No Man Is a Contradiction

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There can be no doubt of the purposefulness of Donne's poetic searching of the relation of body to spirit in love. We don't know when he wrote "The Ecstasy," or what personal circumstances may have prompted "Air and Angels," "Love's Progress," and "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning." But he plays tellingly upon "the soul's, and body's knot" in the *Metempsychosis* (1601):

> Another part became the well of sense,
> The tender well-armed feeling brain, from whence,
> Those sinewy strings which do our bodies tie,
> Are ravelled out, and fast there by one end,
> Did this soul limbs, these limbs a soul attend,
> And now they joined. (ll. 501-06)

Then the notorious shaping hyperbole of *The First Anniversary* works precisely to demonstrate that a contraction of bodily powers is a spiritual diminution:

> we'are not retired, but damped;
> And as our bodies, so our minds are cramped:
> 'Tis shrinking, not close weaving that hath thus,
> In mind and body both bedwarfed us. (ll. 151-54)

The best known conceit in *The Second Anniversary* celebrates a state of innocent purity in which sense and spirit work as one:

> her pure and eloquent blood
> Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
> That one might almost say, her body thought.
> (ll. 244-46)

In the prose writings a reader must be struck by the way Donne will come back to the liaison between soul and body at the critical point of an argument.[1] It seems that some of his most characteristic thinking about differences of doctrine, and the nature of a Church, grows out of a particular conception of the working of the human constitution:

> All our growth and vegetation flowes from our head, Christ. And . . . he hath chosen to himselfe for the perfection of his body, limmes proportionall thereunto, and . . . as a soule through all the body, so this care must live, and dwell in every part, that it be ever ready to doe his proper function, and also to succour those other parts, for whose reliefe or sustentation it is framed, and planted in the body. (*Biathanatos*, p. 179)

Love is indivisible when it starts in a due regard for the integrity of human nature itself. An undue contempt for the life of the body in the world may have dangerous, even monstrous consequences. This is the drift of *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*, two polemical tracts which were probably written quite close together in 1608-09. These occasional essays have been reputed outrageous, or taken for documents in neurosis. Attentively read, they smack more of paradox than self-hatred. *Biathanatos* comes before us as a professed paradox (title page; p. 217) in that serio-satiric mode which Helen Peters' edition of the *Paradoxes and Problems* has helped us to understand, whose effect is a calculated provocation of waters long grown stagnant. Yet this treatise puts a good case, even a just one, which is argued in a manner that impresses by its reasonableness and shrewd common sense. Donne's skeptical appraisal of the world shows up strikingly in his way of playing off conflicting imperatives so that little more remains to justify them than some common human impulse, and of balancing the good and ill consequences of actions as if our judgment of events in time may have relative validity at best. What he expressly does not attempt is a general defense of suicide, and we quite reverse his drift if we attribute that intention to him. He is at pains to limit strictly the circumstances in which a man may be justified in seeking his own death, as if he allows that the case for self-slaughter has just so much reason in it; and he links this argument closely with the reasoning advanced in *Pseudo-Martyr* against the pursuit of martyrdom for its own sake.

In *Biathanatos* Donne proposes no more than that it may sometimes be licit, in certain situations, to prefer death to life. He has in view only those occasions when a man must choose between ease in the world and the possibility of eternal life; and he is no less precise in his positive aim of re-encouraging men to a just contempt of this life, and restoring them to their natural state, "which is a desire of supreame happiness in the next life by the loss of this" (p. 216). Samson brought about his own destruction not principally, as an end in itself, but accidentally in the accomplishment of a greater purpose. St. Paul himself welcomed death just so that he might be with Christ, as Calvin allowed:

> this may be done onely when the honour of God may be promoved by that way, and no other.
> (p. 200)

The muster of powerful examples serves to remind us that Christians have always proved themselves by their willingness to put another end before mere survival and well-being in the world. Circumstances will recur in which a man better testifies to God's glory, and ensures eternal life, by inviting his own death or even killing himself. Donne professes to seek no more than the confirmation of a Christian truism which has dropped out of common reckoning when he persuades us that we should think more favorably of gaining eternal life than of losing this life. But he characteristically tries out this proposal where it will most disturb our settled preconceptions, in the tricky case of people who have deliberately brought on their own death in God's cause.

