.[103]

Alternatively, David Willbern cites Cordelia in *King Lear*:

> From her voiced 'Nothing' to her mute voice as 'an excellent thing", Cordelia's discourse traces a circle of absent presence. She is the queen of silence ... Cordelia's nothing, at beginning and end, circumscribes or pinpoints the elemental absence at the centre of Lear's world.[104]

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[100]See Cooper, "The Political Implications", in *New Essays on Donne*, 192-210; also Frost, *Holy Delight*, 47-56.

[101]E.g. in George Wither's *Prince Henries Obsequies or mournefull elegies upon his death* (1612), $D3^{r}$: "So Iesses eldest *Sonnes* had most renowne,/ But little *David* did obtaine the Crowne".

[102]*James I and the Politics of Literature*, 32, 31.

[103] *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of Cal. Press, 1988), 31-64, 32.

[104] "Shakespeare's Nothing", in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, edd. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1980), 244-63, 247.

Donne posits something similar of 'real silence' in a letter to a friend beginning: "Sr, as well in Love as in greife why should not sylence be interpreted a signe rather of store then want? So if y^{o} construe myne at this tyme y^{o} shall not be mistaken". He goes on to ask:

> let me intreat y^{o} mayntayne this love betweene us by this meanes of sylent discoursing whereby I shall hold y^{e} defect of absence half cured & made by conceit a well formed p^{r}sence untill it may be so indeed.[105]

In the argument of "Elegie X" ("The Dreame"), "So if I dreame I have you, I have you,/ For all our joyes are but fantasticall" (ll. 13-14). As Devotion 5 heralded the imagined presence or conceit of the physician, so the Dedication heralds that of the Prince, the royal healer. In both cases, we see the suppliant patient, the suppliant writer, "devising figments to temper his nothingness",[106] just as, it seems, the poet of another "Dreame" conjures his absent beloved: "Thou art so truth, that thoughts of thee suffice,/ To make dreames truths" (ll. 7-8).

In the *Devotions*, however, the nothingness is but tempered, the absence only "half cured". As Jonathan Culler remarks of apostrophe, to invoke a presence is also to betray an absence, in particular a discomfort with that absence that the apostrophe serves to assuage.[107] In Chapter 3, I argued against James Baumlin for Donne's belief in Real Presence and incarnational rhetoric. This view of language as sacrament depends, however, on an underlying spiritual faith in the absolute. Where absence had no such theological underpinning - the case, I suggest, in most of Baumlin's counter-examples - then indeed language provided only "a *figurative* presence ... a sacramental *metonymy*".[108] In such secular cases, "incarnationism is denied ... sacramental presence ... is reduced to a mere trace of memory", and "writing provides but a weak compensation and surely no antidote for absence, becoming ... a compulsive action that

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105 Evelyn Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), 322.

106 Beckett, *Company* (London: John Calder, 1980), 64.

107 See *The Pursuit of Signs* (Ithaca, 1981), ch. 7.

108 "Donne's Poetics of Absence", *JDJ* 7(2) (1988) 151-82, 167ff.

seeks to allay (though it can never cure) the anxiety of separation" (180).[109] In the case of both Devotion 5 and the Dedication (and as with Chapter 2's analysis of state authorities) the figure invoked is all too human - the fallible Physician, the vulnerable Prince. The imaginative possibility that betrays their absence cannot evoke an accompanying Real Presence. Instead, it regenerates the storyteller's anxious production of text, which then does not so much restore as re*shape* notions of absent authority in its own interests.[110] In the classic symbiotic interaction of text and context, the first is shaped by the second - more specifically the absence of it - which is in turn shaped by the first. Hence the attested case of Jonson's masque, *Neptune's Triumph* (1624), intended to celebrate Charles's return but never performed in the diplomatic furore surrounding the event. As Goldberg notes, Jonson nonetheless refers to it in a subsequent masque as if it had been: "On the page, it is as if the production took place, and in the masque, it is as if the return of Charles was indeed a triumph. So is state discourse manufactured".[111]

But this entire theory is founded (and founders) on absences: the absence of Charles in the text, the absence of referents, the absence of proof. In the final analysis, neither prince nor principle is "so truth, that thoughts of (them) suffice,/ To make dreames truths; and fables histories". As Pechter comments of the New Historicist enterprise in general, "the histories being recovered are themselves transcendental signifieds"[112] - fables of identity. Beginnings cannot be found,[113] and we have returned

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[109]The difference, Eleanor McNees suggests, is between the genuine enactment of Eucharistic transformation in Donne's divine writing and a facile, Papist transubstantiation manifestly misapplied to earthly love in the secular poems (*Eucharistic Poetry: The Search for Presence in the Writings of John Donne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Dylan Thomas, and Geoffrey Hill*, London and Toronto: Associated U.P., 1992, c. 2). The latter are only "by analogy eucharistic sacraments themselves" (34), and share features with McNees's later writers, whose physical language tries increasingly to mask spiritual absence (26-9). Or, as Lucius Carie concluded his "Elegie on Dr. Donne", "His age saw visions, though his youth dream'd dreams" (l. 90).

[110] Freud's primary myth of loss: see Willbern, "Shakespeare's Nothing", in *Representing Shakespeare*, 244-63, 250-1.

[111]*James I and the Politics of Literature*, 71.

[112] "The New Historicism and its Discontents", 298.

[113] Cf. the condition of modern historicists - "Anxieties about identities and origins ... haunt intellectual history today" (Hans Kellner, "Triangular Anxieties: The Present State of European Intellectual History" in *Modern European Intellectual History*, 111-36, 113).

to the endless circle of self-contained aestheticism.[114] As with Pechter's New Historicist, contextualizing Donne, like Donne's own contextualization, is just another way of interpreting - "coating anew, recovering the text in a Barthesian manner with (more) words of (one's) own".[115]

Pechter is one of the most vocal critics of the New Historicist attitude to text and context, arguing that it advocates going "beyond immediate textual impressions to arrive at a predetermined point of theoretical understanding, which is the point from which one comes to the text in the first place". Thus, "New historicist criticism is a criticism of recognition, of knowing again what one knew before".[116] Though this charge appears not only unfair but naively positivist in its own presuppositions, it does point to the extremist position that holds true for Donne. The argument that New Historicism disregards the text, using it in effect as a hollow absence round which to trace a political statement, could be translated - inverting text and context - to apply to Donne's procedure in Devotions 5-8. Donne's aim, to depict the text in search of salvation, is prejudged; his con-text is a pre-text, the absence of the necessary "physician" that the text has itself created. The same argument is directly reflected in the overall structure of the *Devotions*, where the *Epistle* that prefaces the disease also reveals its outcome.[117] Disclosure is enclosure. The text that occupies the space in between, the disease itself, is a means of returning to the beginning, of confirming the initial assurance of salvation. This accords with the anti-hermeneutical Christian tradition that views salvation as "but the art of *memory*", and a preacher's duty as revealing a truth already experienced but

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114 As Marcus notes, we arrive at the "interpretive gridlock" of metaformalism ("Historicism, New and Old", in *'The Muses Common-weale'*, 209). Greenblatt's displacement of the limits of form, or ungrounding of context, must inevitably result in "the wonderful self-validating circularity that characterizes virtually all powerful constructions of reality" ("Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion", *Glyph 8*, Baltimore and London: John Hopkins, 1981, 40-61, 49). Effectively, he is trapped by his position in the narrative; there is "no 'outside', no freedom from roles and fictions" (Richard Strier, "Identity and Power in Tudor England: Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare*", *Boundary 2* 10(3) (1982) 383-94, 393).

115 "The New Historicism and its Discontents", 298.

116 "The New Historicism and its Discontents", 301-2.

117 See p. 284 below.

forgotten, a "remembring of *that*, which your soul knew before" (II.2.73.52, 74.69-70). In almost the same words, Pechter suggests that 'extreme' historicists reveal history, they do not discover it. And yet the point he misses undermines the intended bearing of his argument; if rhetorical recognition surrounds the historicist text, it comes nonetheless through engagement with it. Only through perusing the progress of the disease can the baptism of the *Devotions'* third birth, physical salvation, receive its confirmation in the spiritual salvation offered by holy dying. As Donne's failed dialogue between patient and society actually reaches out to involve the reader, so, conversely, the historicist's interaction between context and text (far from precluding engagement with the text) actually implicates him/her within the textual interpretive process.[117]

Since, then, Donne's context is firmly confined within the boundaries of his text, any authority it shadows must also be contained. This tends to invert traditional historicist assumptions in the general debate over the relationship between dominant ideologies that inform officially sanctioned texts and the subversive elements those texts contain.[118] Some critics in this debate follow Greenblatt's extreme view that literature survives only by virtue of its continual reinscription of the dominant ideology, deliberately producing subversion and discontent in order to contain it.[119] According to this view, "radical undermining ... is not the negative limit but the positive condition for the establishment of order".[120] Others argue that these subversive elements sometimes escape control and challenge the power that produced them.[121] Thus LaCapra conceives of the dialogue within the text through two of Bakhtin's terms; *heteroglossia*,

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[117]See fn. 77 above.

[118]Dubrow and Strier summarize this debate in *The Historical Renaissance* (4-5). Pechter offers a less sympathetic version that considers this a "starkly simple model" of discourse ("The New Historicism and its Discontents", 296-7: 297).

[119] For instance, Jonathan Dollimore: "if the very conflicts which the existing order generates from within itself are construed as attempts to subvert it from without ... that order strengthens itself by simultaneously repressing dissenting elements and eliciting consent for this action: the protection of society from subversion" (*Political Shakespeare*, 7).

[120] Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets", 48.

[121] See Howard generally, "The New Historicism", 34-5, 40; and Dubrow - Greenblatt's preconception would only result, she argues, in a misreading of the poetry of patronage as wholly adulatory ("'The Sun in Water'", in *The Historical Renaissance*, 214-15).

which suggests that numerous 'unofficial' voices may exist beneath the surface of a dominant discourse, and *carnivalization*, which suggests their "revolutionary potential to expose the arbitrary nature of official constructions of the real".[123] These 'murmurings', Dollimore writes, though "appropriated by authority for its own purposes, once installed ... can be used against authority as well as used by it".[124] As even Greenblatt admits, there must be a sense in which doubt cannot be "*entirely* contained".[125]

With Donne's text, conversely, where doubt is the focus of the work, it is authority that is produced in order to be undermined and destabilized. To reverse Greenblatt's analysis of Harriot's "Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia": the momentary sense of stability or certainty - the existence of one absolute value in the figure of the physician or the Prince - is produced by the power that ultimately denies the possibility of certainty.[126] Where individual energy empowers a governing structure indirectly, it can the more easily do so directly, in a reversal of Greenblatt's parasitic formulation. Jonathan Crewe shows this in his analysis of *The Unfortunate Traveller*, by choosing to highlight instead

> the violence of a subversion that feeds upon itself and is sustained by the models of order it seeks to deny ... replacing the center with the margin of an insidiously violent and arbitrary power - the power of the page.[127]

Alternatively, we could view such a structure as representing the secondary stage of the historicist text, where subversive murmurings have finally succeeded in overturning official discourse. It can not be forgotten that the power of another 'page', despite its disciplined containing form and affirmation of a state-controlled material base (the printing world that has set and produced the text), is composed of words, those unruly individual elements so carefully checked in the mediaeval and Hobbesian worlds. Still,

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123 *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 298-316.

