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Sustainable Energy: Philip Sidney and John Donne

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"Busy old foole, unruly Sunne"—we forget that this was not a lyrical exordium necessarily familiar to readers in the Fifteen-Nineties.[1] They might have heard something like it in the theatre; they might have encountered vehemence in Martial; they might have made the acquaintance of quick irony in Menippean satires. But love-poetry? The shade of Petrarch had entered England through the hollow pen of Sir Thomas Wyatt, had been taken in hand by the young Earl of Surrey, and had grown into a ubiquitous presence following the publication of England's first *libro di poesia* by Richard Tottel in 1557. As a result, most English love-poetry more closely resembled Daniel's: "O had she not been fair and thus unkind, / Then had no finger pointed at my lightness:" or Barnfield's: "Thus, sacred virgin, muse of chastity, / This difference is betwixt the moon and thee". And yet in young John Donne we find power-lines that strike every new reader as much now as they must have at the time: "I wonder, by my troth, what thou, and I / Did, till we lov'd?"; "O my America, my new-found land!"[2] Later and quieter apostrophes carry

[1]The present article is based on two presentations to the John Donne Society; the first at its meeting in Leiden (Netherlands) in the summer of 2012, the second the keynote presentation at the 2013 meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

[2]All quotations from Donne's *Songs and Sonets* and *Satires* come from *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967). All quotations of Donne's *Elegies*, *Obsequies*, and *Holy Sonnets* come from volumes 3, 6, and 7.1, respectively, of *The Variorum Edition of the*

the same current: "O more then Moone, / Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy spheare."

If we are not to believe that such lines sprang fully-formed from the head of the future Dean, we might inquire where he got the idea. And we should then quickly find that there was one lyric poet in the previous generation that had explored such country before him. This was Sir Philip Sidney who, unusually, had provided both theory and practice; the latter in his sonnet-sequence known to us, of course, as *Astrophil and Stella*:

> Be your words made, good sir, of Indian ware
> That you allow them me by such small rate? . . .
> You say, forsooth, you left her well of late;
> O God, think you that satisfies my care?[3]

As for the theory:

> to be moved to doo that which wee know, or to be mooved with desire to know: *hoc opus, hic labor est*. . . . so coldly they applie firie speeches, as men that had rather redde lovers writings, and so caught up certaine swelling Phrases. . . . then that in truth they feele those passions, which easily as I thinke, may be bewraied by that same forciblenesse or Energia, (as the Greeks call it) of the writer.[4]

Sidney has read his Quintilian (as, doubtless, had Donne):

> The prime essential for stirring the emotions of others is, in my opinion, first to feel those emotions oneself. It is sometimes positively ridiculous to counterfeit grief, anger and indignation, if we content ourselves with accommodating our words and looks and make no attempt to adapt our

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Poetry of John Donne, gen. ed. Gary A. Stringer, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995–).

[3]Sonnet 92, ll. 1–2, 7–8. All quotations of Sidney's poems come from *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

[4]"Defence of Poetrie" in Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten, eds., *Miscellaneous Prose* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p. 91.

> own feelings to the emotions to be expressed. What other reason is there for the eloquence with which mourners express their grief; or for the fluency which anger lends even to the uneducated, save the fact that their minds are stirred to power by the depth and sincerity of their feelings?[5]

What Sidney did—more than Wyatt, than Surrey, than Thomas Watson—was to show how this might be done in the lyric, the English lyric. Applying Quintilian's counsels to genres other than oratory is an experiment. For example, we see Justus Lipsius, in Leiden, practicing it in epistolography, in order to convey to Sidney the strength of his emotion. Putting aside the elegant Ciceronian periods which he mastered perfectly elsewhere, he begins: "*Indignor. Itane res nata, vt litteræ meæ cum molestiâ semper iunctæ?*" ("I am furious. Has it come to this, that my letters are always joined to trouble?")[6]

One part of the experiment, where the imagination is involved—as it is in a narrative, whether one recounts a gruesome murder to a jury or a shipwreck in a romance—is a technique closely related to *energia*, both in word and in matter: *enargeia* or vividness. If in describing one creates vivid impressions, says Quintilian, "[f]rom such impressions arises that ἐνάργεια . . . which makes us seem not so much to narrate as to exhibit the actual scene, while our emotions will be no less actively stirred than if we were present at the actual occurrence."[7] *Enargeia*, vividness, helps to produce *energia*, forcibleness.

> Fly, fly, my friends, I have my death wound, fly;
> See there that boy, that murth'ring boy I say,
> Who like a thief hid in dark bush doth lie,
> Till bloody bullet get him wrongful prey.
> (*A&S* 20, 1–4)

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[5]*Institutio Oratoria* 6.2.26, trans. H. E. Butler, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), pp. 431, 433.

[6]Lipsius to Sidney, 27 March 1586, in *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, vol. II, ed. Roger Kuin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 1217.

[7]*Inst.* 6.2.32, p. 435.

It is not *energia*'s only ingredient, however: a vehemence of expression helps, whether arrived at by *exclamatio*, by apostrophe, or by rhetorical questions. All of these Sidney explored in his own quest for amorous forcibleness, and in doing so sparked not only the explosion of sonnet sequences that lasted into the next century, but a current of energy that did the same. By 1621, with the appearance of Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, the vogue for Petrarchan sonnet-sequences came to an end. Not, however, that for Sidneian *energia*; young John Donne, after all, began to write in the early 1590s, at its height. And Donne, more than anyone outside the theatre, ensured that this *translatio energiæ Sidneianæ* continued deep into the seventeenth century. We can see it, for instance, in Donne's Fourth Satire, where the foolish courtier steps so vividly into our view, with his worn waistcoat now become Tufftaffatie, his insistence on the virtues of travel and foreign parts, and his prattling gossip of who loves whores, who boys and who goats:

> But the'houre
> Of mercy now was come; He tries to bring
> Me to pay a fine to scape his torturing,
> And saies, Sir, can you spare me? I said, willingly;
> Nay, Sir, can you spare me'a crown? Thankfully'I
> Gave it, as Ransome; But as fidlers, still,
> Though they be paid to be gone, yet needs will
> Thrust one more jigge upon you: so did hee
> With his long complementall thankes vexe me.
> But he is gone, thankes to his needy want,
> And the prerogative of my Crowne:
>
> (140–50)

And, of course, it is brilliantly exemplified in "The Flea." Performing, *playing*, a fashionable theme, this divertimento distinguishes itself not only by the vehemence of its speaking voice, but by the fact that the action takes place not in the text but between the stanzas—the speaking voice is a commentary upon it; moreover, so cleverly is this managed that the space between the stanzas and, in each case, the text following it produce between them also the *enargeia*, the vividness that makes us feel as if we are there:

> [gesture]
> Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since
> Purpled thy naile, in blood of innocence?
> (19–20)

It is the *translatio energiæ sidneianæ* all over again, except that Sidney when young was more sage and serious than Jack Donne: at the age when the latter was enjoying the Inns of Court, frequenting plays and visiting ladies, Philip was the Queen's ambassador to Emperor Rudolph II and sending back thoughtful reports on the diplomatic situation in the Empire to Sir Francis Walsingham.