It is fundamental to Donne's general design that the case for self-destruction has force while it is limited to the martyrs who chose to die rather than deny Christ. So much must be allowed in justice to people who claim the right to pawn their own lives in a cause. Yet no such dire alternative confronts the recusants and Jesuits who now court martyrdom by refusing to subscribe to an Oath of Allegiance. They are required to deny no more than the right of the Pope to depose their lawful king. Donne concedes as much as he does so that he may deny the more categorically all that falls beyond the limit he sets. In a Christian state a man may not justly claim the right to flout the law in the name of an alien Church. His allegiance to a spiritual authority cannot override his obligation to obey the civil power.

The Jesuitical absoluteness which provoked both these tracts is undermined by Donne's very conduct of a legal discussion, in

which instances are played off one against another in tacit witness that man's moral stances must be judged in relation to their circumstances. Donne puts two substantive reasons why a spiritual authority may not license its adherents to set themselves beyond the just laws of a Christian country. His essential objection to a spiritual absolutism is that no single human institution has a monopoly of truth. He proposes quite the contrary understanding, that however the sects may vary in the corruptness of their doctrines yet they are all parcels of the universal Church which we shall make up hereafter, if only hereafter; and "as long as they goe towards peace, that is Truth, it is no matter which way" (p. 20):

> *let us follow the truth in love, and in all things grow up into him, which is the head, that is Christ, till we are all met together, unto a perfect man.* By which we receive the honour to be one body with Christ our head. (pp. 178-79)

Polemic passes into principle, and we recognize Donne's larger engagement with this bitter issue of the day. It is much more than a debating point with him that although human institutions have but relative worth at best, they may nonetheless embody a vital part of the whole truth, as it were accommodating to the relative capacities of their charges such spiritual stock as they conserve:

> [It is a] sound true opinion, that in all Christian professions there is way to salvation. . . . As some bodies are as wholesomly nourished as ours, with Akornes, and endure nakednesse, both which would be dangerous to us, if we for them should leave our former habits, though theirs were the Primitive diet and custome: so are many souls well fed with such formes, and dressings of Religion, as would distemper and misbecome us, and make us corrupt towards God, if any humane circumstance moved it, and in the opinion of men, though none. . . . I will not, nor need to you, compare the Religions. The channels of Gods mercies run through both fields; and they are sister teats of his graces, yet both diseased and infected, but not both alike.[2]

Donne's second argument against the Roman usurpation of spiritual sovereignty takes him still more deeply into the make-up of our nature. His specific counter to the case for the subversive

"Missions of the Pope" is that the separation of authority into secular power and spiritual power is invalid in itself. In a just commonwealth the civil and the spiritual authorities may not be separated though they ought to be distinct, for they take several ways to one and the same end, which is fully realized only when the law of the land follows out the law of God. The oneness of State and Church is assured when the authority of both institutions is vested in the same sacred office, and the conduct of policy takes a spiritual direction, for "no man can rightly governe earthly matters, except he know also how to handle Divine" (*Pseudo-Martyr,* p. 20). Such a fusion of the offices of priest and king supposes the close interworking of the spiritual and secular powers; and this mutual support of distinct elements is argued directly from the right functioning of the human constitution, in which body and spirit work not as incompatible entities but as complementary parts of one whole nature:

> It is intire man that God hath care of, and not the soule alone; therefore his first worke was the body, and the last work shall bee the glorification thereof. He hath not delivered us over to a Prince onely, as to a Physitian, and to a Lawyer, to looke to our bodies and estates; and to the Priest onely, as to a Confessor, to looke to, and examine our soules, but the Priest must aswel endevour, that we live vertuously and innocently in this life for society here; as the Prince, by his lawes keepes us in the way to heaven: for thus they accomplish a Regale Sacerdotium, when both do both; for we are sheepe to them both, and they in divers relations sheepe to one another. (*Pseudo-Martyr*, p. 17)

The idea that our own nature proves the interfusion of temporal and eternal being controls the argument of *Pseudo-Martyr*, and gives the tract an interest which even Donne's best champions conspire to deny.[3] In *Pseudo-Martyr* Donne singles out for reprehension as a dangerous error the "usurped and detorted" use of "the Comparisons of *Soule* and *Body*, and of *Golde* and *Leade*" (p. 20). He determinedly refers erroneous versions of authority to the false assumption that body and spirit are separate or even contradictory entities (p. 20).