124 *Political Shakespeare*, 12.

125 "Invisible Bullets", 49.

126 Cf. "Invisible Bullets", 51.

127 See Goldberg's review in "Recent Studies in the Renaissance", *SEL* 24 (1984) 157-99, 175, of Jonathan Crewe's *Unredeemed Rhetoric: Thomas Nashe and the Scandal of Authorship* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins U.P., 1982).

the tension in a text between dominant and subversive aspects, whatever they are, endows it with 'readable energy'; it is why we not only may, but do continue reading it.

Notwithstanding Donne's earlier adoption by the New Critics, the *Devotions* may then usefully be explored in New Historicist terms - if only to highlight the perversity of its public engagement, its conscious resistance to history and historicist assumptions. Insofar as the text's stance casts its own light on the nature of that investigation, critics engage in a true dialogue with the past, Gadamer's 'fusion of individual horizons', in which neither party is privileged.[127] That is to say, we find in stepping back from Devotion 8, in contextualizing Donne's contextualization, that we are in fact attempting a critique of New Historicism - stepping back from ourselves. But 'New' has always been a misnomer, and we have only become the latest political context. As Greenblatt remarks, distinctions between literary foreground and political background do exist, but they are always shifting: "not intrinsic to the texts; rather they are made up and constantly redrawn by artists, audiences, and readers".[128] If the exchange is non-hierarchical, mutual, circular (synchronic), both reference points are also part of an unfinished linear narrative that recedes endlessly into time. As within Donne's 'model' dialogue, the horizons of historicism and formalism fuse;[129] at this particular *limen*, this transitional space between outer and inner that is stylistically represented in Webber's blurred aesthetic threshold,[130] we exist in both the word and world, LaCapra's worklike text that documents its *own* reality.[131]

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127 Jay, "Reflections on the Habermas-Gadamer Debate", in *Modern European Intellectual History*, 95-6.

128 *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* (Oklahoma: Pilgrim, 1982), 6. Here Greenblatt would seem to part ways again with Clifford Geertz, who argues in "Art as a Cultural System" that true appreciation of a work's impact requires the 'period eye', awareness of the local habitat at the one particular time that the work was produced (*MLN* 91(2) (1976) 1473-99). In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, one of the properties of 'thick' description is to preserve the 'said' from perishing and 'fix' it (20). This disagreement suggests Greenblatt departs more from the static point of view than is generally assumed.

129 As J. Hillis Miller announced, the turn to history and away from theory (thus Strier, fn. 113 above) is itself a triumph of theory; the resistance to theory can only be theory ("Presidential Address, 1986: The Triumph of Theory, the Resistance to Reading, and the Question of the Material Base", *PMLA* 102 (1987) 281-91, 286).

130 Fn. 54 above. Even private self-scrutiny in the Renaissance was often externalized in utterance (see Anne Ferry, *The 'Inward' Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare,*

For Donne, objective reality does exist, but as with the 'Renaissance' style of art, this external, true source of power supplies the work with potential, not kinetic energy.[132] God, in the end, is the only context, the writer's ultimate goal. If the *Devotions* are egotistic, they also share the anomic tendency of the sermons, in which all material goals have been replaced by an endless desire for the infinite.[133] Donne's second, public birth thus recapitulates the impulses of his first. It also anticipates the last; as the flattening of authority within the text foreshadows equality in death, so the individual's shifting opinions are a type of the Truth.

Precisely as, therefore, Louis Montrose and the New Historicists assert the "historicity of texts/textuality of history", the *Devotions* construct art out of politics and politics out of art. The dialogue of Devotions 5-8 dramatizes the sermons' desire "to integrate historical and formalist concerns, to generate genre theory out of the political demands that were made of (the individual)",[134] and "Two is better than one" becomes, as in Devotion 5, "two is one". This satisfies furthermore the criterion of 'greatness' posited by LaCapra, wherein tradition is simultaneously reinforced and subverted:

> the ability of certain texts or works of art to generate a heightened sense of the problematic nature of this ambivalence [the extent to which art serves the escapist function of imaginary compensation for the defects of empirical reality and the extent to which it serves the contestatory function of questioning the empirical in a manner that had broader implications for the leading of life] and yet to point beyond it to another level of ambivalence, where the very opposition between escapism and criticism seems to become tenuous - indeed, where oppositions in general founder and emerge in the passage between radical hyperbole and delimited structures.[135]

Donne, Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983). If outer = utter, Devotions 5-8 all occur in the outer, enunciated realm, further blurring the distinction between the two parts.

131 *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 30-2; or, as Hayden White defines it more traditionally, the 'classic' text, so distinguished by its consciousness of and focus on its own process of meaning-production ("Method and Ideology in Intellectual History: The Case of Henry Adams" in *Modern European Intellectual History*, 280-310, 307-8).

132 See Evett, "Donne's Poems and the Five Styles of Renascence Art", *JDJ* 5 (1986) 101-31, 127.

133 Chapter 2, fn. 69.

134 Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 100. The metaformalism Crewe sees as threatening to emerge is inevitable in any Christian or Neoplatonic framework, with its transcendental signified (*Trials of Authorship*, 7-8; see fn. 113 above).

135 *Rethinking Intellectual History*, 5.

Devotions 9-15: Time and Text

... darknesse, death

Before we come to our third, climactic birth, the celebrated Bell sequence that famously marks the apogee of the *Devotions* as well as the disease, we face the challenge of the seven, central Devotions. In many ways, these form the backbone of the work,[137] tracing the doctors' battle with the disease, its crucial period of development and eventual crisis. They represent the "seven *critical daies*" of illness (14E: 75.1), in which Donne's body, like the world, is recreated or re-read against time in preparation for the birth to come.

Devotions 9, 10, 11, 12

Immediately in Meditation 9, Donne's body is opened up as text to the doctors: "I have cut up mine own *Anatomy*, dissected myselfe, and they are gon to *read* upon me" (45.29-46.1).[138] The reading at this stage, however, is unclear. There are, Donne decides, "more *sicknesses* then *names*" (46.16), realities that escape language and hence control. Memory, by whose means we understand narrative,[139] cannot contain words enough for these experiences: "it would overlode, & oppress any naturall, disorder and discompose any artificiall *Memory*, to deliver the *names*" (46.20-1). Instead, the doctors who have "received my *Anatomy* " produce writing of their own (47.17), which Donne takes as his example: "when we may have recourse to that which is *written* ... the proceedings may bee apert, and ingenuous, and candid, and avowable" (47.14-16). Such text is

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[137]For Donne's concern with central patterns, see Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms* (Cambridge: U.P., 1970), 71-4; also Sibyl Lutz Severance, "Soul, Sphere and Structure in 'Goodfriday 1613. Riding Westward'", *SP* 84 (1987) 24-43.

[138]See Janel Mueller on Donne's reading of his body as Bible ("The Exegesis of Experience", 15).

[139]See Chapter 3, pp. 132ff.

furthermore timely; rather than *antidating* or *postdating* the matter, it concentrates on "the present case" (47.19-30).

In the Expostulation, Donne goes on to imprint his body more particularly in this present text, opening and anatomizing the spiritual ills of "*veine ... Artery ... bone ... marrow ... sinews ... ligaments*" (48.23-31). This distinction of parts holds at arm's length the disease's formless victory, what Elaine Scarry calls the spoiling 'whole-body trope' which threatens nameless engulfment.[140] It also continues the association of anatomy with confession, or saving text. Listing God's numerous books for man, Donne ends by asking for "a new reading" of himself (49.17), for "if you refer mee to that which is *written*, you intend my recovery" (48.35-49.1).

Accordingly, the Prayer invokes God's "pure *eyes*" upon his body as the currently-written text (49.32): "Looke therefore upon me, *O Lord* ... Look upon me, and that wil raise me again from that *spirituall death*" (50.8-11). This is also inevitably a reflection of the readerly eye, which bestows literary immortality on the writer; as we read, we find ourselves already implicated in the textual exchange. Here too Donne acknowledges the "*blessed* and *glorious Trinitie*"'s part in his births. Two are past - "thogh the *Father* know, that I have defaced his *Image* received in my *Creation;* though the *Son* know, I have neglected mine interest in the *Redemption*" - but the third is *now* invoked: "*O blessed spirit*... at this *minute*, I accept ... thy blessed inspirations" (50.15-20) - that is, the expression of the text.

The body, however, continues to resist being read. Devotion 10 covers its refusal to communicate: "The *pulse*, the *urine*, the *sweat*, all have sworn to say *nothing*" (10M: 52.15-16). Again Donne invokes the Holy Ghost of memory, to recollect his "former sinnes, that ... they may powre out themselves by *Confession*" (10E: 54.12-13), but again, narrative risks being swamped by events: "I know [the *sinnes* of my *youth*] not so well, as to name them all, nor am sure to live houres enough to name them al, (for I did them

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140"Donne: 'But yet the body is his booke'", in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Population and Persons*, ed. Scarry (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins, 1988), 70-105, 102-3 fn. 22.

then, faster then I can speak them now ...)" (10P: 55.7-9). Not only does real time threaten to subsume narrative time, as we saw on occasion in the sermons;[141] past action here has *already* overtaken the time of its reporting. In order to re-establish his own 'speaking now' at the crest of the action, at a point of controllable narrative retrospect, Donne's Prayer lists these sins according to type (55.11-20). The lengthy scholastic distinctions Raspa takes to be satirical actually serve the serious confessional purpose of containing and exorcizing a multitude of otherwise innumerable individual sins. Anatomizing them, like his body, preserves Donne from formless dissolution.

Devotion 11 extends this anatomy by penetrating to the heart. If "wee our selves are principally in our contemplation" (11M: 57.17-18), Donne delves here deepest within in search of a reading. The conclusion he emerges with is that his own heart is of "a middle kinde ... not so perfit, as to bee given, but that the very giving, mends" (11E: 59.26-7). Just as Chapter 3 argued that Donne's narrative action was self-fulfilling ("though I faile of my required ends,/ The attempt is glorious, and it self commends"),[142] and that it was paradoxically *through* conscious experience of the present that he derived a sense of eternity, so the Prayer here anticipates Christ's ability "to make this present sicknesse, everlasting health", through virtues "imprinted ... in all creatures" (61.12-14).

Devotion 12 moves a step nearer to imprinting virtues, as the physicians start to extract "*vapors from the Head*" (62.3). These are, as the Meditation laments, Donne's "owne *vapors*" (63.2): "our selves are the *Well*, that breaths out this exhalation" (62.26-7). Inevitably, "this exhalation" refers us back to the text; both 'vapours' derive from Donne's "*Calling*" (63.13), and his examples, explicitly or implicitly, raise comparisons with libellous speech as well as poisonous writing (63.18, 29-32, 64.8-14). Yet as the Expostulation goes on to note, exhalations may also be positive, proceeding from the "blessed inspirations" of the Holy Ghost (9P: 50.15-20). The saving text that the physicians are beginning to elicit has emerged decisively by Devotion 13.