We have, then, a transfer of energy, a talent, possibly innate but certainly acquired also, for vehemence and vividness, injecting into the *mass* of lyrical, elegiac and even satiric tradition a *movement* of presence, a complicity of intimacy with the reader. We may perhaps inquire a little further into the How of this movement: the ways in which Donne—for it is time to leave Philip behind—develops and in some cases subverts the forms he inherited.

Some of the earliest works in Donne's poetic cursus, in the 1590s, were satires. As we all know, satire's roots were thought (wrongly) to lie in the satyr-plays: consequently it was not only deliberately rude in its matter but rough in its manner: rude and rough as a hairy satyr. Donne himself calls Persius "crabbed," and the general idea was that satire should be, not only crabby but crabbed as well. And even today, most texts dealing with Elizabethan satire mention the involutions of Joseph Hall and the virtual illegibility of John Marston.[8] How suprising, then, to turn to their *oeuvre* and find that they run as limpidly as a babbling brook. Here is Hall on the foolish lover:

> Fond wittold, that wouldst load thy witless head
> With timely horns before thy marriage-bed!
> Then can he term his dirty, ill-fac'd bride
> Lady and queen and virgin deified;
> Be she all sooty-black or berry-brown,
> She's white as morrow's milk or flakes new-blown;
> And though she be some dunghill drudge at home

[8]E.g., Colin Burrow in Kirk Freudenburg, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 248–51.

> Yet can he her resign some refuse room
> Amids the well-known stars. Or, if not there,
> Sure he will saint her in his calender.[9]

Good trashy stuff; but as far as rough hairy meter is concerned, we might as well be listening to Dryden. And here is crabbed Marston, a Cynic looking for a man:

> "A man, a man, a kingdom for a man!"
> "Why, how now, currish, mad Athenian?
> Thou Cynic dog, seest not streets do swarm
> With troops of men?" "No, no, for Circe's charm
> Hath turn'd them all to swine. I never shall
> Think those same Samian saws authenticall,
> But rather I dare swear the souls of swine
> Do live in men; for that same radiant shine,
> That lustre wherewith Nature's nature foiled
> Our intellectual part, that gloss, is soiled
> With staining spots of vile impiety
> And muddy dirt of sensuality.
> These are no men, but apparitions,
> *Ignes fatui*, glowworms, fictions,
> Meteors, rats of Nilus, fantasies,
> Colosses, pictures, shades, resemblances. . . ."[10]

And that, too, is good nasty work; but once again, the satyr's supposed roughness is confined to descriptions and epithets, exclamations and execrations, all couched in limpid iambic pentameters as carefully shaped, in couplets as balanced, as the *Dunciad*'s. But now read this aloud:

> Well; I may now receive, and die; My sinne
> Indeed is great, but I have beene in
> A Purgatorie, such as fear'd hell is
> A recreation and scant map of this.

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[9]Satire VII, ll. 17–26; Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and Norwich, *The Poems of Joseph Hall*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1949), p. 18.

[10]"A Cynic Satire," ll. 1–16; *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1961), p. 140.

> My minde, neither with prides itch, nor yet hath been
> Poyson'd with love to see, or to be seene,
> I had no suit there, nor new suite to shew,
> Yet went to Court; But as Glaze which did goe
> To'a Masse in jest, catch'd, was faine to disburse
> The hundred markes, which is the Statutes curse,
> Before he scapt, So'it pleas'd my destinie
> (Guilty'of my sin of going,) to thinke me
> As prone to'all ill, and of good as forget-
> full, as proud, as lustfull,'and as much in debt,
> As vaine, as witless, and as false as they
> Which dwell at Court, for once going that way.
>
> ("Satire IV," 1–16)

I will spare readers a written scansion of this; but he that hath ears to hear, let him hear—the meter is like the chops of the Channel, with a tide flowing one way and squalls from all over the compass whipping the surface into a chaotic mass of foam and spindrift. Or, to change metaphors, this is a satyr indeed, with chopping hooves, the harsh fur on his hips matted and clotted with burrs, and an evil grin on his face.

The point I am making here is that Donne, perhaps alone of all his generation's happy satirists, not only has realized that roughness in verse needs to invade the meter and rhythm of the form, but has, even in his early twenties, the extraordinary sensitivity to language and accent to implement this idea, to make it work. We must not forget that the Elizabethans still tended to read aloud whenever possible. The normal form of satire lent itself to this with considerable ease, to produce a pleasingly comic effect not unlike that in the railing speeches in Shakespeare's plays. Donne's satires, though, are another kettle of fish. Less than a hundred years later, Dryden had this to say:

> Would not Donne's satires, which abound with so much wit, appear more charming if he had taken care of his words, and of his numbers? But he followed Horace so very close that of necessity he must fall with him. And I may safely say it of this present age, that if we were not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets.[11]

[11]"Of the Original and Progress of Satire" (1693), *Of Dramatic Poesy and other Essays*, ed. George Watson (Everyman, 1962), 2:144.

As an anonymous author expressed it in 1775:

> Whether Mr. Pope took the hint from [Dryden's] question, or not, is uncertain; but he has shewn the world that Dr. Donne's Satires, *when translated into numbers and English* [sic] (as Mr. Dryden above expresses it) are not inferior to any thing in that kind of Poetry, even his own admirable writings.[12]

I am not sure that Donne would have wanted his satires to appear charming in any sense of that word; and I should like to hear what his shade thinks of Pope's "versification" of his rough magic.

What Donne saw, moreover, and Dryden did not, was that the crabbedness, and beyond it the manipulation in general, of the meter is a weapon in the *poet's* armory, not just the satirist's; that it itself is a form of *energia* every bit as powerful and effective as verbal vehemence or *enargeia*'s vividness. Satire allowed him to experiment with this in a way that Sidney never had, and to perfect a range of technical, of metrical mastery that placed him in a class by himself, and that in many ways still does.