The much noted uses of his own disposition in both *Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr* are carefully placed at the outset of the

argument, where they may draw a reader into a sympathetic complicity with a man's wish to end his sufferings, while showing him the bars to his attempting it:

> I have often such a sickely inclination. And, whether it be, because I had my first breeding and conversation with men of a suppressed and afflicted Religion, accustomed to the despite of death, and hungry of an imagin'd Martyrdome; Or that the common Enemie find that doore worst locked against him in mee; Or that there bee a perplexitie and flexibility in the doctrine it selfe; Or because my Conscience ever assures me, that no rebellious grudging at Gods gifts, nor other sinfull concurrence accompanies these thoughts in me, or that a brave scorn, or that a faint cowardlinesse beget it, whensoever any affliction assailes me, mee thinks I have the keyes of my prison in mine owne hand, and no remedy presents it selfe so soone to my heart, as mine own sword. Often Meditation of this hath wonne me to a charitable interpretation of their action, who dy so: and provoked me a little to watch and exagitate their reasons, which pronounce so peremptory judgements upon them.
>
> ("Preface," *Biathanatos*, pp. 17-18)

In allowing just so much substance in his adversaries' case Donne intimates that the slight human urge has been petrified into an inhuman principle. We need not doubt that his testimony is authentic; yet it does clear the ground for an impartially reasoned discrimination between true martyrdom and false:

> And for my selfe, . . . I most humbly beseech him, . . . to beleeve, that I have a just and Christianly estimation, and reverence, of that devout and acceptable Sacrifice of our lifes, for the glory of our blessed Saviour. For, as my fortune hath never beene so flattering nor abundant, as should make this present life sweet and precious to me, as I am a Moral man: so, as I am a Christian, I have beene ever kept awake in a meditation of Martyrdome, by being derived from such a stocke and race, as I beleeve, no family (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for

> obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, then it hath done. I did not therefore enter into this, as a carnall or over-indulgent favourer of this life, but out of such reasons, as may arise to his knowledge, who shall be pleased to read the whole worke.
>
> ("An Advertisement to the Reader," *Pseudo-Martyr*, A5r-v)

The circumstance he brings home to a just reader from the first is that his family tradition and history, and his own upbringing, would point him to an opposite belief from his present conviction. We understand him to take his position now by his own reason, in judicious disregard of these strong ties of sympathy. Still, such moments of personal candor are undoubtedly more than a polemical maneuver. We are invited to see in them a deliberate and even agonizing refusal to submit his reason to family loyalties and the constraints of his nurture. This Advertisement intimates that the argument which follows it judiciously reasons out an Anglican ecumenism, and justifies a wise election of it.

There is no doubt that Donne's intricate management of his intellectual middle course opens him to misunderstanding. He is particularly subtle in his way of sifting from opposite extremes what seems reasonable in them, as if to show that opinions turn vicious just at the point where they become prescriptive, and take on an absoluteness which is alien to our condition. Much of what has been taken for his residual Romanism, as by Mrs. Simpson in her edition of *The Courtier's Library*,[4] is really no more than a confirmed refusal to allow even his own Church's title to a corner in the truth:

> To adore, or scorn an image, or protest
> May all be bad; doubt wisely. (*Satire III*, ll. 76-77)

No less than the *Satires*, *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Biathanatos* express Donne's enduring abhorrence of power gained by the pretence to a unique possession of the saving truth:

> So perish souls, which more choose men's unjust
> Power from God claimed, than God himself to trust.
>
> (*Satire III*, ll. 109-10)

Yet Donne's Christian skepticism is always humanely grounded, and positive in its scope. His readiness to find truth in the teachings of all the Christian sects, more corrupted or less but never whole in

itself, follows out his profound conviction that the sectaries and non-sectaries alike have a place in Christ's Church:

> Sir, not onely a Mathematique point, which is the most indivisible and unique thing which art can present, flowes into every line which is derived from the Center, but our soul which is but one, hath swallowed up a Negative, and feeling soul; which was in the body before it came, and exercises those faculties yet; and God himselfe, who only is one, seems to have been eternally delighted, with a disunion of persons. They whose active function it is, must endevour this unity in Religion: and we at our lay Altars (which are our tables, or bedside, or stools, wheresoever we dare prostrate our selves to God in prayer) must beg it of him: but we must take heed of making misconclusions 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 voyces differ who is Mayor, and who Aldermen, or what their Jurisdiction, (as with the Bishop of *Rome*, or whosoever) yet it is still one Corporation.[5]