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[141]Chapter 3, pp. 111-12.

[142]"Elegie XVII", ll. 36-7.

It is here that the disease makes its visual declaration: "*The Sicknes declares the infection and malignity thereof by spots*" (67.7-8). This, as Clara Lander comments, is the 'keystone' of the illness.[143] At last the disease confesses itself, and Donne's body offers itself up as a text of signs to be read by the physicians, a "*spotted sacrifice*" (13E: 68.31). But the delivery of a narrative does not necessarily bring reassurance (13M: 68.13-17):

> a woman is comforted with the birth of her *Son*, her body is eased of a burthen; but if shee could *prophetically* read his *History*, how *ill a man*, perchance *how ill a sonne*, he would prove, shee should receive a greater burthen into her *Mind*.

Donne's case appears actually worse, since this birth is not distinct. The narrative remains part of himself, written on the body: "The *flesh* ... spotteth it selfe, with it self" (13E: 69.6-7). Its "*History*", still in process and as yet open-ended, is also his. Nonetheless, he ends with a declaration of faith, that

> These heates, *O Lord*, which thou hast broght upon this *body*, are but thy chafing of the *wax*, that thou mightest *seale* me to thee; These *spots* are but the *letters*, in which thou hast written thine owne *Name* (13P: 70.22-5).

In Donne's physical "body", we do indeed find the *text* 'Body', and the confusion of the two generates for the reader a "new" or what I called in Chapter 3 a sacramental reading.[144] As "These *spots* are ... *letters*" to be read by the physicians, so the letters we read emulate the spots of Donne's body. Words become flesh, to be read again as words as we re-enact the original heuristic process.

One effect of this textualization of the body, as Chapter 3 suggested, is to replace 'real' time with narrative time. The spectre Devotion 10 raises of the time-lag of

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[143]"A Dangerous Sickness Which Turned to a Spotted Fever", *SEL* 11 (1971) 89-108, 90 (in typhus, she notes, spots emerge around day 12: 99). Seelig places the crisis more centrally, 'midpoint' in the *Devotions* between 12 and 13 where the event occurs ("In Sickness and Health", 106-7). Cf. N.J. C. Andreasen, who asserts that Devotion 12 alone marks the central turning point, with an achievement of brotherly love; but this climactic realization occurs more decisively in Devotions 16-18 ("Donne's *Devotions* and the Psychology of Assent", *MP* 62 (1965) 207-16, 214-16).

[144]Pp. 145, 156-8.

language and events which occur more quickly than they can be reported is thus countered, since the event now narrated is itself narrative, and reports on itself. Devotion 14's explicit discussion of time brings us to the directly present, self-referential moment of reading, as Donne addresses the reader outright:

> that which you call *present*, is not *now* the same that it was, when you began to call it so in this *Line*, (before you found that word, *present*, or that *Monosyllable*, *now*, the present, & the *Now* is past,) (14M: 71.21-4).

Prior to this, Donne cites both Plato's view of time as "but the *Measure of Motion*", and Augustine's account of an "*Imaginary halfe-nothing, Tyme*" which, "howsoever it may seeme to have three *stations*, *past*, *present*, and *future*, yet the *first* and *last* of these *are* not (one is not, now, & the other is not yet)" (14M: 71.18-24).[145] By translating the continually-disappearing present or *nunc stans* with which Augustine is left into the textual terms of a rapidly-vanishing narrative, Donne again combines logico-spatial and psychological approaches.[146] Time becomes the measure of *narrative* motion, and indeed conversely, reading becomes our personal measure of time. Time passes not *while* but *because* we read. The urgency of Donne's account arises therefore from our need to continue imprinting our sense of the present, to constantly read the now. This creation of a *nunc currens* is what allows Donne to contain time as the moving image of eternity within Augustine's present; he rejects again here Traherne's expansionist view - "*Eternity* is not an everlasting flux of *Tyme*' - distinguishing clearly between eternity and perpetuity (14M: 71.27ff).[147]

The Expostulation proceeds to emphasize the importance of "the present life" (72.33-73.1). As a preliminary, however, Donne introduces the transitoriness of "occasion":

> how little of our *life* is *Occasion*, *opportunity* to receyve good in; and how little of that *occasion*, doe wee apprehend, and lay hold of? How busie, and perplexed a *Cobweb*, is the *Happinesse* of Man here, that must bee made up with a

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[145]See Chapter 3, pp. 120-22.

[146]Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 128-31.

[147]Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 118-19.

> *Watchfulnesse*, to lay hold upon *Occasion*, which is but a little peece of that, which is *Nothing*, *Tyme*? (14M: 72.4-9)

Despite his ingenuous definition, the self-referentiality of earlier passages makes it impossible not to relate these "occasions" to those of Donne's structure and title. As the Expostulation confirms, these "little peeces" of time are precisely the moments of crisis which give rise to Donne's renewed outbursts, left by God

> for *assistances*, and for the *Exaltation* of our *Devotion*, to fix our selves, at certaine *periodicall, & stationary times*, upon the consideration of those things, which thou hast done for us ... how those things have wrought upon us, and disposed us to a spirituall recovery, and convalescence (73.7-12).

A sustained focus on these crises, these emergent occasions or "*periodicall, & stationary times*" in the narrative provides the reader with a continually significant, evolving present, the kind of charged time described by Frank Kermode as *kairos* rather than *chronos*.[148]

Within the Expostulation, Donne also provides an example of the sort of telescoping found in the sermons, which creates the condition for the continual narrative retrospect of the *nunc currens*. Explicitly comparing such temporal compression with God's eternity, Donne asks, "Since *a day is as a thousand yeres with thee*, Let, *O Lord*, a *day*, be as a *weeke* to me; and in this one, let me consider *seven daies*" (74.34-75.1). He then inserts a metaphorical week of spiritual preparation into this fourteenth day of illness, seven days of a new Creation culminating in the vision of his "*Everlasting Saboth*" - the true *nunc stans* (76.15).[149] Paradoxically, the exercise of counting takes Donne beyond "reckning any more *Dayes* after" (76.16-17); seven is the number for infinity (4P: 24.18), and it is once more *through* telling time that Donne arrives at a sense of

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[148]See Chapter 3, p. 116.

[149]Terry Sherwood discusses Devotion 14's enunciation of a "temporal format for the whole work" (*Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought*, Toronto: Univ.of Toronto Press, 1984, 175-6).

eternity.[150] The reader's experience mirrors Donne's on a larger scale, for we too must pass through seven central Devotions on time and text, the seven actual occasions or crises of illness recreated in miniature in Devotion 14, in order to reach Donne's climactic third birth. The fourteenth Expostulation itself is the longest segment in the *Devotions* with 129 lines; only after its explicit and protracted discussion of time do we reach a coincidence of the present with eternity: "so bright a *day* here" as will last "*even to the end of the world*" (14P: 77.8-11).

Devotion 15, lastly, intensifies the patient's now-achieved state of narrative self-consciousness. In the headtitles, "*Interea insomnes noctes Ego duco, Diesque*/I sleepe not day nor night", we have for the first time in both Latin and English the first person pronoun, Donne's identification with the present, narrating self.[151] The extended, preternatural wakefulness Donne concentrates on here serves to heighten awareness of time's passing. This is very much a Devotion "*interea*", the Meditation recalling its predecessor's "first *seven daies*" (15M: 77.27) and anticipating the "*recreation*" of Devotions 16-18 (78.24-5): "hee that hath seene his *friend* die to *day*, or knowes hee shall see it to *morrow*" (77.18).[152] It reiterates the paradox of Devotion 14 - "oh, if I be entring now into *Eternitie*, where there shall bee no more distinction of *houres*, why is it al my businesse now *to tell Clocks*?" - as well as its conclusion, that such "continuall waking" is a "*parasceve*" to finally "entring into that presence" (78.26-34). That word recurs (15E: 80.21; 15P: 80.32), for it is in this interstice that the present is also most highly focussed. Without 'sleeping time', *chronos* equals *kairos*. There is nothing *but* the wakeful presence of the text, and with Donne's focus on watching ("The name of

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[150]Cf. the attempt made by later writers like Vaughan and Crashaw to transcend by *distorting* normal patterns of counting (Helen Wilcox, "'Curious Frame': The Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric as Genre", in *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric*, ed. John Roberts, Columbia and London: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1994, 9-27, 19).

[151]Cf. "*the Patient*" (3M: 14.26), "*the Heart*" (11M: 56.5), etc.

[152]Cf. Arshagouni's structural conclusions from the same adverb; here I depart from her structure on thematic grounds ("The Latin 'Stationes'", 202-3, 207-8). Sherwood's "recreational format" for Devotion 14 also emphasizes that "The present must contain the past and the future; it must distil the whole generic pattern in the moment" (*Fulfilling the Circle*, 177).

Watchmen belongs to our *profession*' [15E: 80.7-8]), the action of reading becomes itself the occasion. In watching Donne watch, we watch ourselves watch in Colie's "infinite regress of self-regard".[153] Donne ends by rooting himself in this self-reflexive *nunc stans* : "returne thou to that *Minute*" (15P: 81.23).

Devotion 16-23: Structures of Division and Transcending

... things which are/not.

Devotions 16, 17, 18, 19

We are returned indeed in the third "preternaturall Birth", "*now ... to* Life, *from this* Sicknes" (3.6-10). In Devotions 16-18, Donne achieves a climactic, imaginative identification with his dying neighbour, a projection of suffering that Biro describes as creation's primary, underlying impulse.[154] Devotion 19 follows with the appropriate baptismal waters of rebirth, as the illness breaks and recovery is in sight: "*aspicienda resurgit Terra*" (97.8-9). Through a creative realization of human relationship and shared mortality, Donne is spiritually as well as physically resurrected.

Devotions 16-18 focus therefore on resolving the division and isolation of the earlier Devotions. They are themselves "*adjoyning*" like the nearby church (81.27), since uniquely in the *Devotions*, their subject - the three bells rung for the sick - spills out across the *station* divisions. The purpose of bell-ringing, to "bring[ ] the *Congregation* together, and unite[ ] *God* and his *People*" (16E: 83.23-4), is fulfilled in the overlapping structure. In fact, it is Donne's voice which rings out across the divisions. Opening in the borrowed voice of another "*Author*, who writ a *Discourse of Bells*", a "*fellow Prisoner*" (16M: 81.30ff),

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[153]On Montaigne: *Paradoxia Epidemica,* 519. Cf. Devotion 6's unsatisfactory circle of unequal regard (p. 241 above).

[154]"The Rhetoric of Pain", 11.

he gradually assumes the overarching voice of the bell itself - the "voice of thy Church" (16E: 83.17), a "*remembrance*[ ] of ... *Mortalitie*" (16E: 84.19), a prophet of death (16M: 82.17-22).[154] If, at first, it has been the dead man reading Donne his "*funerall Sermon*, in the voice of these *Bells*" (16P: 85.15-16), finally it is Donne who preaches "*a repetition Sermon*" to the reader (16E: 84.18), enacting the process of identification.[155] God has indeed "*sent one from the dead to speak*" (16P: 85.18), to provide comfort in the shared brotherhood of death (16M: 83.10-13). Through such "*assistances*", we reach the 'exalted' stage of Donne's "preternaturall" third birth. As he recapitulates the natural and supernatural births, "*into the* World" and "*into the* Ministery",

> as in making us *Christians*, thou diddest not destroy that which wee were before, *naturall men*, so in the exalting of our religious devotions now we are *Christians*, thou hast beene pleased to continue to us those *assistances* which did worke upon the affections of *naturall men* before (16E: 84.32-85.1).