His development of this beyond the satiric genre came almost at once, with the *Elegies*: "the very rankest growth of love-song weeds in all Donne's poetry," as Louis Martz put it, as late as 1960.[13] Martz also saw, as had many readers since Grosart, that the weeds contained "a great many harsh satirical thorns"; and indeed many of them could be called Satires, of what we will loosely call Love. Gosse's interpretation of them as autobiographical[14] is depressing: I have no trouble at all imagining them read aloud over large bumpers of sack and sugar in a friend's rooms in Lincoln's Inn, to five or six other slightly-drunk literary law students, and interrupted regularly by howls of laughter, riotous applause, and toasts to the flushed and happy author. One or two hearers might even have an equally merry, giggling young woman

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[12][William Tooke, Robert Beloe, and William Nares,] *A New and General Biographical Dictionary* (London: T. Osborne et al., 1775), 4:179.

[13]Louis L. Martz, "John Donne: the Meditative Voice," *The Massachusetts Review* 1.2 (Winter, 1960): 330.

[14]Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of Dr John Donne, Dean of St Paul's* (New York: Dodd, Mead & London: Heinemann, 1899), 1:69.

on their knee, slapping their faces at each particularly "misogynist" sally.

Here, we have left Sidney far behind. To be sure, the *Arcadia*'s comic sonnet describing Mopsa's features[15] might be seen as having foretold "The Anagram"; but Philip—and this was perhaps a blessing—did not live to see the mood of the Nineties. However, his *energia* did. Young Donne did, it is true, read Ovid, of whom there were Continental editions and one very poor Marlovian translation; but knowledgeable readers have remarked that while both poets share a kind of urban smartalecry and a gift for serio-comic situations, Ovid—or at least young Nosey, Naso, his persona—is genuinely in love, and in his own way yearns every bit as much as Francesco (Petrarca) did. Jack, if we may so call him, seems thoroughly and happily disgusted with the world, husbands, fathers, and his girl. And it is in this key that the Sidneian *energia* now plays itself into new compositions for new audiences. Many of its constitutive elements are the same. There is the vehemence of a living voice:

> Fond woman which wouldst haue thy husband dy
> And yet complaynst of his great iealosy;
> If swolne with poyson he lay in his last bed
> His body with a sere barke covered;
> . . .
> Thou wouldst not weepe, but ioly and frolick bee
> As a Slave which to morrow should be free.
> Yet weepst thou when thou see'st him hungerly
> Swallow his owne death, harts-bane iealosy.
> ("Jealousy," 1–4, 11–14)

There is the vividness of *enargeia*, setting a scene at which we are spectators:

> We must not as we vs'd, flout openly
> In scoffing riddles, his deformity;
> Nor at his boord together being sate,
> With words nor touche scarse lookes adulterate.
> Nor when he swolne and pamperd with great fare

[15]*Old Arcadia* 3 in *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), p. 12.

> Sitts downe and snorts cag'd in his basket chaire
> Must we vsurpe his own bed any more
> Nor kis and play in his house as before.
> (17–24)

But the characteristically Donnean element from the crabbed Satires, the virtuoso handling of metrical variety and irregularity, is a major part also of the *Elegies*' remarkable energy. Under the guise of couplet-rhymed iambic pentameters, by now the accepted English equivalent of Latin's elegiac couplet, the *Elegies* play with meter like a dolphin with the tides. "The Comparison," for example, opens with elegant, if strongly-stressed, iambics:

> As the sweet sweate of roses in a still,
> As that which from chaf'd Muscatts pores doth trill,
> As the allmighty balme of th'early East
> Such are the sweat dropps on my Mistres brest.
> And on her neck her skin such lustre setts
> They seeme no sweat drops but pearle carcanetts.
> (1–6)

So much for the lovely lady. But now, as the comparison takes off and he comes to his adversary's companion in the same condition, notice what happens to the meter:

> Ranck sweaty froth thy Mistres brow defiles
> Like spermatique issue of ripe menstruous biles.
> Or like that Scumm, which, by needs lawles law
> Enforc'd, Sanserraes starved Men did draw
> From perboyld shoes and bootes and all the rest
> Which weare with any souereigne fatnes blest.
> And like vile lying Stones in saffrond tinne
> Or warts or wheales they hang vpon her skinne.
> (6–13)

The lines stutter, halt and enjamb; and even in the final couplet Donne hits the brake twice with the "or . . . , or . . . ," construction Shakespeare later borrowed for his Sonnet 74: "When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang upon the bough. . . ." Would Sidney have liked this Elegy—which, as we know, gets much, much worse as it goes on?

He might not, but he would have admired both its huge *energia* and its ghastly *enargeia*, the latter borrowed most probably from Horace. Donne had been reading Horace for the Satires, and cannot have missed the dreadful Eighth and Twelfth Epodes which fixed forever, beyond all bounds of taste and charity, what some might now call the "meme" of the hideous, older woman.

Another group of *Elegies* is more like Ovid's. "Love's Warre," for instance, while its opening still reads like its predecessors and teases the lady with being like a "free City," changes its tone further along:

> Long Voyages are long consumptions
> And Ships are carts for executions.
> Yea they are Deaths; ist not all one to fly
> Into an other World, as t'is to dy?
> Here let me warr; in these armes let mee ly
> Here let me parle, batter, bleede, and dy.
> Thy armes imprison me, and myne armes thee,
> Thy hart thy ransome is, take myne for mee.
> (25–32)

In spite of the original context, this is an entirely new tone, a new form of *energia*: the energy of joyful love-making, an energy that runs through much of the poetry that follows. The most famous example is of course "To his Mistris Going to Bed," to which I will return.

One of Ovid's tonalities Donne's *Elegies* lack: the *amoureux transi*, the hopeless yearning lover who can repine at his mistress's door in the middle of the night, begging to be let in, however witty his begging and however amusing, and amused, his self-portrait (Elegy 12). At their most pungent, Donne's *Elegies* replace this with a cheerful scorn; in all cases, the poet addresses a lady who is already familiar with his bed as he is with hers. However, here is a new tone entirely:

> By our first strange and fatal interview,
> By all desyres which thereof did insue:
> By our long sterving hopes, by that remorce
> Which my words masculine persuasive force
> Begott in thee, and by the memoree
> Of hurts which Spyes and Riualls threatned mee,
> I calmely beg: But by thy Parents Wrath,

> By all paynes which want and diuorcement hath
> I coniure thee: And all those othes which I
> And thou haue sworne to seal ioynt constancy
> Here I vnsweare, and oversweare them thus,
> Thou shallt not Love by meanes so dangerous.
> Temper O fayre Love, Loves impetuous rage
> Be my trew Mistres still, not my faignd Page.
> ("On his Mistris," 1–14)

Compared to the metrical extravagancies of the Satires and the satiric *Elegies*, this shows a new simplicity; yet we sense once more an enormous energy, but of a different kind. It maintains the vividness of the speaking voice, but Donne is here moving into a new tonal register, and one that Sidney might more easily have recognized, though he did not attempt it—indeed, nobody outside the theater did. It corresponds precisely to Sidney's recommendations in the *Defence*, and the passage in Quintilian that inspired it. What it shows is the power to *move* the reader, by an embodiment, and thus a transfer, of emotion.