The argument from the oneness of the human constitution carries him further, to the oneness of human kind:

> as we are all sheep of one fold, so in many cases, we are all shepherds of one another, and owe one another this dutie, of giving our temporall lives, for anothers spirituall advantage; yea, for his temporall.
> (*Biathanatos*, p. 186)

We must take it for more than political opportunism when we find him defining the Church itself as a spiritual direction of the just commonwealth, even a commonwealth of savages. In *Pseudo-Martyr*, in 1609, he may well have had the American Indians in mind when he spoke of the civilizing power which their own humanity must have upon "a companie of Savages," if only that company might be brought to consent and concur to a civil manner of living, and so produce magistracy and superiority:

> So also, if this Companie, thus growen to a *Common-wealth*, should receive further light, and passe, through understanding the Law written in all hearts, and in the Booke of creatures, and by

> relation of some instructers, arrive to a saving knowledge, and Faith in our blessed Saviours Passion, they should also bee a *Church*, and amongst themselves would arise up, lawfull Ministers for Ecclesiastique function, though not derived from any other mother Church, and though different from all the divers Hierarchies established in other Churches: and in this State, both Authorities might bee truely said to bee from God.
>
> (*Pseudo-Martyr*, pp. 83-84)

Donne's resonant proclamation that our common human nature inescapably involves us one with another is well enough known:

> The Church is *Catholike, universall*, so are all her *Actions;* All that she does, belongs to *all*. When she *baptizes a child*, that concernes mee; for that child is thereby connected to that *Head* which is my *Head* too, and engraffed into that *body*, whereof I am a *member*. And when she *buries* a *Man*, that action concernes mee; All *mankinde* is of one *Author*, and is one *volume*; . . . who bends not his *eare* to any *bell*, which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell, which is passing a *peece of himselfe* out of this *world*? No Man is an *Iland*, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the *maine*; if a *Clod* bee washed away be the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a *Mannor* or thy *friends*, or *thine owne* were; Any Mans *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in Mankinde.[6]

His resoluteness in carrying this powerful vision through may be less well appreciated:

> we are debters to all, because all are our Neighbours. *Proximus tuus est antequam Christianus est*: A man is thy Neighbour, by his Humanity, not by his Divinity; by his Nature, not by his Religion: a Virginian is thy Neighbour as well as a Londoner; and all men are in every good mans Diocess, and Parish. *Irrides adorantem lapides*, says that Father; Thou sees a man worship an Image, and thou laughest him to scorn; assist him, direct him if thou canst, but scorn him not.[7]

"A Virginian is thy Neighbour, as well as a Londoner." W. Moelwyn Merchant has well shown us how steadfastly Donne's persuasion that the primitive Virginian natives are also part of humanity stood up to the news of the massacre in the settlement only weeks after he delivered that sermon.[8] When Donne preached at a banquet of the Virginia Company itself later in the year he simply disregarded the clamor for the Indians to be put down like beasts, and urged our duty to our fellow men in whatever condition we find them. He spoke with an impassioned eloquence which does justice to the largeness of his vision:

> Before the ende of the worlde come, before this mortality shall put on immortalitie, before the Creature shall be delivered of the bondage of corruption under which it groanes, before the Martyrs under the Altar shalbe silenc'd, before all things shal be subdued to Christ, his kingdome perfited, and the last Enemy Death destroied, the Gospell must be preached to those men to whom ye send; to all men. (*Sermons*, IV, 280)

We must carry to the Indians as to our immediate fellow citizens such love, truth, civility, justice as we possess because we thereby further and hasten "this blessed, this joyfull, this glorious consummation of all, and happie reunion of all bodies to their Soules." No man is an island, or a contradiction of his own humanity. We are no more pure spirits in contempt of our bodies than we may arrogate the truth to ourselves, or deny our commitment to our kind—"to all men." In furthering a happy reunion of all bodies to their souls we hasten the consummation of love.