This movement of creation is cyclical, insofar as we begin and end as "*naturall men*", only "*home*, at [our] journies end" (16E: 84.6). The Prayer closes, however, by invoking a further "*resurrection* to a new life" (85.25-6) - again "we *enter* when we *die*" (16E: 83.31).

Devotion 17 now explodes with images of union. Earlier references to religious differences, Jews and Gentiles (16E: 83.18-20, 84.29), are subsumed under the all-embracing name of Catholic: "The *Church* is *Catholick, universall ... All* that she does, belongs to *all*" (17M: 86.8-10).[156] Mankind is "of one *Author*, and is one *volume*" (17M: 86.13ff); "*one sound*" compasses all the voices of the Scriptures (17E: 88.8, 12). Devotion 16's sympathy with one dead individual expands into a vision of universal empathy, wherein "this *Bell* calls us all" (17M: 86.22):

> No Man is an *Iland*, intire of itselfe ... Any Man's *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*; and therefore, never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee* (17M: 87.5-11).

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[154]For the importance of bells in ordering social, cultural and political rites of passage, see Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 68-80.

[155]This may also be a reference to intertextual charity: J.K. Evans suggests the image of the tolling bells may have been borrowed from a fellow-preacher, Charles Fitz. Geoffrey's 1620 funeral sermon ("Who Cast Donne's Tolling Bells?" *JRMMRA* 2 (1981), 113-16).

[156]See Chapter 4, p. 178.

In this great epiphany, Donne achieves the saving insight of man's humanity with man. He is saved *through* charity - "by this consideration of anothers danger, I take mine owne into Contemplation, and so secure my selfe" (17M: 87.25-6) - and *by* charity: becoming "another" for the reader, his own "danger" becomes the reader's instructional present. The relationship between writer (Donne), written (dying man, *Moriens*) and inscribed object (reader) becomes confused in the workings of a universal charity, anticipating God's final move to "unite *him & us* in one *Communion of Saints*" (17P: 90.30-1). The patient is legibly restored to society, and the individual at last becomes part of a whole.

Nonetheless, Donne admits he is yet "afraid to *die*" completely into saintly communion (17P: 89.29). What he therefore does is to invoke in the Prayer a picture of the traditional 'good death': the dying man perfecting his account, drawing comfort from divine forgiveness and "giving such outward *testimonies* thereof, as all that are about him may derive comforts from thence" (90.9ff: 18-20).[158] In this way, Donne contains death in life, the completed circle of the dead man's life within the *Devotions*' unfinished, progressive account of his own: "this [blessing], that before your death, you would consider your own in mine" (17E: 88.13-14). The *Devotions*' form moreover reflects this imaging; within the implicitly incomplete structure of 23 Devotions, Devotions 16-18 (the narrative of the dead man) have strong connotations of cyclicity.[159] References to circular journeys recur ("our *home, heaven*" [17M: 87.21-2]), and Donne repeatedly alludes to beginnings in the context of ends (17E: 89.10, 17M: 86.23-30).

In Devotion 18's final double-knell, the doom-laden first line echoes the headnote: "*The bell rings out* ... The *Bell* rings out" (91.3-5). Although "It is the *going out*, more than the *coming in*, that concernes us" (18M: 92.11-12), Donne in his opening concentrates now on the connection between the two. The soul thus begins where the

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[158]See Arnold Stein, "Handling Death: John Donne in Public Meditation", *ELH* 48 (1981) 496-515, 497-8.

[159]Donne rings them, significantly, in the "inverted *Order*" (83.30) of 3, 1, 2, funeral, passing and death (Raspa, *Notes* to p. 81); cf. A.B. Chambers on the circular structure of echoes in "La Corona", which allows the poem to begin equally in the middle or at the end ("'La Corona': Philosophic, Sacred and Poetic Uses of Time", in *New Essays on Donne*, 140-72, 160ff).

body ends, in the "*nothing*" (91.12ff) to which the latter eventually dissolves (92.25ff). Similarly, our two first births "in respect of *our naturall Mother*" are compared at the end of the Meditation to that final opening from the grave: "in her *wombe* we *grew*; and when she was delivered of us, wee were planted in some *place*, in some *calling* in the *world*; In the wombe of the Earth, wee *diminish*, and when shee is *delivered* of us, our *grave* opened for another, wee are not *transplanted*, but *transported* [as] *dust*" (93.12-16).[160]

These are all births; but as the Expostulation emphasizes, the Meditation omits the third, intermediary birth made possible through the realization of brotherly charity: "Is not this, O my *God*, a holy kinde of *raising up seed to my dead brother*,[161] if I, by the meditation of *his death*, produce a better *life* in my selfe?" (94.20-2). This spiritual rebirth is the metaphorical lesson of Donne's physical illness and recovery. It is, Donne asserts, "a *second death*, if none live the better, by me, after my *death*, by the *manner* of my *death*" (94.26-7): for him who studies the death fruitlessly, it is also "the worst *death*, that ... of resisting thy *spirit*" (95.12-17). Donne's own contribution to producing a better life in the reader through instruction in the *ars moriendi* (and hence a third birth that escapes the second death) is the *Devotions*: the hidden subtext of the claim, though "I ... *die*, ... a *Creature* of mine owne shall be *immortall*" (95.27-9). Emphasis again falls on the saving text produced, and the process of replacing event with word is reiterated. Faced with the body's decay, the Meditation depicts narrative again overtaken by act - "wee cannot expresse it *so fast*, as it growes *worse* and *worse*" (92.26-7) - only for the Prayer to restore the primacy of narrative: "if I over-runne thy pace, and prevent thy hand, and imagine *death* more instant upon mee than thou has bid him bee, yet the voice belongs to me" (96.9-11). We move from Latin to English headnote, direct speech ("*Mortuus es*") to indirect ("the bell ... tells me ... that I am dead") (91.1-3), as active *tolling* becomes mere *telling*; finally, narrative itself becomes action, and Donne can directly merge the two, first person with second: "the voice belongs to me; *I am dead*" (96.10-11).

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[160]Cf. We go "from one mother to another, from the womb to the grave" (Gosse, II.174); also Chapter 4, p. 205.

[161]Significantly, from *Genesis* 38:8.

Donne concludes in the *ars moriendi/ vivendi* spirit - "*I am dead,* I was *borne dead* ... the whole course of *life* is but an *active death*" (96.11-13).[162] The essential loss of a final dramatic focus in this scenario is registered, however, in the slight anxiety of the final prayer for "*ends* swallowed in *infiniteness*" (97.234). The *Devotions* itself must somehow end endlessly, without Donne's own deathscene.[163]

Devotion 19 brings the waters of baptism to crown this intermediary, "preternaturall" birth, with a flood of sea imagery (97.15ff). Donne also sets it in context. As we had a type of baptism at our first birth - "the first *life,* that thou gavest to any *Creatures,* was in *waters*" (19E: 100.33) - and the ceremony itself at our entry into the Church, so in turn "*Baptisme* carries a *figure* of that *purity,* which we shall have in *perfection* in the *new Jerusalem*" (19E: 100.10-12), at "the *last* day" (19E: 102.31-2). We look back to the first "*Creation* of this *world*", and forward to the last: "proceed in *that way,* and perfit *that worke,* and establish me in a *Sabbath,* and *rest* in *thee,* by this thy *seale* of *bodily restitution*" (19P: 103.17-26). This recovery is thus set between other regenerations; Donne is dealing with "*third Heavens*" (19E: 99.16), a typological sequence of births.

The prospect of the Devotion, then, is towards the final rebirth of which this is in turn a type. But even Nature, Donne notes, "so *regular,* and so *pregnant*", requires time "to bring her worke to perfection, and to light" (19M: 97.27-8). As a "*woman* that is weake, cannot put off her *ninth moneth* to a *tenth,* for her *deliverie* ... nor a *Queene* cannot hasten it to a *seventh,* that shee may be ready for some other pleasure" (19M: 98.2-5), Donne must await "dispatch" and a final berthing at land (19E: 102.22ff). He continues to search for God's purpose that "*terminates* every action" (19E: 102.28), and the Prayer ends still looking ahead: "*O Lord,* let *this daies* comfort be the *earnest* of to *morrowes*" (104.21).

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[162]A perspective emphasized in the 'tombstone' layout of the first three editions, where every page resembles an epitaph (cf. 3M: 15.19-21: "all that the patient saies ... is but a varying of his owne *Epitaph*").

[163]See Chapter 4, Section D.

Devotions 20, 21, 22, 23

Traditionally, critics have considered that, through the Bells sequence, Donne finds faith and is prepared for death: in Friederich's words, "aesthetically successful completions signify that intellectually or emotionally adequate solutions ... have been found".[164] Yet Donne does not close on this earnest of triumph; on the contrary, we find him already fearing relapse at the end of Devotion 19 (104.12ff), seeking a surer end. Despite the three births of the text now traversed, Devotion 20 laments that things "are not alwaies determined in *Resolutions;* We cannot alwaies say, *this was concluded*" (20M: 104.29-105.2). When, Donne asks, "shall it be thy pleasure to put an *end* to all ...?" (20E: 106.18-19). Unable to envision this moment of closure, he adopts as he did for his 'unfinished' sermons the image of an incomplete circle, almost but not quite rounded off: "hee that would describe a *circle* in paper, if hee have brought that *circle* within one *inch* of finishing, yet if he remove his *compasse,* he cannot make it up a perfit *circle*" (107.33-5).[165] Having only "gone so farre", Donne may yet fail of his required end: "if I depart from *thee,* my *center,* all is unperfit". What is needed to close up the circumference is "a returning to *thee*" (108.2-4), to the indivisible centre or compass-point of origin: "thou *beginnest* where wee *beginne*" (107.11-12). But this requires a return to nothingness; for perfect purgation, Donne must yet be "ground even to an *attenuation,* and ... proceed to *evacuation,* all waies to exinanition and annihilation" (20M: 106.14-15).[166]

Devotion 21 continues the theme of seemingly endless progress, endless division of space and time. As Christ, "alwaies *infinite* in *himselfe,* & incapable of *addition,* was yet pleased to grow in the *Virgins* wombe, & to grow in *stature,* in the sight of men" (21P: 114.30-2), so Donne too seeks "a farther and farther growth of thy *grace*" (21E: 114.18). The image, moreover, of *circular* progess is developed; man "*moves,* and moves in a *circle,*

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[164]"Strategies of Persuasion", 53, 58ff; also John Demaray, "Donne's Three Steps to Death", *Personalist* 46 (1965), 366-81, 366.

[165]See Chapter 4, pp. 209-12.