How does Donne do it? First of all, there is the *gradatio* of the lover's verbs: he calmly begs, then he conjures her; then he unswears their former oaths, then he overswears them. This alone gives to the simple line that finally indicates the content—"Thou shallt not Love by meanes so dangerous"—an extraordinary intensity quite independent of verbal flourishes.[16] Although the poem goes on for another forty-two lines, it is this opening part that we remember; and it is interesting to see that, in spite of the couplet rhyme, it consists of fourteen lines, and thus partakes of the functions and emotional potential of the sonnet. Then, although he does not specifically set a scene, he fills his begging, conjuring, unswearing and overswearing with hints of reality, with scraps and memories of true events. We join in "remembering" the first interview and its harvest of desires: we do

[16]Though one part of its power *is* verbal: "thou shált nót lóve"—as Charles Morgan put it, commenting on "and béat dówn Sátan under our feet" in the Book of Common Prayer's Litany, "where, except in Churchill at war, shall we find the passionate energy that can drive a stress on to three consecutive syllables?" ("On Learning to Write" in *The Writer and his World* [London: Macmillan, 1960], p. 131.)

so in part because we are struck by the adjectives "strange and fatal" and their power of ambiguity. We know about spies and rivals in part because they are traditional obstacles to lovers, in part because we remember them from some of his other poems. The wrath of parents can also belong to this category of standard obstacles (since Roman comedy); but anyone familiar with the ire of Sir George More will be hard put to it not to think of that. As for "want and diuorcement," lack and absence, they serve to intensify the "paynes" which are part of a crescendo that complements the verbs' *gradatio*. He begs by invoking the beginning, the desires, the opposition to them; but by the parents' wrath and the pain of absence he *conjures*, which *OED* (II.) defines as "to constrain by oath, to charge or appeal to solemnly." The wrath and pain become the instruments of a solemn oath, and in this solemnity there is no irony nor mock.

"Conjuring" reminds the lover of their private oaths. It is almost as if, just as in "The Flea," an interjection from the beloved has come between the lines—an interjection we do not hear, but the answer to which follows at once. They were oaths of "ioynt constancy," and she has invoked them as justification for her plan not to let him go to the wars alone: now he both "*unswears*" them and "*overswears*" them, like a hand over-writing the writing on a page.

My point here is, once again, to show and emphasize the means of producing the *energia* that "moves" the reader. It is a quieter energy than that of "The Comparison" or "The Bracelet," but it moves us more.

The Funeral Elegy addressed to L.C. (probably from 1595 or thereabouts) explores a new direction for this lyric energy: a poem of mourning. "Elegy" as a generic term here takes on the meaning that, as it happened, outlasted the other, more purely metric and/or Latinate. Interestingly, Donne here uses the same means that served him in the satires and satiric elegies, but to create an entirely different, almost opposite effect. Like the Fourth Satire I quoted above, the Funeral Elegy is technically written in iambic pentameters; but like the satire, it twists this meter out of all recognition in reading aloud. In all poetic texts there is a difference, ideally a counterpoint, between meter and rhythm, where "meter" refers to the recognized form the author has adopted for his text, while "rhythm" indicates the

actual stress-pattern when that text is voiced by a reader.[17] Adding performance-scansion to a poetic text is dangerous because strictly personal; but I will venture here to give my suggested scansion for this elegy, which will show its extreme metrical elasticity.

Sórrow, who to thís house, scárse knew the wáy
Ís, Óh, héire of it, Óur áll is hís práy.
This stránge chánce cláymes stránge Wónder; and to ús
Nóthing can bé só stránge, as to wéepe thús.
Tis wéll his lífes lówd spéaking wórks desérve
And gíue práyse tó, óur cóld tóngs cóuld not serve.
Tis wéll he kept téares fróm our éyes befóre
That to fítt thís déepe íll we might haue stóre.
Óh yf a swéete bryer clýmbe úp by a trée
Íf to a Páradise thát transplánted bée
Or félld and búrnt for hóly sácrifíce
Yét thát must wíther which by ít did rise;
As wé for hím déad: Though nó fámily
Ere ríggd a sóule for héauens discóuery
With whóm more Vénturérs more bóldly dáre
Vénter their státes with hím in ióy to sháre.
Wé lóose what áll frínds lóvd, hím; hé gáines nów
But lífe by Déathe, which wórst fóes would allow;
If hé could háue foes, ín whose práctise gréw
Áll Vértues whose námes súbtile schóolemen knew.
Whát éase, can hópe that we shall sée him, begétt,
When wé must dý fírst, and cánnot dý yétt?
His Chílldren are his pictures, Óh they bee
Píctures of hím déad, sénseles, cóld as hée.
Hére néedes no márble tombe; since hé is góne
Hé and abóut him, hís, are túrn'd to stóne.

[17]This whole area is complicated by the existence of two sorts of meter: quantitative and stress-based. Latin, originally a stress-based language, adopted quantitative meter from the Greeks; English, originally a Germanic stress-based language but which incorporated much vocabulary from the much lighter-stressed French, attempted quantitative meter briefly in the sixteenth century but in essence never left its characteristic, mainly isochronic, stressed meter. There is also the complication of altered pronunciation between the 17th and the 21st centuries; but in so far as the earlier pronunciation is known I have taken it into account.

The *effect* of this elasticity is twofold. On the one hand it forces readers out of their metrical complacency, insisting that they pay attention to every word and to every grammatical construction. On the other, and more importantly, it *slows down* the reading, as guests at a funeral walk slowly following the coffin. Such slowing-down could have been achieved by other means, for example by extending the line from pentameter to alexandrine: unlike French, which often (not always) realizes the alexandrine as a light, quick line of four anapests, English has tended to use it as a slow and majestic element. Donne, however, chose metrical eccentricity as a more appropriate vehicle, partly for the reasons mentioned above and partly, I suspect, to make readers share the extreme disturbance that the death of a loved one introduces into his immediate world. It is a new "key" for Donne's characteristic lyric *energia*, which we shall see him continuing and perfecting in other elegies, culminating in the sublime "Nocturnall On St Lucy's Day," to which I will return.