ii

Donne's intellectual attitudes are not subject to the reversals of his career. The understanding of love which he opened in "The Ecstasy" needed no drastic renunciation when he took holy orders. On the contrary, a series of sermons which span his preaching ministry, many of them delivered on Easter Day, affirm the mutual dependence of soul and body as it is assured by Christ's taking flesh for pure love, and by the indivisibility of the human and the divine elements in Christ's own manhood. In this conviction Donne never wavered. It affords him his counterthrust against death and dissolution, as if he proves the scope of providential love in his own awareness of the inseparable interworking of mind and senses:

> Never therefore dispute against thine own happiness; never say, God asks the heart, that is, the soule, and therefore rewards the soule, or punishes the soule, and hath no respect to the body. . . . Never go about to separate the thoughts of the heart, from the colledge, from the fellowship of the body. . . . All that the soule does, it does in, and with, and by the body. . . . The body is washed in baptisme, but it is that the soule might be made cleane. . . . In all unctions, whether that which was then in use in Baptisme, or that which was in use at our transmigration, and passage out of this world, the body was anointed, that the soule might be consecrated. . . . The body is signed with the Crosse, that the soule might be armed against tentations. . . . My body received the body of Christ, that my soule might partake of his merits. . . . These two, Body, and Soule, cannot be separated for ever, which, whilst they are together, concurre in all that either of them doe. Never thinke it presumption. . . . To hope for that in thy selfe, which God admitted, when he tooke thy nature upon him. And God hath made it . . . more easie then so, for thee, to beleeve it, because not onely did Christ himselfe, but such men, as thou art, did rise at the Resurrection of Christ. And therefore when our bodies are dissolved and liquefied in the Sea, putrified in the earth, resolv'd to ashes in the fire, macerated in the ayre, . . . take account that all the world is Gods cabinet, and water, and earth, and fire, and ayre, are the proper boxes, in which God laies up our bodies, for the Resurrection. (*Sermons*, IV, 358-59)

The ideas which Donne so sublimely draws together just at the midpoint of his ministry shape his contemplation of mortality from the first extant sermons to *Deaths Duell* itself. He is far from the mortifier of rebellious flesh we are too quick to see in the selected highlights. His prepossession with death might be better explained as a horror like Adam's when he contemplates the ruin of so noble a work as mankind:

> But have I now seen death? Is this the way
> I must return to native dust? O sight
> Of terror, foul and ugly to behold,
> Horrid to think, how horrible to feel!
> (*Paradise Lost*, XI, ll. 462-65)

Donne's return upon the prospect of inevitable wreck is always an impassioned urge to outbrave, even transform into glory, the worst that our mortality may inflict upon us. We must put him with Shakespeare and Milton in that high estimation of the body which distinguishes the seventeenth-century English writers from ascetics and idealists alike:

> That this clod of earth, this body of ours should be carried up to the highest heaven, placed in the eye of God, sat down at the right hand of God, *Miramini hoc*, wonder at this; That God, all Spirit, served with Spirits, associated to Spirits, should have such an affection, such a love to this body, this earthly body, this deserve this wonder. The Father was pleased to breathe into this body, at first, in the Creation; the Son was pleased to assume this body himself, after, in the Redemption; The Holy Ghost is pleased to consecrate this body, and make it his Temple, by his sanctification; In that *Faciamus hominem*, Let us, all us, make man, that consultation of the whole Trinity in making man, is exercised even upon the lower part of man, the dignifying of his body. (*Sermons*, VI, 265-66)

Such an appraisal of our nature is precisely grounded. Donne justifies human worth, and the dignity of the body itself, in the coupling of body and soul which makes us man, and the mingling of physical and spiritual elements in our make-up:

> In the constitution and making of a natural man, the body is not the man, nor the soul is not the man, but the union of these two makes up the man; the spirits in a man which are the thin and active part of the blood, and so are of a kind of middle nature, between soul and body, those spirits are able to doe, and they doe the office, to unite and apply the faculties of the soul to the organs of the body, and so there is a man: so in a regenerate man, a Christian man, his being born of Christian Parents, that gives him a body, that makes him of the body of the Covenant . . . and then in his baptism, that Sacrament gives him a soul, a spiritual soul, *jus in re*, an actual possession of Grace; but yet, as there are spirits in us, which unite body and soul, so there must be subsequent acts, and works of the blessed spirit, that must unite and confirm all, and make up