[166]Cf. Friederich, who finds already in Devotion 19's rhetoric, "baroque ceilings ... all fly[ing] toward the center of infinity" ("Strategies of Persuasion", 67).

giddily". Men "put into *Circles* ... move from *place* to *place* ... fall into little *Circles*, and within a step or two, are at their *end*" (21M: 111.23-9). There are, as Donne makes explicit, two perspectives that exist in the text with regard to this circle: "I seeme to *stand* to my *Company*, and yet am carried, in a giddy, and *circular motion*, as I *stand*" (21M: 111.20-1). From the present viewpoint, Donne's continued progress through life imitates the closing of a circumference; from the perspective of eternity, his life is "seen to have been all along one motion":[167] a completed circle returned to its centre, a statically resolved image of death.[168] Parallel visions of completion and incompletion, arrival and progress, reside within the same form.

The theme of relapse, or return to beginning, connects the two, making one the other's fulfillment. Meditation 21, looking back to the first Fall, envisages a second, post-baptismal "fall into *infinite sinne*" (110.9). Illustrating this, Devotions 16-18's uplifting vision of universal compassion degenerates into a source of fretfulness: "how little, and how impotent a peece of the *world*, is any *Man* alone? and how much lesse a peece of *himselfe* is *that Man*?" (110.19-21). Where, furthermore, Prayer 20 envisaged the marriage of soul and body as "*Man* and *Woman* together ... one *flesh*" (109.3-4), Donne here imagines divorce: "If man had beene left *alone* in this *world* ..." (110.6). In fact, the couple were themselves sufficient un-two the day, as Donne notes with a punning reminder of the etymology of evil: "to make *Woman* ill, the *Devill* saw, that there needed no third" (110.12-13).[169]

The third does come, but as the restorative signalled in Donne's grateful invocation, "O *blessed and glorious Trinity* ... you *three*" (21E: 112.25-6). Now remarried, the resurrections of body and soul together produce a third: "this *bodily rising*, by thy *grace*, [is] an *earnest* of *a second resurrection* from *sinne*, and of a *third*, to *everlasting glory*" (21P: 114.28-9). Or, as Donne reiterates it:

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[167]Chapter 4, p. 211.

[168]Cf. Freccero's reading of "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (Chapter 3, fn. 81).

[169]Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 179-82.

> This *Resurrection* of my *body* [from the *miseries* and *calamities* of this life] shewes me the *Resurrection* of my *soule* [from *sinne*]; and both *here* severally of both together hereafter [a *Resurrection* in *Heaven*] (21E: 112.9-10).

That is, Donne's third birth into physical-spiritual health (his second resurrection) also *recalls* his second birth into the Church (his first resurrection through grace), while pointing to a final, fourth birth (his third resurrection). This is the same "threefold Resurrection" cited in IV.1 (56.426ff) and again in IV.14, based on St Bernard's three births: after birth "*into the* World", we "must be borne againe, and againe; againe by baptisme, for Originall sin, and for actuall sin, againe by repentance" (359.521ff).[170]

The penultimate Devotion returns to the very first birth of all, the seed of our fathers (22E: 118.31), the "*root and occasion*" of disease: "*Adam* might have had *Paradise* ... yet he gave it over" (22M: 116.19-21). Donne sinks despairingly into a contemplation of man's "innate *tincture* of sin, imprinted by *Nature*" (22E: 119.19), using for this natural birth natural metaphors of the body as a farm: "the whole *ground* is of an *ill nature*, the whole soile *ill disposed*" (22M: 116.28-9). Charity once more recedes in this view of man's innate (de)composition, for "There is nothing in the same *man*, to helpe *man*, nothing in *mankind* to helpe *one another*" (117.23ff). The very "*union* of the *body* and the *soule*" just celebrated is now identified with the beginning of sin (22E: 118.12).

Donne's final Devotion deals explicitly with "the fearefull danger of relapsing" (121.1-2). Here at its journey's end, the text looks ahead by looking back, to stations passed along the way: "It is not in *mans body*, as it is in the *Citie*, that when *the Bell* hath rung, to cover your *fire*, and rake up the *embers*, you may lie downe, and sleepe without feare" (23M: 121.4-6). The human body-politic of Devotions 11-12, bell-ringing of Devotions 16-18, fiery bed of Devotion 3, embers of Devotion 22, sleep of Devotion 15 and fear of Devotion 6 — all these echoes of past experience are at once recollected and seen as a possible guide to the future: "stil there is a feare of a *relapse*" (121.7).

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[170]See also Joseph Duncan, on "Resurrections in Donne's 'A Hymne to God the Father' and 'Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse'", *JDJ* 7(2) (1988) 183-95.

The future appears, furthermore, not simply as randomly repetitive, but circular. Besides discussing beginnings and ends in conjunction (23E: 125.23-7), Donne links them in the *Devotions* itself. In the very last Meditation, he recalls the first: "that *comfort* which wee might have in our first *sicknesse*, from *that meditation, Alas, how generally miserable is Man, and how subject to diseases*" (122.10-12). The italics that usually mark Biblical quotation now signal Donne's own prior words. While in Meditation 1, sickness was thought "undeserved, if we consider only *disorder*" (7.13-14), in this last, relapsing is now admitted to be "*destroying so soone, so long a worke ... by my disorder*" (122.16-17). In the first Devotion, furthermore, Donne has already anticipated this final retrospect: his vision there of himself in the end, looking "backward to, to the considerations of thy mercies afforded mee from the beginning," has come full circle (1P: 10.3-4).

The reader now faces the very real possibility that he must return to the beginning of the text, joining "this *Minute*" of dissolution at the end of the narrative (23P: 126.26) to that which dissolves into illness at its opening: "this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute" (1M: 7.5-6). With relapse, once again "wee must *pant* through all those *fierie heats*, and *saile* thorow all those *overflowing sweats* ... *watch* through all those long *nights*, and *mourne* through all those long *daies*" (23M: 121.24-6): "we must goe the same *way* over againe" (23M: 122.1).

Yet counterposing this, Devotion 23 maintains a strong sense of progression. The Expostulation opens, uniquely, with "My *God*, my *God*, my *God*" (122.30); Donne's usual double-invocation (borrowed from Christ on the cross) gains Trinitarian force in the dying moments of the text, now addressing "thou mightie *Father*, who hast beene my *Physitian*; Thou glorious *Sonne*, who hast beene my *physicke*; Thou blessed *Spirit*, who hast *prepared* and *applied* all to mee" (122.30-2).[171] This is followed by a tripartite recapitulation: "wee have *three lives*, in our *state* of *sinne*; and where the *sinnes* of *youth* expire, those of our *middle yeeres* enter: and those of our *age* after them" (123.32-4). Donne adds, "the *occasion* of my *feare* is more *pregnant* then so" (123.35-124.1); and

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[171]Cf. fn 19 above.

indeed, these are in the nature of three births, which can be parallelled with those of the *Epistle*: the life of fallen man in original sin (Donne's 'natural' life before he entered the Ministry), of Christian man in actual sin (Donne's "*middle yeeres*" from 1615, and the age of 43), and of man temporarily reprieved to health, but facing possible relapse (Donne's life henceforth, from 1623). Through a triumphal progress towards expansiveness that climaxes in Devotions 16-18, the text has shifted from "I have had *three Births*" at its opening (3.7), to "wee have *three lives*" here at its close; from an exclusive, historic past to an inclusive, dramatic present; from individual "I" to universal "Wee".

This last Expostulation is also unusually expansive in length; characteristically, the closer to silence he comes, the less willing Donne is to lose his grip on the words of reassurance.[172] The Prayer similarly crams in "*two Prayers, two Supplications*" for one (126.15). With its final conclusion, two again swells to three: "Thy holy *Apostle, Saint Paul,* was shipwrackd *thrice;* & yet *stil saved*" (127.2-3). Donne like Paul has been preaching in fear of being finally cast away;[173] like Paul, he faces three shipwrecks (lapses after birth, grace and recovery to health), yet under the New Testament, will escape damnation. As Saul was reborn as Paul and then Saint Paul in his three shipwrecks, so Donne, having elsewhere traced his progress from Jack to John, makes here his claim for canonization.[174] Although this third naming comes only with death, ultimately he too will be one in three, and three in one: brought "to such a *participation of thy selfe* (*thy selfe,* O my *God,* cannot bee *parted*) to such an *intire possession* of thee" (126.23-5). This, Leonard Barkan notes, is the paradox of anatomy, that man can be simultaneously "dismembered by his own multitude of component parts", yet "reunited with the cosmos and God because they too are analogous bodies with component parts,

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[172]Cf. Chapter 4, section B3.

[173] 3E: 17.16-17: this "sinne of feare" that he "shall perish on the shore" thus comes in the *third* verse of "A Hymn to God the Father", ll. 13-14 .

[174]In his poem of that name, he associates sainthood with sacrificial service (there to profane, here to divine love): "we'are Tapers to, and at our owne cost die" (l. 21); also VI.4.101.237-9.

and the single individual can find his place within those larger bodies" - "every man is a peece of the *Continent*" (17M: 87.6).[175]

In conclusion, two conflicting patterns emerge from this last section of the *Devotions*. Although the *Epistle*'s third birth takes place in Devotions 16-19, with Donne's spiritual realization of the essential unity of mankind parallelling a physical recovery, the text significantly does not end at this moment of consummation.[176] Donne traces the completed circle of his neighbour's passing, death and funeral, but this image of perfection is merely vicarious. His own account continues to trail on through the gradual convalescence of Devotions 20-23, and its repeated tripartite recapitulations and anticipations indicate a final prospect or fourth birth ahead. Against this open-ended structure, however, Donne juxtaposes a circular narrative; links between Devotions 1 and 23 as well as the final theme of relapse strongly suggest the possibility not of indefinite linear progress but a complete return to beginning. Moreover, the insertion of the postdated *Epistle* at the outset of the text guarantees circularity; knowledge of Donne's third birth into recovery (alone described as a return, not an entry) prefaces our entire reading of the disease, replicating on the larger scale the circular ordering of Devotions 16-18. In Donne's beginning is his end, and, since death is the only outright cure for disease (18P: 96.7-8), recovery entails a relapsing structure. We are 'sentenced' to the earthly text, unable to escape consciousness and trapped in the movement of paradox - "an infinite *action*, not an infinite progress".[177] The *Devotions* in this reading resembles the cyclic volume of Borges, "whose last page was identical with the first, a book which had the possibility of continuing indefinitely", or alternatively, whose "spine is continuous and ... follows the complete circle of the walls [of a circular chamber]".[178]

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[175]*Nature's Work of Art: The Human Body as Image of the World* (N.H.: Yale U.P., 1975), 59. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 18-19: "thus man, through that which makes him man, assimilates himself to ... God".

[176]Although cf. Frost's chart of the *Devotions*, in which symbolically it does (*Holy Delight*, 158-9).

[177]Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, 519.

[178]"The Garden of Forking Paths", in *Labyrinths*, edd. Donald Yates and James Irby (Penguin, 1970), 44-54, 51; "The Library of Babel", 78-86, 79.