An extraordinary contrast to this Funeral Elegy is found in "The Autumnall," probably written only five years later. I am here in no way concerned with the identity or the exact age of the poem's subject, but only with its peculiar form of energy. If the Funeral Elegy can be described as "slow but disturbed," "The Autumnall" might be characterized as "witty but tranquil." Taking a Classical theme from some brief Greek lines, Donne typically imagines himself into the situation: a young man himself, a "visiter of Ladies" of all ages, he here admires, indeed loves, one in middle age. (We should not forget that the visible signs of age appeared much sooner in Donne's time than in our own. He is clearly thinking in terms, not of man's seven ages but of four: childhood is spring, youth is summer, middle age is autumn, and old age, winter.)

"The Autumnall's" *energia* does not come from metrical eccentricity: indeed, the meter is one of the elements of the poem's tranquility. It is calm and regular almost everywhere, and these qualities are accentuated by the couplet rhyme, only rarely enjambed. (A rare exception is line 17, still concerning the wrinkles of a face no longer young that is the stately home of Love: "And here, till hers, which must bee his, death come . . ." where the meter is subordinated to the wit of the words, and which is at once completed by the

splendidly regular line 18: "Hee doth not digg a Graue, but build a Tombe.")

Where, then, does this poem's characteristic *energia* lie? It lies, I think, in the collocation, the collaboration, of bold honesty on the one hand and warm affection on the other, of wit and tranquility. Donne clearly saw and accepted this as a challenge. In the context of his youthful work, where wit is often outrageous and almost always boisterous, taming it just enough to enter without disturbing autumnal serenity must have been a task of considerable fascination. And it is this collaboration that brings it into the other context of "To His Mistris" and its ability maturely to move us. The wit lies in the words, which create a succession of metaphors of which the energy lies in their nature as *concetti*: they are simultaneously surprising and apt, so that in each couplet readers move quickly from being surprised to being convinced. Sometimes the surprise is greater (the lovely image of Love the monarch on Progress everywhere else but returning to his "standing house," his permanent palace, the lady's face), sometimes the appropriateness (the tranquility of a lasting evening), but always there is the dynamic interaction of the two, and of both with the energetic calm of the meter.

One detail worth mentioning is the way Donne has in this elegy integrated in a completely new way the meme of the hideous crone that we saw him exploiting outrageously in "The Comparison." Here he employs it to emphasize that the lady's age is autumnal and not wintry: a new "comparison" and fittingly pursued in a different key. The concentration on her face helps, as it eliminates the need to dwell on the unappetizing details of her lower parts: the ugliest metaphor he proffers is that of the old woman's "Lanke" face as "a soules sacke." Such faces are "antiques," with the accent on the first syllable reminding us of the word's range of meaning, from old to grotesque. The meme is incorporated by a kind of apophasis that assures its integration into an elegy of quiet praise.

Now it is time to move to the poems we probably all began with when we came to know and love John Donne and his work: the *Songs and Sonets*. As in the *Elegies*, there are two main forms of energy here: the comic and the profound. One might even be tempted—since we have no idea how Donne himself would have ordered them—to divide what is usually called the Songs and Sonnets into two books of love

lyrics. One of these, in energy closer to the *Elegies*, is Ovidian, but also Continental: from Imperial Rome to the Dames des Roches,[18] Donne's virtuosity displays itself in the cocking of snooks, in the outrageous paradox, in the rueful admission of addiction. Consider his wicked sendup of both Marlowe and Raleigh in "The Baite":

> Come live with mee, and bee my love,
> And we will some new pleasures prove
> Of golden sands, and christall brookes:
> With silken lines, and silver hookes.
>
> There will the river whispering runne
> Warm'd by thine eyes, more then the Sunne.
> And there the'inamor'd fish will stay,
> Begging themselves they may betray.
>
> When thou wilt swimme in that live bath,
> Each fish, which every channell hath,
> Will amorously to thee swimme,
> Gladder to catch thee, then thou him.
>
> If thou, to be so seene, beest loath,
> By Sunne, or Moone, thou darknest both,
> And if my selfe have leave to see,
> I need not their light, having thee.
>
> Let others freeze with angling reeds,
> And cut their legges, with shells and weeds,
> Or treacherously poore fish beset,
> With strangling snare, or windowie net.
>
> Let coarse bold hands, from slimy nest
> The bedded fish in banks out-wrest;
> Or curious traitors, sleavesilk flies,
> Bewitch poor fishes wandring eyes.

[18]Madeleine and Catherine des Roches (1520–87 and 1542–87), mother and daughter, were both lively and intellectual feminist authors in Poitiers, friends of Etienne de Pasquier and Pierre de Ronsard.

> For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
> For thou thy selfe art thine own bait;
> That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
> Alas, is wiser farre then I.

Nobody wrote so charming a poem about fish until Rupert Brooke. It is almost a pity to analyze such verse, and I will say only that the energy here is an energy of *lightness.* This is peculiarly a talent of Donne's, shared to this degree by almost no one else. It is partly in the rapid tetrameters, partly in the images of the lady's elegant limbs shimmering in the water alongside the fish; it deliberately slows itself down in the antitheses of "Let others . . . or . . . ," "Let coarse bold hands . . . or . . . ," to swoop triumphantly into the final stanza and the final paradox that engenders the punch-line.

Of such poems there are a number in the *Songs and Sonets*: they are neither snarky nor profound, but the kind of thing a happy and amused lover or husband might write, tongue in cheek, to his beloved on a rainy Saturday. "Witchcraft by a Picture" belongs in this group, as do "The Dampe," "The Flea," "Loves Alchymie," and this:

> Twice or thrice had I loved thee,
> Before I knew thy face or name ;
> So in a voice, so in a shapelesse flame,
> *Angells* affect us oft, and worship'd bee;
> Still when, to where thou wert, I came,
> Some lovely glorious nothing I did see,
> But since, my soule, whose child love is,
> Takes limmes of flesh, and else could nothing doe,
> More subtile then the parent is,
> Love must not be, but take a body too,
> And therefore what thou wert, and who,
> I bid Love aske, and now
> That it assume thy body, I allow,
> And fixe it selfe in thy lip, eye, and brow.
>
> Whilst thus to ballast love, I thought,
> And so more steddily to have gone,
> With wares which would sinke admiration,
> I saw, I had loves pinnace overfraught,
> Ev'ry thy haire for love to worke upon

Is much too much, some fitter must be sought;
For, nor in nothing, nor in things
Extreme, and scattring bright, can love inhere;
Then as an Angell, face, and wings
Of aire, not pure as it, yet pure doth weare,
So thy love may be my loves spheare;
Just such disparitie
As is 'twixt Aire and Angells puritie,
'Twixt womens love, and mens will ever bee.
("Aire and Angels")

Again, this is an *amused energia*, a lightness of being: what it does is take the element of "wit," that so tantalized Dryden's generation—the sheer convoluted intellectual cleverness expressed in snaggy, involuted verse—and blend it with what I call something festive. What creates this joyful amusement is a particular form of the trope of irony. The poem treats love philosophically: Helen Gardner called it one of the four "Problems of Love" or "Lectures in Love's Philosophy."[19] Irony, as we all learned, is a trope of double meaning, which can sometimes play with the poem's two audiences—addressee and readers—but here works differently.