> this spiritual man in the way of sanctification; for without that his body, that is, his being born within the Covenant, and his soul, that is, his having received Grace in baptism, do not make him up.[9]
> (*Sermons*, II, 261-62)

Christ himself offers final confirmation that our nature is essentially mixed, and needs the effective union of soul and body, for he shared our manhood just so long as he united body and spirit, human element and divine. When Christ lay in the grave he relinquished his humanity, though his godhead never left him, because "the Humane soule was departed" from "the Carcasse":

> But yet for al this powerful *embalming*, this *hypostaticall union* of both natures, we see *Christ* did *dye*; and for all this *union* which made him *God* and *Man*, hee became no man (for the *union* of the *body* and *soule* makes the man, and hee whose soule and body are separated by death, (as long as that state lasts) is properly no man).[10]
> (*Sermons*, X, 237)

Christ's mixed nature effectively seals the marriage of our flesh to divine being and unites "heaven, and earth, Jerusalem and Babylon together"[11]:

> As our flesh is in him, by his participation thereof, so his flesh is in us, by our communication thereof; and so is his divinity in us, by making us partakers of his divine nature, and by making us one spirit with himself . . . for this is an union, in which Christ in his purpose hath married himself to our souls, inseparably, and *Sine solutione vinculi*, Without any intention of divorce on this part. (*Sermons*, IX, 248)

Eternal being perpetually interpenetrates the world of sense, as in a union of love, countervailing change and death:

> In this kisse, where *Righteousness and peace have kissed each other*, In this person, where the Divine and the humane nature have kissed each other. In this Christian Church, where Grace and Sacraments, visible and invisible meanes of salvation, have kissed each other, *Love is as strong as death*; my soul is united to my Saviour, now in my life, as in death, and I am already made *one spirit with him*: and whatsoever death can doe, this kisse, this union can

> doe, that is, give me a present, an immediate possession of the kingdome of heaven.
>
> (*Sermons*, III, 320-21)

The dignifying of our flesh by its union with spirit in Christ vouchsafes a glorious resurrection of the body itself, which shall repair "in an inseparable re-union"[12] the divorce between body and soul made by sin:

> such a gladnesse shall my soul have, that this flesh, (which she will no longer call her prison, nor her tempter, but her friend, her companion, her wife) that this flesh, that is, I, in the re-union, and redintegration of both parts, shall see God; for then, one principall clause in her rejoycing, and acclamation, shall be, that this flesh is her flesh; *In carne mea, in my flesh I shall see God*. . . . As my meat is assimilated to my flesh, and made one flesh with it; as my soul is assimilated to my God, and *made partaker of the divine nature*, and *Idem Spiritus*, the same Spirit with it; so, there my flesh shall be assimilated to the flesh of my Saviour, and made the same flesh with him too. *Verbum caro factum, ut caro resurgeret*; Therefore the Word was made flesh, therefore God was made man, that that union might exalt the flesh of man to the right hand of God. . . . when *after my skinne worms shall destroy my body, I shall see God*, I shall see him in my flesh, which shall be mine as inseparably, (in the *effect*, though not in the *manner*) as the *Hypostaticall union* of God, and man, in Christ, makes our nature and the Godhead one person in him. My flesh shall be no more of mine, then Christ shall not be man, as well as God.
>
> (*Sermons*, III, 112-13)

In the grave God transforms "a piece of Copper money" into "a Talent of Gold" and fits it for eternal life, which was always the true destiny of the body (*Sermons*, II, 92). Even our final beatitude will not be complete until both parts of our nature are reunited, for the soul itself "is not perfectly well, not fully satisfied, till it be reunited to that body againe" (*Sermons*, VII, 322). At that "redintegration," which is also "an indissoluble marriage to him, who, for the salvation of both, assumed both" (*Sermons*, VIII, 168), we shall know a bliss of body and soul together such as the angels themselves cannot share. As God married body and soul

together in the Creation, so he "shal at last crowne thy body and soule together in the Resurrection" (*Sermons*, VIII, 203).

> The Angels shall feed and rejoyce at my resurrection, when they shall see me in my soul, to have all that they have, and in my body, to have that that they have not. (*Sermons*, V, 230)

When Donne so insists upon the effective integrity of sense and spirit even in fallen human nature, his imperative care is to justify the resurrection of the whole being. Yet he also puts at issue the final value of our experience in this temporal world. His formal concern is the nature of a sacrament.