But in spite of this, by the time we reach the end of the *Devotions*, a sense of forward movement has been generated by the linearity of the reading process - "directed, progressive, ratiocinative".[179] As Frank Kermode astutely remarks, "We cannot ... be denied an end; it is one of the great charms of books that they have to end".[180] We read, that is, partly *for* the silence of resolution that follows the close of a book (the peace that passeth all understanding). Donne relied for dramatic effect on precisely the imminence of this silence, and the *Devotions* inevitably constitutes one of his many valedictions.[181] As its beginning emulates *Genesis*, so its end images *Revelation*. The latter too closes ambivalently, being what Frye calls "emphatically the end of the Bible" and yet "a remarkably open end": "The panoramic apocalypse gives way ... to a second apocalypse that, ideally, begins in the reader's mind as soon as he has finished reading".[182] If the apocalypse is the world without the ego (138), the end of Donne's text is an apocalyptic loss of the 'I' that has redacted the *Devotions*, and effectively the death of the author.[183] Hence the extended comfort the last few Devotions continue to provide in the face of their fearful projections. Within Borges' cyclical volume we glimpse his infinitely divisible "*single volume* ... containing an infinite number of infinitely thin leaves ... each apparent page would unfold into other analogous ones; the inconceivable middle page would have no reverse".[184]

Donne's paradoxical text, therefore, looks both forward to death and backward to recovery, progressing and relapsing simultaneously. It progresses through a final physical relapse into eternity, and relapses through circular physical progress into time. Like its antitype, the Logos, its workings as "*direct line*" and "*Circle*, first, last and altogether" are thus merged (1P: 9.32-10.4). Its final words, a prayer against "a *relapse*

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[179]Margaret Maurer, "The Circular Argument of Donne's 'La Corona'", *SEL* 22 (1982) 51-68, 58.

[180]*The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, Oxford: U.P., 1968, 23.

[181]Cf. the three "Valediction" poems, "A Hymn to Christ", II.11.

[182]*The Great Code*, 137.

[183]Cf. Colie's account of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*: "The book does not quite end, and yet it does end, realistically speaking, as any intimate discourse ends, in the expectation of continued life and continued discourse" (*Paradoxia Epidemica*, 460).

[184]"The Library of Babel", *Labyrinths*, 86.

into those *sinnes*, which I have *truely repented*, and thou hast *fully pardoned*" (127.10-11), maintain the tension between completion and incompletion.[185] On the one hand, the spectre of relapse implies continuation of process, although it actually returns us circularly to Devotion 1; a *full pardon*, on the other hand, evokes an end-moment of perfect reconciliation, while paradoxically leaving the *Devotions* still bordering on the textless future. Donne thus combines the two *ars moriendi* traditions examined in Chapter 4: the instantaneously perfect circle wherein the life of the text is an undifferentiated dying, and the gradual, pieced-up compass that focusses on an end to come. In the two perspectives of St Augustine, he both "seeme[s] to *stand* ... and yet [is] ... carried, in a giddy, and *circular motion*" (21M: 111.20-1).[186]

A final examination of the framework of the *Devotions* places these joint perspectives in the context of our discussion so far. My primary argument in this chapter (and which, insofar as it dictated the subjects of Chapters 1-4, underlies the dissertation as a whole) is the existence in the *Devotions* of a thematic structure, based on the *Epistle*'s biographical "*three* Births". Just as, in *The second Anniversary*, the soul is refined into a "third birth/ (Creation gave her one, a second, grace)" (ll. 214-15), so here in Donne's heuristic *ars moriendi* manual we trace his progress from natural world to public world, and eventually a spiritual understanding of human relationship through charity.

This journey of births strongly resembles that advocated by a more modern thinker; in summarizing, we may adduce Hannah Arendt's "philosophy of natality" by way of comparison.[187] Donne's first "Naturall" birth "*into the* World" is Arendt's 'primary natality' - represented by the imagery and problematical discussion of beginnings in Devotions 1-4. His second, into the public world via the Ministry, is

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[185]See Seelig's grammatical analysis ("In Sickness and in Health", 103-4).

[186]Chapter 4, section B5.

[187]See generally Patricia Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Natality* (London: Macmillan, 1989).

dramatically, and again critically, re-enacted in Devotions 5-8, in the individual's approach toward society. This conforms to Arendt's 'secondary natality': "With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth".[188] Her "rebirth of beginning"[189] moreover, like Donne's, typologically recapitulates its predecessor, since "the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting" - the essence of political activity.

Devotions 9-15 then turn inward to discuss the world of the text, withdrawing from the inadequacies of the secular world glimpsed in Devotions 5-8. In the same way, Arendt in her progress from secondary to tertiary natality moves from the political to philosophical, in search of "an image of how the mind can withdraw from the world without ignoring it or demeaning it".[190] While she suggests explicating "the theoretical life ... in terms of the phenomenal world and not in terms of the world of true essence",[191] Donne in these Devotions uses worldly narrative typologically to approach the religious life of the Word, enabling similarly a life of contemplation that avoids the monastic sin of trivialising this world. For Donne, progressive narrative specifically measures movement in time to the atemporal; for Arendt generally, constant rebirth maintains temporal consciousness, leading eventually to a third "birth into the timelessness of thought".[192] For both, it is an Augustinian sense of the present - "the location of the thinking ego in time ... this mysterious and slippery now, a mere gap in time, toward which nevertheless the more solid tenses of past and future are directed insofar as they denote that which *is* no more and that which *is* not yet"[193] - that "annihilates temporal as well as spatial distances". As Arendt echoes Augustine, "I can anticipate the future,

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[188]*The Human Condition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1958), 176-7.

[189]Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 42ff.

[190]Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (N.H. and London: Yale U.P., 1982), 439.

[191]Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 71.

[192]Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 70, 23.

[193]*The Life of the Mind: Thinking* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), 208.

think of it as though it were already present, and I can remember the past as though it had not disappeared".[194]

We arrive, in other words, at a third birth into the timeless present of thought, the *nunc stans* that is paradoxically a re-birth into community. Through reading's continuous attempt to recover the origin (an etymology of the body in Devotions 9-15), distance between individuals is annihilated; as a series of rebirths, text unifies a community of readers by providing them with Arendt's common source of identity: "the experience of isolation is itself what triggers the desire in man to refer back to and at the same time extend to the origination of his human life".[195] Donne's consequent identification with his dying neighbour in Devotions 16-19 is tolled by the three bells of judgment, that precise faculty which for Arendt also, requires an "enlarged mentality" and "engages in the possible viewpoints of others by imagining, that is, making present what is absent".[196] We have thus moved from private to public to conceptual sphere, in order to discover our place in the relational world.

These three births, then, represent Donne's spiritual progress through life. Their gradual expansion into charity across the *Devotions* is parallelled within each Devotion through Meditation, Expostulation and Prayer, an address to self followed by a debate with God, culminating in an address to God. Donne traces stylistically here what Joyce calls the three progressive forms of art:

> the lyrical form, the form wherein the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself; the epical form, the form wherein he presents his image in mediate relation to himself and others; the dramatic form, the form wherein he presents his image in immediate relation to others.[197]

Nor, as we have seen, does Donne's text stop here. Amidst the increasing recapitulations of man's three earthly stages, emphasis shifts in Donne's last Devotions

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[194]*The Life of the Mind*, 85. *Confessions*, XI.20.

[195]Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 10.

[196]Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 94. See *Between Past and Future* (N.Y.: Viking, 1954), 241.

[197]*A Portrait Of The Artist as a Young Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), 218.

to the immortal life beyond the text, of which these are but types. As the Ignatian retreat consisted of four thematic weeks,[198] so for Donne an imagined fourth and final birth gives meaning and direction to the three; but as with the fourth Pauline stage of history, it is projected infinitely ahead[199] - hence Arendt's third birth results in "thinking's endless quest for meaning",[200] while Donne envisages "*ends* swallowed in *infinitenesse*" (18P: 97.3-4). His *Moriens*, like Arendt's thinker, teaches passage by example, in what is literally a "borderline experience" (the converse of his asymptotal approach to the Origin).[201]

Back, however, at the intra-Devotional level (the tripartite structure of the title page which supposedly reinforces the significance of the *Epistle*'s "*three* Births" for the narrative, inter-Devotional level), we find that, although each Devotion also traces "a spiritual autobiography ... Donne's own progress towards faith", the movement then repeats.[202] Like the three bells, the three segments are cyclical; Donne suggests "the circularity of divine vision by repeating linear movements" (MEPMEPM...).[203] To an extent, insofar as the fourth birth remains beyond the text, Donne's three lives also represent a cyclical pattern of rebirth, possibly even in anniversary form.[204] More significantly, insofar as the fourth birth is nonetheless implied, correspondence can be discovered within the structure of each Devotion. Just as the archetypal Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost is unified in terms of a transcendent fourth, a *notion* of the Trinity,[205] so Meditation, Expostulation and Prayer are unified and contained within the notion of a Devotion. The whole (or fourth) appears as other than the sum of its

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[198]Cf. Frost, who draws a contrast in literal timespan (*Holy Delight*, 8).

[199]Chapter 4, p. 204.

[200]Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 70.

[201]See Bowen-Moore, *Hannah Arendt's Philosophy*, 79.

[202]Joan Webber, "The Prose Styles of John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*", *Anglia* 79 (1961) 138-52, 141.

[203]Boyd Berry, *Process of Speech: Puritan Religious Writing and Paradise Lost* (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1976), 198.

[204]See Frost's argument that Donne's birth, decision to take orders and approximate date of recovery - as well as the subsequent date of his will, tying in the fourth birth - all occurred on December 13 (St Lucy's Day) (*Holy Delight*, 123ff).

[205]See Chapter 4, pp. 168-9.

(three) parts: "First ... secondly ... thirdly ... And in all this (which is a fourth consideration)".[206] Returning with this insight to the *Epistle*, we find hidden within the "*three* Births" structure an analogous announcement of the ordering fourth: "*In this* last Birth, *I my selfe am borne a* Father: *This* Child *of mine, this* Booke, *comes into the world*, from *mee, and* with *mee*" (3.10-12). Emerging from the third birth is the fourth, overall birth of the *Devotions* itself,[207] which, in containing the other three, also creates a boundary between that which is and is not text. The book in its cyclical entirety becomes a paradoxical emblem of the 'true' fourth birth beyond words, the embodiment of literary immortality (as Borges admits, his "cyclical book is God").[208]

As Chapter 4 argued, tightness of form mattered to Donne, and this paradox is mirrored at other levels of structure ("all the words are numbred, and measured and weighed").[209] Besides the three segments within each Devotion that repeat linearly, there are twenty-three Devotions that ascend numerically without repetition. This plainly creates another incomplete, linear structure, on a par with the twenty-three line "Resurrection, Imperfect". Classical literary perfection was represented rather by Homer's twenty-four book epic; Spenser for instance projected twelve books of private, and twelve of political virtues in the *Faerie Queene*. More generally, in a schema of hourly meditations, the *Devotions* falls one short of the daily 24; inevitably, Donne's last hour is shrouded in silence.[210] If we "die daily," this is only at the end of the day, the end of the *Devotions*, and "There is nothing so neare Immortality" (VIII.6.168.404-5). Our final rest is *hors de texte*, beyond the eyes of the reader; as Donne wrote in "A Hymn to Christ, at the Author's last going into Germany":

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[206]Headnote to Chapter 4, section B1.

[207]Cf. James I's reference to *Basilikon Doron* as "this birth of mine" (*The Political Works of James I*, ed. Charles H. McIlwain (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1918), 11.