The opening reminds us of "The Good-Morrow," and after the first two lines the poem could have gone anywhere, in any mood. However, the raised finger of "So . . ." at once introduces a highly intellectual analogy, which proceeds happily through line 25, after which the finger is raised once more, now waggingly to punctuate a clearly irrefutable conclusion. *Quod Erat Demonstrandum.* Where, then, is the irony? It is a trope of double meaning: here, I submit, the doubleness of meaning is shared by the poet and the beloved, and by the poet and his readers: and it is revealed by two disparities. The first is the incongruity of using a thoroughly scholastic argument in a love poem: this was the incongruity which bothered the Restoration, because they could not believe—they could no longer believe—that for Donne and his audience such a paradox could be intentional, understood, and appreciated as delicious, not improper, though still a paradox. The second disparity is that between the poem's argument and its implied

[19]In her edition of *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 205.

situation. The poet is pretending to be an ass, lecturing upon love to a goose; yet the elegance of the argument, as well as the simply moving opening lines, suggests that the poet, his persona the speaking lover, and the beloved are all equally intelligent and equally in love, so that in the real life of this perfect equality, his conclusion here would be nonsense—were it not understood to be a charming pleasantry, uttered with tongue in cheek.

This joyful irony in itself creates what I have called a festive *energia*; and this is common to a number of the lyrics in *Songs and Sonets*.[20] Such an energy fits in well with modern questioning of the old temporal dichotomy between young Jack Donne and older married Doctor Donne: it is perfectly conceivable as pillow-talk on a sunny summer morning in Mitcham, with the children still asleep. It is also partly what links the *Songs and Sonets* to the *Elegies*. Something of this festive *energia*, this joyful irony, we find in "On Going To Bed," especially in the opening and the closing sections. We can imagine the lady smilingly saying, after the final question, "Oh, shut up and come to bed!" In the central parts, of course, we find touches of "Loves Progress" and "Loves Alchymie," and the whole is gloriously witty, energetic, and sheer fun.

However, the reason I mention it here is that it also introduces a new turn in *energia*'s helix. This new energy appears just after the "off with" series, and follows the chuckle of Mahomet's Paradise and the attribution of a splendid erection to angelic powers.

> Licence my roving hands, and let them goe
> Behind, before, above, betweene, below.
> Oh my America, my newfound land,
> My kingdome, safelyest when with one man man'd.
> My Myne of precious stones; my empiree;
> How blest ame I in this discouering thee!
> To enter in these bonds, is to be free,
> Then where my hand is sett my seale shalbee.
> (25–32)

[20]Helen Gardner suggested adding "A Lecture Upon the Shadow," "The Dreame" and "Loves Alchymie" to the "Problems of Love"; to the poems of joyful energia I would add "The Legacie," "The Triple Foole," and a few others.

After which, the poem joyfully goes back to philosophy and its triumphantly challenging ending. But what has happened in these eight central lines? It is as if suddenly, on an indrawn breath, the irony has volatilized and been replaced by what I can only call an *energia* of wonder. The roving hands introduce it, and their topographical asyndeton is a slowing-down, a chorographic deceleration that culminates in the half-sigh, half-cry of "Oh!"[21]

This wonder, this amazement, is even less common in English lyric hitherto than the festive energy I mentioned earlier; and in the *Songs and Sonets* it permeates the great lyrics of requited love that captivated us all when we were young. We hear it in "A Valediction of Weeping":

> O more then Moone,
> Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy spheare,
> Weepe me not dead, in thine armes, but forbeare
> To teach the sea, what it may doe too soone;
> (19–22)

We hear it in "The Anniversarie":

> All other things, to their destruction draw,
> Only our love hath no decay;
> This, no to morrow hath, nor yesterday,
> Running it never runs from us away,
> But truly keepes his first, last, everlasting day.
> (6–10)

It is the culmination of the festive energy, the triumphant joy of "The Good-Morrow," of "The Canonization" and of "The Sunne Rising": it is what lies beyond even that. And whatever its date, it is in "The Extasie" that we find the *energia* of wonder's furthest point. Not now an "O Altitudo!" at the new found land; not a *tendresse* against weeping, itself on the point of tears; not a recognition that in such a

[21]Anne Lake Prescott tells the story that when her female students, who had been reading "post-colonial" interpretations of this passage, saw the portrait of Donne in the hat, they agreed unanimously that this man could colonize them any time.

love the *equites nocti* afford an everlasting day; but stilled and distilled, a light that is still at the still point of the turning world.

> When love, with one another so
> Interinanimates two soules,
> That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
> Defects of loneliness controules.
> . . .
> So must pure lovers soules descend
> T'affections, and to faculties,
> Which sense may reach and apprehend,
> Else a great Prince in prison lies.
>
> To'our bodies turne wee then, that so
> Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
> Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
> But yet the body is his booke.
>
> And if some lover, such as wee,
> Have heard this dialogue of one,
> Let him still marke us, he shall see
> Small change, when we'are to bodies gone.
> (41–44, 65–76)

The energy here has stilled even the meter and the rhythm. I believe Donne took part of his idea from Sidney, from the Eighth Song of *Astrophil and Stella*, with a possible influence also of Shakespeare's "The Phoenix and the Turtle." The intellectual wit is still there, more than in Sidney: the argument still needs to be followed, but with lightness; and unlike Shakespeare, Donne has placed his poem under the sign of the first person—both singular and plural, in a "dialogue of one."

Within the turning world, he went beyond this only once, one thirteenth of December, in what may be the most moving of his poems. There is controversy about its dating: some think that it may have been written after the death of Lucy, Countess of Bedford; but in view of the fact that he also made his will on St Lucy's Day, and given the tone of the poem, I barely hesitate to situate it in December 1617, four months after Ann's death.

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,
The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
The worlds whole sap is sunke:
The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunke,
Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seeme to laugh,
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

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.
For his art did expresse
A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and leane emptinesse:
He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have;
I, by loves limbecke, am the grave
Of all, that's nothing. Oft a flood
Have wee two wept, and so
Drownd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two Chaosses, when we did show
Care to ought else; and often absences
Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)
Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown;
Were I a man, that I were one,
I needs must know; I should preferre,
If I were any beast,
Some ends, some means; Yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love; All, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow,'a light, and body must be here.