[208]"The Library of Babel", in *Labyrinths*, 79.

[209]Pp. 187-9 (II.1.50.27-34).

[210]Note the association of "*twenty foure thousand delinquents*" with death (23E: 124.33-4); also "The Computation"'s identification of its complete 'day' (2400 hours) with "being dead, Immortall" (l. 10). Since Donne was ill in November 1623 and the illness lasted less than a month, the twenty fourth year of the century may also have represented the possibility of death. The adoption, however, in texts of "measures falling just short of temporal constants" (such as days) was an attested numerological device (Fowler, *Triumphal Forms*, 155).

To see God only, I goe out of sight:
And to scape stormy dayes, I chuse
An Everlasting night. (ll. 30-2)

Elsewhere too, he describes the eternity ahead as "A state but of one Day" (VII.4.138.750-1), though infinitely, cyclically, long, compared to our current, incomplete cycle, "(of which last houre we have heard three quarters strike[])]" (VII.4.138.764-5). This structure relates to Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which divided history into twelve parts based on the hours of the day, Christ coming 'at the eleventh hour' (after 5 500 years), and the world ending at the sixth millenium.[211] Donne's own bordering, twenty-three hour structure - like his artificial measure, "one *naturall, unnaturall day*" (23M: 121.29) - shares this image of a clockface, for underlying the end-focussed progression is the ultimate cyclicity ensured by the twenty-fourth (cf. 21M: 111.23-9). The day ends, only to begin again; though always we "launch at Paradise",[212] yet "*Christs* crosse, and *Adams* tree, stood in one place"[213] and we simultaneously "saile towards home". The compass described by the hour-hand of Donne's clock is concluded only by returning to the origin, God's centre — to finish the perfect day which encapsulates all the days of one's past (the perfect Logos which encapsulates all the words of one's text) requires the divine union of death (20E: 107.33 ff).

In twenty-three Devotions, then, we have essentially a projected image of the perfect twenty-four, through an incomplete circle obsessed with its own shortcomings. Yet twenty-three *per se* also serves the nature of Donne's text; Donne's day was "*naturall*" as well as "*unnaturall*".[214] The Bible associates it with God's vengeance on sinners,[215] while the twenty-third Psalm guides the dying: "The Lord is my shepherd .... Yea,

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[211]Anne Higgins, "Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 19(2) (1989) 227-50, 246-7.

[212]*Metempsychosis* vi, l. 57.

[213]"Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse", l. 22.

[214]Cf. Frost's destruction of the paradox in her attempt to fit the *Devotions* to the hours of a day (*Holy Delight*, 138ff).

[215]Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, 247, fn. 2.

though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death, I will not fear."[216] Milton used twenty-three in *Paradise Lost* to entwine these twin themes of Justice and Mercy,[217] a symbolism reinforced by the fact that twenty-three represents the sun's maximum angle of declination from the equator. At this point, "its seemingly uncontrolled motion is checked" and there is "a promise of restoration" as the return journey commences.[218] The idea of rebirth from sin is therefore already implicit in the twenty-three Devotions as they stand. Debora Shuger has also noticed the double pun of the title, which may mean both 'devotions upon the resurrection of one who has died' and 'devotions upon the rising of the sun from beneath the waves'.[219]

Even in the sixty-nine segments, the two images of linear and circular meet. Donne is again one segment short, this time of the Biblical "*three-score and ten years of life*" prophetically evoked in his last sermon (X.11.233.132-3).[220] This span of "(*an eternity* of three score & ten yeares)", as he only half-jokingly calls it in 8M (41.26-7), stands like the twenty-fourth hour of the text just beyond its reach, marking the rounded completion of life's parenthesis.[221] But again, as the eternity beyond the "*three* Births" is imaged in the present, fourth birth of the cyclical *Devotions*, so Donne's seventieth year is

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[216]Cf. 12P's reference to "this *Valley* of sicknesse" (66.29), and Donne's description of his illness in Gosse, II.208: "God brought me into a low valley...".

[217]See, for example, Gunnar Qvarnström, *The Enchanted Palace* (Stockholm, 1967), 156-7, 104ff; Fowler, *Spenser and the Numbers of Time*, 247 fn.2; A.P. Riemer, *Antic Fables* (Manchester: U.P., 1980), 189.

[218]Riemer, *Antic Fables*, 173.

[219]Donne and sonne/sunne would then typically be related: "The Title of Donne's *Devotions*" *ELN* 22 (4) (1985) 39-40. Cf. also Thomas Browne on the paradigm of solar ascent and descent: "the lives not onely of men, but of Commonweales, and the whole world, run ... on a Circle, where, arriving to their Meridian, they decline in obscurity, and fall under the Horizon againe": *Religio Medici*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 18). For the characteristic ingenuity of metaphysical sermon titles, see Horton Davies, *Like Angels From a Cloud; The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1986), 112-13.

[220]Frost discusses Donne's attention to 70 (*Holy Delight*, 99ff).

[221]See Frost's plot of the *Devotions* as a 23x3 year account of the significant events (births) of Donne's life, set mathematically to a 69 year structure (*Holy Delight*, 145ff).

shadowed in the urobouros of the figure 69, that symmetrical reflection of the infinite circle.[221]

Structurally therefore, the *Devotions* imagines different sorts of circles, finished and unfinished, much "as in the *Heavens*, there are but a few *Circles*, that goe about the whole world, but many *Epicicles*, and other lesser *Circles*, but yet *Circles*" (21M: 111.24-6). The cycle of Meditation, Expostulation and Prayer repeats, within what is predominantly an incomplete cycle of twenty-three/(four) Devotions; the resulting total of sixty-nine segments, however, both illustrates a circle and confirms a larger, incomplete circle of life. As the *Epistle*'s fourth birth suggests, the text provides types that image as well as point towards its consummation.

A glance at the organization of the thematic structure I have outlined bears this out. With the births of Devotions 1-4, 5-8 and 16-19, the remaining 'tail' of Devotions 20-23 and the seven central Devotions 9-15, the twenty-three occasions present the pattern:

4 4 (7) 4 4

At the heart of the *Devotions* lies the discussion on time and text, contained not only by the symmetry of the flanking fours but in the numerological significance of the number, seven, the symbol for infinity (4P: 24.18). Paradoxically, just at the point where the act of reading turns most closely in on itself, it escapes containment. At the centre of time is timelessness, at the core of the text, a sense of the wordless (so Borges' "inconceivable middle page would have no reverse").[222]

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[221]On the uroboros' association with Christ, see Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, in *Collected Works*, edd. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler and William McGuire (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953-79), 20 vv., 14.423-4 (further references are to this edition). Frost notes too the 359 syllables of the *Stationes* poem as a further example of 'short time' (cf. a 360-degree circle) (*Holy Delight*, 110); but even this number *in toto* reflects the sun's complete diurnal movement in a sidereal day (124-5). We might recall Donne's stricture on a poem, that it is "curious, and requires diligence in the making, and then when it is made, can have nothing, no syllable taken from it, nor added to it" (II.1.50.27-35: 29-31).

[222]See fn. 183 above.

Surrounding this centre symmetrically are four groups of four - the "round earth's imagin'd corners", an emblem of creative wholeness.[224] In his first Expostulation, Donne announces, "We are *Gods tenants* heere, and yet here, he, our *Land-lord* payes us *Rents*; not yearely, nor quarterly, but hourely, and quarterly" (9.27-9). The *Devotions* returns these rents hourly and quarterly in the divisions of its text: in the twenty-three incomplete hours of its meditational 'day', and the four complete quarters of its sermonal 'hour'. The first sermon we have extant following the *Devotions* insists likewise on "foure steps, ... foure passages, ... foure transitions ... [for] our quarter Clock".[225] The tension between completion and incompletion is, however, replicated within the *Devotions*' four perfect quarters, for they themselves derive from a surface structure of "*three* Births". This is finally a world wherein "we have heard three quarters strike" only (VII.4.139.765), and the projected, textless fourth is but emblematically included, an underlying presence that is yet not present.

Jung traces this archetype of an "muffled and alembicated fourth" back through alchemical tradition to the Axiom of Maria Prophetissa: "One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the Third comes the One as the Fourth".[226] This mirrors precisely the emergence of the *Devotions* as a whole (and a fourth) from the *Epistle's* third birth; its concealment there, reflecting the inaccessibility of the true, textless fourth, furthermore accords with Jung's notions of suppression. To Socrates' question at the opening of the *Timaeus* ("One, two, three - but where ... is the fourth?"),[227] and Goethe's Cabiri scene in *Faust* ("Three we brought with us/But the fourth would not come"),[228] we can easily add Donne's "is there a fourth?",[229] along with his exploration of the question

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[224]See Chapter 4, fn. 15; also S.K. Heninger, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics* (San Marino: Huntingdon Library, 1974), 7.

[225]VI.2.64.93-5. Cf. Frost's claim that Opicinus's astrological chart with its fourfold division "provides the fore-conceit of the twenty-three-part autobiography" (169) - rather more convincing than her own division based on Expostulation 14's hexaemeral week, which forces the *Devotions* into groups of four (4 4 4 4 4 3) (135ff).

[226]*Psychology and Alchemy*, 12.26-31.

[227]trans. Desmond Lee (Penguin, 1977), 29.

[228]*Psychology and Alchemy*, 12.203-9; "Psychology and Religion", 11.243-5.

[229]V.3.90.479; see Chapter 4, p. 169.

in the *Devotions*. If, as Jung notes, the structure of three + one pervades Christian thought - long cross, tetragrammaton (three letters different, one repeated), Trinity and Devil, Trinity and Mary, three synoptic gospels and one 'Gnostic'[230]- Donne shows himself here and elsewhere[231] aware of its implications. Thus, while it is primarily modern scholarship that has isolated the fourth gospel of St John as later, non-synoptic and more meditative, assuming knowledge of the other three,[232] Donne not only emphasizes also its distinctive character and history of exclusion, but suggests that it was "*last written*" of all: that it recapitulated the whole Bible, and not just the other three gospels.[233] Donne's fourth birth of the *Devotions* similarly recapitulates all that has gone before - not only his own "*three* Births" but all the preceding Christian texts its words have in part fulfilled:

> The songs are these, which heavens high holy Muse
> Whisper'd to *David*, *David* to the Jewes:
> And *Davids* Successors, in holy zeale,
> In formes of joy and art doe re-reveale.[234]

Like the first gospel of St John, this second, his Revelation (or in Lewalski's coinage, "re-revelation"),[235] aims to bring us to the brink of silence.

Still, as the distinctive feature of St John's gospel was its immanent view of the Logos - "resurrection and judgement begin already in this life, the future is contained in

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230*Mysterium Coniunctionis*, 14.619, *Civilisation in Transition*, 10.738, "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity", 11.179.

231See, for instance, VI.2.64.89-95; also Chapter 4, p. 169.

232See John, Gospel of St., in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, rev. ed., ed. F.L. Cross and E. Livingstone (Oxford: U.P., 1983), 743-5.

233 III.17.348.1ff: 23; and see Chapter 4, p. 192.

234*Upon the translation of the Psalmes by Sir* Philip Sydney, *and the Countesse of Pembroke his Sister*, ll. 31-4. See pp. 235ff above on Donne's rewriting of the Bible (a practice Helen Wilcox associates with the religious lyric: "'Curious Frame'", in *New Perspectives*, 12. Donne's experience with that genre inevitably affected his sermons; if it was necessary ultimately for the 'curious frame' to be broken (Wilcox, 26), Donne begins the process here by releasing thought into prose).

235*Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: U.P., 1979), 52.

the present, and the terms of the eternal in the temporal"[236] - so a circular structure of four underlies the linear three even as it emerges out of them. Formally, Donne presents what Jung calls the "relation between the incomplete and the complete state ... the 'sesquitertian proportion' of 3:4";[237] and yet these two together allow an approach to the divine perspective embedded within the *Devotions* - "three and foure are seven, and seven is infinite" (X.8.180.73-4). Just so, John Dee's comprehensive list of line-circle variations numbers 24,[238] and we arrive at union through counting divisions, the One through the Three. Jung's need for a material adversary to connect the Trinity's Platonic realm of pure thought with reality and give it meaning leads him to add the "dark son", whose opposition to Christ is then resolved by the fourth, Holy Ghost.[239] But for Donne, Christ was himself this bridge, and a fourth person was superfluous.[240] Instead, a notion of the fourth could be, as we saw in Chapter 4, contained within and by the three - as Jung alternatively speculates, a quaternity that includes "the God within" or "Essence" of God.[241] As the Trinity elicits the notion of an implicit, defining fourth, the relationship between which and itself is then defined again by a third (since there is after all no definition not contained by the Trinity),[242] so here the "*three* Births" of the text gain meaning through a fourth into silence, which opposition is then mediated by the emblematic 'fourth' birth of the *Devotions* - thus itself, simultaneously, a reconciliatory, readerly 'third': "*In this* last Birth ... *This* Child *of mine, this* Booke, *comes into the world,* from *mee, and with mee*" (3.10-12). If the *Epistle* promises four births, these are redefined more comfortably by the end of the text as a "threefold Resurrection".[243] As Jung concludes,

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[236]*Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 744.

[237]*The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, 9(1).644.

[238]*Monas Hieroglyphia* (1654); see Liselotte Dieckmann, *Hieroglyphics: The History of a Literary Symbol* (Washington: U.P., 1970), 63-4.

[239] "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity", 11.181-5, 194-206, 251-2, 258ff.

[240]See Chapter 4, pp. 182-4; also Donne's dismissal of a Manichean 'Evil God' (Gillian Evans, "John Donne and the Augustinian Paradox of Sin", *RES* 33 (1982) 1-22, 8-10).

[241]"Psychology and Religion", 11.101; "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity", 11.250, 290.

[242]Chapter 4, p. 174.

[243]See pp. 280-1 above.

> the quaternity is the *sine qua non* of divine birth, and consequently of the inner life of the Trinity. Thus circle and quaternity on one side and the threefold rhythm on the other interpenetrate so that each is contained in the other.[244]

God emerges beyond-text, yet is also immanent within it; the reader revolves in purely textual circles that nevertheless reflect this dualism. The structure and ending of the *Devotions* thus encapsulate both an "architectural wholeness"[245]and a wholelessness, the final union of opposites ('69') that fulfils the narrative's climactic collapsing of divisions in Devotions 16-19.

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[244] "Psychology and Religion", 11.125.

[245]Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle*, 157.

CONCLUSION

L. Elaine Hoover, in her comparative study of Donne and the Spanish metaphysical, Francisco de Quevedo, isolates the "inseparable antitheses" the two poets shared: "the dualities of time and eternity, immanence and transcendence, the body and the soul, space and infinity ... appearance and reality".[1] I have explored Donne's continued deployment of these antitheses in the first half of his preaching career, from 1615-23, under the four (re-organized) chapter headings of "Nothingness and Beginning", "The Art of Politics", "Time and Text" and "Structures of Division and Transcending".

In the first of these, I discussed Donne's multiple beginnings as the consequence of repeated failure to define a point of absolute origin. Driving Donne's endless pursuit of this point is a fascination with the nothingness that alone underlies it, a nothingness he associates with infinite God. My second chapter reassessed prevailing views of Donne's political conservatism, arguing that he engaged in contemporary debate on a number of levels. Here again, however, the absence of an absolute authority leads to a proliferation of relative opinions, often mutually contradictory. Donne's perspective on secular truth varies in accordance with changing aesthetic or political needs, to the same extent that the royal figure of authority who ultimately validates the individual's activity in this public sphere is himself subject to contingency. Chapter Three turned to the sacramental event of the sermon as Donne's solution to such contingencies: a conjunction between words and Word, temporal passage and the liturgical sense of an eternal present. By replacing the empirical present with the ever-evolving textual moment of the sermon, however, Donne repeats his infinitely divisible approach to nothingness in a visibly infinite refinement of textual presence.

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[1] *John Donne and Francisco de Quevedo: Poets of Love and Death* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of N. Carolina Press, 1978), xxii-iii.

The Origin, Truth and an eternal Present remain, therefore, continually beyond Donne's reach in these three chapters. And yet it is his failure to realize them, in many ways, which makes this conclusion possible. For in all this (which is my fourth chapter), lies the Trinitarian paradox of the Many and the One. Donne's depiction of multiple beginnings, truths, words and, as Chapter Four adds, endings, defines by contrast his ideal terms of reference: the Origin, Truth, Logos and Death. One term of each antithesis creates its other. Nor can Donne's ideal terms be represented otherwise than by such relation; the simple nothingness of monastic retreat, an absolute certainty of knowledge, such timeless silence as results from undifferentiated, same-sex expression and the static circle of a 'perfect death' that draws no distinction between holy living on earth and translation into heaven, he passes over or rejects outright.

For Donne, division as a notion and as a technique of representation allows the *possibility* as well as the vision of union. In a literal sense it sanctifies creation, since God is not only imminent but immanent; not only imaginable as the unified Other (as discussed in my fourth chapter), but already inherent in the multiple-perspectives of Donne's approach to him (as portrayed in my first three). He is "both the object, and the wit", the One and the Three simultaneously.

My final, focal chapter draws Donne's major expressions of this paradox together, by collapsing the four chapter-divisions above into a quintessence: the culminating publication of Donne's mid-career, the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1623). This prose work contains perhaps Donne's best-known passage ("never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*" [17M: 87.10-11]), yet the ease with which it lends itself to anthologising and quotation is also a reflection of its traditional status as a fragmentary, uneven collection of meditations, better read in parts. The *Devotions*' multiple aspects are, however, precisely a function of the work as a whole. As the prefaces make clear individually, it is in the first place *organized* as a series of divisions; taken together, the implications of Title-page, *Epistle* and Table of *Stationes* then link the partitions as a series of parturitions. They are both "divisions" upon emergent

occasions, and Devotions "upon emergent occasions", or births. From a Meditation on natural beginnings in Devotions 1-4, we emerge into an Expostulation on worldly birth in Devotions 5-8, eventually arriving, through a concentrated experience of time, at the climactic Prayer for unity that signals Devotions 16-19's birth into spiritual wholeness. Devotions 20-3 balance this with a reminder of incompletion, the final opening towards which these births in turn are drawn; and it is on this perfectly imperfect paradoxical note, that the book overall emerges into the world.

Donne's characteristic dualities thus not only converge systematically in the narrative of the *Devotions* but are redefined, grouped in typological relation through the metaphor of birth. All are seen initially as aspects of the same primary di/vision, that between the human and divine perspective. Donne, as both human and Divine himself, then bridges the gap; not only as he does in the site of the sermons between the two terms of each antithesis, but between the antitheses themselves. Surviving the illness in order to commemmorate it beyond his lifetime, he becomes the Holy Ghost of his own autobiography, revealing, relating and holding in tension the paradoxes that make up a life.

TABLE I: Division of Sermons

2 general parts:	I.	1, 3, 5, 7	
	II.	1, 3/4/5, 13/14, 17	
	III.	1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 15, 18	
	IV.	4, 5, 6, 8, 15	
	V.	1, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 18/19	(= 30)

2 specific parts:

Temporal-Spiritual (Right-Left)	III.2	
Proposition-Reason	III.16	
Propositum-Praepositum	III.8	
Mystery-Manifestation	III.9	
Hemisphere-Hemisphere	IV.7	
Room-Room	IV.10	
Scienta-Modus	IV.14	
Palace-"Sewar"	V.3	
Matter-Form	V.4	(= 9)
		(= 39)

3 general parts:	I.	2, 4, 6	
	II.	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 18	
	III.	6/7, 11, 14	
	IV.	2, 11, 12	
	V.	2, 6, 9/10, 14	(= 22)

3 specific parts:

Root-Tree-Fruit	I.8/9	
Present-Retrospect-Prospect	II.2	
Light-Light-Light	IV.3	
Weeping-Weeping-Weeping	IV.13	
Building-Foundation-Prospect	VI.1	(= 5)
		(= 27)

4 general parts:	III.	17	
	V.	17	(= 2)

4 specific parts:

Outer Court-Inner Court-Palace Rooms-Backside	V.12	(= 1)
		(= 5)

6 general parts:	II.	11
7 general parts:	IV.	1
8 general parts:	III.	10

TABLE IIa: Markers of Endings

To end all	I.2, 6; II.1, 6, 11, 17; III.14, 17; IV.4, 7, 10, 11, 13 V.1, 10
For to end this	VI.1
All ends in this	I.4
The end of all	II.5, 7
To end with the end of all	V.14
To conclude	I.3; II.6, 12; III.1; V.5
yet to conclude	I.1
But, to conclude	I.4
This is the conclusion	I.9
For our conclusion of this	V.15
To contract this, and conclude all	V.11
We shall shut up all	II.18
To collect all, and bind up all in one bundle	III.5
Now to collect	II.16
Lastly	I.4 ; II.8; III.8; IV.9; VI.1
Tis time to end	IV.15
To restore you to your liberty and to send you away with the meditation	V.8
We have done	II.2; III.4
And this is all, which I will say	V.12
And with that ... I desire that this Congregation may be dissolved; for this is all that I intended ...	IV.7
The sum of all is	II.14
That is the purpose, and the end of all we have said	IV.8
And so, you have all that we intended in this exercise to present unto you	III.13
This is as much as these words do justly occasion us to say	V.3
And so we have done with our first part	II.3
And so we have done with our first part ... the second ... we must reserve for a second exercise	V.18
But to come to our last note	III.7

TABLE IIb: Force of Endings

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
powerful prayer	*5*	1 *18*	*2* *10,11*	1 *10*		
		9 11	3,4			
moving invocation	6	2 12 14 15	8,*9* 12 14,17	11 14	10,11 13	
	3	5	6		14	
quiet dignity	1, 2	8 10	5 7 18	3 8 12 15	1 5 7 9 12	
			1 16	4	3 17,18	
weak, forced, secular	4	6,7 17	15	6,7 9 13	4 6 8 15 19	1
summarizes	8,9	3 16	13 15	5 12	11 15,16	
repeats text	7	16	12	2,3	2 12 16 19	
notice of continuance	8	3,4, 13 17	13	5	18	

Italics = "... *inestimable price of his incorruptible blood*".

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