But I am None; nor will my Sunne renew.
You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser Sunne

> At this time to the Goat is runne
> To fetch new lust, and give it you,
> Enjoy your summer all;
> Since shee enjoyes her long nights festivall,
> Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call
> This houre her Vigill, and her Eve, since this
> Both the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

This quiet dirge has the *energia* of a slow, muffled drum, of a funeral march. I cannot think of a greater poem of mourning in the English language. Constantly, the vocabulary slows and intensifies the meter: "For I am every dead thing / In whom Love wrought new Alchimie"; "*All* others, from *all* things, draw *all* that's good"; "But I am by her death (which word wrongs her)" (my emphasis). And the *energia* creates *enargeia*: we are here, in the midnight of day and year, and in the midnight of the poet's soul.

Where can such poetic energy go, beyond the still point of the turning world and mourning's deep midnight? Only beyond, into another dimension. (I stress that I do not suggest any chronological pattern to Donne's lyrics, only some thematic and energetic ones.) Beyond "The Extasie" and the "Nocturnall" there is only God. Yet for Donne the turn to God in no way implies a plateau of quietness, a permanent calming of the *energia*. It is true that *La Corona*, that crown of prayer and praise, is quiet, as a communicant's joining his heart and soul to the liturgy in the Eucharist is quiet: but there is a powerful energy there, diffused throughout a vast structure yet flowing into every outcrop of it, the vine's growth felt in one of its outermost branches.

Then Donne takes us out of the Church into an inner room, yet with a Prayer-Book in his hand. "A Litanie" begins like a punchier version of *La Corona*, joining us to the Universal Church and all its Saints. But when that list has run its course, we hear a new voice, a new *energia* that joins the truths of faith to a positively sardonic wit:

> XV.
> From being anxious, or secure,
> Dead clods of sadnesse, or light squibs of mirth,
> From thinking, that great courts immure
> All, or no happinesse, or that this earth

Is only for our prison fram'd,
Or that thou art covetous
To them whom thou lovest, or that they are maim'd
From reaching this worlds sweet, who seek thee thus,
With all their might, Good Lord deliver us.

XVI.

From needing danger, to bee good,
From owing thee yesterdaies teares to day,
From trusting so much to thy blood
That in that hope, wee wound our soule away,
From bribing thee with Almes, to excuse
Some sinne more burdenous,
From light affecting, in religion, newes,
From thinking us all soule, neglecting thus
Our mutuall duties, Lord deliver us.

XVII.

From tempting Satan to tempt us,
By our connivence, or slack companie,
From measuring ill by vitious,
Neglecting to choake sins spawne, Vanitie,
From indiscreet humilitie,
Which might be scandalous,
And cast reproach on Christianitie,
From being spies, or to spies pervious,
From thirst, or scorne of fame, deliver us.

"When we are mov'd to seeme religious / Only to vent wit, Lord deliver us." "That we may change to evennesse / This intermitting aguish Pietie": has any divine poet shown such caustic self-knowledge? In the background, we can hear Sidney murmuring about "the highest end of the mistress knowledge, by the Greeks called *architektonikè*, which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self'."[22] The *energia* of "A Litanie" comes from applying mordant wit to self-knowledge, doing so in a meter smooth but filled with

[22]From *A Defence of Poesie*, in Sir Philip Sidney, *Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 82–83.

enjambments, and assuming baldly that the readers' selves will thereby be ruefully known by them as well.

What Donne has done in the *Holy Sonnets* is precisely what Sidney did in *Astrophil and Stella*. There was divine poetry before; there was divine lyric poetry before; and there were even religious sonnets before: in Italian by Petrarch himself and Vittoria Colonna; in French by Anne de Marquets; and in English by Anne Lock. But just as Sidney had injected a huge and heretical dose of *energia* into the Petrarchan sonnet-sequence by juxtaposing it with the point of view of a well-educated Protestant Northern courtier, so Donne injected into the thin stream of the religious sonnet-tradition a massive dose of *energia* derived from its juxtaposition with hard-headed self-knowledge, Ignatian meditation, and intense prayer. The result was, as we know, explosive:

> Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
> Repaire me nowe, for nowe mine end doth hast,
> I runne to Death, and Death meets me as fast,
> And all my pleasures are like yesterday.
> I dare not moue my dimme eyes any way,
> Despaire behind, and Death before doth cast
> Such terrour, and my feebled flesh doth wast
> By sinne in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh;
> Only thou art aboue, and when t'wards thee
> By thy leaue I can looke, I rise againe:
> But our old suttle foe soe tempteth me,
> That not one houre I can my selfe sustaine.
> Thy grace may winge me to prevent his Art,
> And thou, like Adamant, drawe mine yron hart.[23]

In this—not the best-known of the Holy Sonnets, but one of the most moving—we see a new use of the Sidneian *energia* in its sonnet-form. The challenging question in the first line is an amazed protest at the human condition: how can what the Eternal has made not be eternal? We know the answer, but Donne defers it with a vivid *enargeia*. As in the *Devotions upon emergent occasions*—which in some ways are almost

[23]This text comes from what the Donne Variorum editors have identified as the original sequence of the *Holy Sonnets*.

prose poems, and share in the *lyric* energy—and as in Ignatian meditation, he creates the "scene" of his death-bed, where time the *eques nocti* runs terrifyingly fast. He, John Donne, is moribund, death-bound, and now *running* to death as if on the back of night's galloping horse. And Death, now again personified, is not standing waiting: Death has become a hungry predator, running toward him "as fast," at the same unnerving speed. The collision will be frightful. John is frozen with terror, and knows not where to look. Behind him, he sees only his pleasures "like yesterday" and moreover condemned and yielding only Despair. Ahead, the galloping figure of Death is growing larger.

Now to "behind" and "before" he adds a new dimension. Not only is he frozen, but also he is standing on quicksand and sinking, weighted *down* by the lead of sin. The vertical, though, is also what holds a tiny glimmer of hope: for when he looks *up*, there is the Saviour, and the Saviour's love lifts him. The meter, which so far has been surprisingly smooth for such a disturbed and disturbing poem, breaks up at the beginning of the sestet, and oddly enough it is in the two broken lines 9 and 10 that the hope appears. Is Donne telling the readers something? Is the meter of despair smooth because it is our normal sinful condition? Does God's hope irrupt, interrupt, break the inexorable monotony? If that is so, we are at once, like the speaker, pushed back: the old subtle foe, complete with smoother meter, reminds us that we, like the speaker, cannot sustain ourselves even for an hour. What, then, is the answer? The only solution is Grace. Grace, which is granted by God's Will alone, can lend the soul wings to outspeed the devil; and since our heart has hardened to a block of iron, motionless and sinking, Grace can hover like a vast divine magnet and heave it out of the mire to the bosom of the Father. And in this final couplet the harmonious meter also is reclaimed by God.

The poem that perhaps best sums up the whole of what I have called Donne's lyric energy—an *energia* that combines intellectual and verbal wit, metrical virtuosity, and the imaginative (re)creation of a deep and felt emotion—is "A Hymne to God the Father":

> Wilt thou forgive that sinne where I begunne,
> Which is my sin, though it were done before?
> Wilt thou forgive those sinnes through which I runne,

And do them still: though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For, I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sinne by which I wonne
Others to sinne? and, made my sinne their doore?
Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne
A yeare, or two: but wallowd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sinne of feare, that when I'have spunne
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;
Sweare by thy selfe, that at my death thy Sunne
Shall shine as it shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, Thou hast done;
I have no more.

The extraordinary quality of this Hymn is its complete simplicity. It deals with the most profound emotion of the believing Christian: the confession of sin and the begging for forgiveness. We have seen these before in the Divine Poems: in several *Holy Sonnets*, including "Batter my heart," in the "Litanie" and in "Goodfriday 1613," for example. But here there is, apart from the completely integrated and justified pun on his name, no self-conscious wit, no showing off, no awkwardness or fireworks. There is no play with irregular or syncopated meter: the verse runs with perfect smoothness. On the other hand, the psychological insight is every bit as great as in "A Litanie." After Original Sin, which must be included even if it is counterintuitive, he proceeds to the sins fallen into continually in spite of equally regular condemnation and repentance: the pattern mentioned by St Paul in Romans 7:19 ("the evil that I would not, that I do"). In stanza *2* he tackles the sin that infects others and becomes their means to imitate it, as a dominant personality persuades weaker souls to join in a disreputable enterprise. This is followed by the caustic memory of a sin condemned briefly (either at the beginning or, more likely and more pungently, in recent times) but indulged in for many years.

All these are transcended by the progression to the final fear that haunts almost all of us, even if religious: that at the crucial moment,

the instant of death, it will all turn out to have been untrue and we shall simply wink out. Here the forgiveness he begs is not a formal pardon but simply the authoritative assurance that will dispel the sin, the fear. And the final reversal of the punning refrain becomes a moving statement of faith, completing a poem of immense spiritual depth and complexity distilled into limpid clarity. The *energia* here briefly reassures us with the pun—reader, you are still in the hands of witty Dean Donne—yet then at once leads us to forget art and contemplate the soul.

It may, finally, be appropriate to try to set the *energia* we have been looking at into its cultural context. To do so, I should like to make a brief excursion through the visual arts. There is throughout the Renaissance, certainly up to and including Titian and probably extending to Veronese, a concern for perfection of form, for creating a harmony between the living subject of the picture or sculpture on the one hand and the ideal corresponding to that subject on the other. Or, as Sidney, following Aristotle and others, put it, between Nature as it is and Nature as it should be. When the harmony succeeded, as it did in Titian's portraits, it was exquisite; but it also had drawbacks. Kenneth Clark criticized the High Renaissance for its insistence on physical perfection even in Galilean fishermen at their work.[24] And what he calls the convention of physical beauty does relate to "Nature as it should be," and shows that that concept, which is of course at bottom a moral one, may very easily also become an aesthetic one. As Sidney himself went on: "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely."[25]

But as Sidney went from there to man, so must we. For the art that particularly concerns us here is portraiture. And for that we turn to a different art historian, the long-time director of Britain's National Portrait Gallery, David Piper, and his classic study of the English face.[26] Piper's chapter that follows Holbein is called "The Elizabe-

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[24]Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: a Personal View* (London: BBC and John Murray, 1969), p. 133.

[25]*Miscellaneous Prose*, p. 78.

[26]David Piper, *The English Face* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1957).

thans—a Rock against Time." Here, with unrivalled knowledge and great discernment, he shows that even in the Elizabethan portraits that regard the viewer, there is something other than a personality. From Titian had been learnt a "proud and aloof dignity," which Anthonis Mor stiffened further by glazing and chilling Titian's rich and broken color. These portraits concentrate on clothes and accessories, sometimes accompanied by coats of arms. "The painted portrait," says Piper, "was but a domesticated tomb-effigy: its object to fix and perpetuate the mortal achievements, the rank, wealth and lineage of its subject."[27]

As most of us remember, *fin-de-siècle* is a real if elusive phenomenon. It is New Year's Eve magnified, it brings intimations of mortality, it impels reflection upon hitherto accepted verities. At the *fin du seizième siècle* it was not otherwise: the more since on the geopolitical stage also there was a rumble of changing scenery. In the arts, this particular *fin-de-siècle* is marked by the coming, or at least the acceleration, of the Baroque. The term is thought to be derived from the Portuguese word for an imperfect pearl, and denotes irregularity. Comparing Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi* with Caravaggio's clearly shows the change: from a reposeful isosceles triangle to a curled diagonal rather like the Nike symbol, a whole new reserve of energy seems to have been tapped. It is a disquieted and disquieting energy; but it is the energy of the period that created the sonnets of Shakespeare and much of the early poetry of John Donne.

Piper's following chapter is called "Jacobean Melancholy," and one of the aspects of the new Baroque in art is its acceptance, sometimes its enthusiastic acceptance, of the complex passion of melancholy. This is not only the settled temperament portrayed by Dürer, or the all-encompassing human condition analyzed by Burton; it appears like a flash of disquiet in areas where the Renaissance would not normally have allowed it. In portraiture, nothing shows so brilliantly the contrast between Renaissance stability and Baroque nervousness than the respective self-portraits of Anthonis Mor and Gianlorenzo Bernini.

And the same contrast is superbly expressed in two other portraits in the National Portrait Gallery. The first is the Longleat portrait of Philip Sidney, ca. 1577; the second is that of John Donne, by an

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[27]Piper, p. 60.

unknown artist, ca. 1595. The Sidney portrait shows none of his poetic *energia*; that of Donne is the perfect complement to his poems in its intense, Baroque energy tinged with melancholy. What the Baroque does is to remove the constraints which had held and channeled the *energia* of self-consciousness and direct emotion: the self-consciousness that Melancholy implies and nourishes is now free to create new pearls, imperfect but interesting. It is this energy that animates lyric poetry from Sidney on, that peaks in the work of Donne and Herbert, and that is finally re-constrained by the new politeness of the Restoration.

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