Flux and stability make the opposing terms of Donne's poetic self-debate from the first. "Good Friday 1613. Riding Westward" is our evidence that before he took orders Donne had reached his own understanding of the consequence of events in the world:

> Let man's soul be a sphere, and then, in this,
> The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
> And as the other spheres, by being grown
> Subject to foreign motions, lose their own,
> And being by others hurried every day,
> Scarce in a year their natural form obey:
> Pleasure or business, so, our souls admit
> For their first mover, and are whirled by it.
> Hence is't, that I am carried towards the west
> This day, when my soul's form bends towards the east.
> There I should see a sun, by rising set,
> And by that setting endless day beget; . . .
> Could I behold those hands which span the poles,
> And turn all spheres at once, pierced with those holes?
> Could I behold that endless height which is
> Zenith to us, and to'our antipodes,
> Humbled below us?

A casual journey westward from Polesworth to Montgomery over Easter 1613 substantiates eternal truth. Donne's pursuit of his sociable pleasures at such a time confirms a general aberration of fallen nature, yet nonetheless discovers to the mind the event which fuses the momentary with the final order and fulfills God's loving providence in the contingents of the world. We must take the poem for the very attempt to see the world in that radical way, to discover absolute being in the circumstances of time and sense.

For Donne such attempts become a discovery of providential design in the very casualties of the body:

> I joy, that in these straits, I see my west;
> For, though their currents yield return to none,
> What shall my west hurt me? As west and east
> In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,
> So death doth touch the resurrection. . . .
>
> We think that Paradise and Calvary
> Christ's Cross, and Adam's tree, stood in one place;
> Look Lord, and find both Adams met in me;
> As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
> May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace.
>
> So, in his purple wrapped receive me Lord,
> By these his thorns give me his other crown;
> And as to others' souls I preached thy word,
> Be this my text, my sermon to mine own,
> Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down.
> ("A Hymn to God my God, in my Sickness")

The bold yoking of terms so seemingly unlike invites us to take the straits of mortal illness for a passage to bliss. In the sweat, pangs, flush of the fever he endures for himself the blood and thorns which pledge Christ's loving dominion over the random decays of the world, and promise a glorious resurrection. The real presence of Christ does not wait upon the bread and wine at the High Altar. It manifests itself in the fabric of daily events themselves, as if the life of the senses sacramentally realizes pure spiritual love.

The transformation of fortuity into timelessness is most forcibly enacted where we should least expect to find it, in Stone's marble effigy of Donne's enshrouded body in St. Paul's. This extraordinary revision of the Droeshout engraving which shows Donne's corpse decaying in its winding-sheet, invites us to set against that flat map of death a reconstituted figure, who soars up from the urn in restored flesh and trim. The body is sleep-enshrouded still, and has not even drawn itself fully erect; moreover it pointedly renews Donne's lineaments, in nice contrast with those idealized torsoes which burst from the tomb of self in Michelangelo's versions of resurrection.[13] It seems that the effigy presents Donne's body in its interim state, when it has been restored

from dust though not yet reanimated in a final union with its soul; and we would expect to find it placed as Donne posed for it early in Lent 1631, "purposely turned towards the East, from whence he expected the second coming of his and our Saviour."[14] The body's form itself now "bends towards the east," anticipating that ultimate Easter Day which will annul time and seal an eternal union of humanity and godhead. *Hic Licet In Occiduo Cinere Aspicit Eum Cuius Nome Est Oriens.* The funeral epitaph Donne devised for himself succinctly points the conjunction of meanings which make up one truth. Nigel Foxell aptly remarks that in the ultimate stroke of wit which his marble effigy enacts Donne "charged the Now and the Here of a single statement with maximum meaning."[15]

Such conceits draw their power if not their oddity from a peculiarly intimate apprehension of the bond between sense and spirit. Donne's direct self-embodiment of spiritual truth makes a startling contrast with the traditional understanding of a spiritual epiphany, based in Plato and Augustine, such as Caxton follows when he takes the dew and manna from heaven for a shadowy figure of the Atonement, and of the sacrament of the Mass:

> That other was gyven to them in a shadowe and ombre but this was gyven in trouthe now ye shal understonde this that was in ye shadow. . . . [He glosses the scriptural anecdote]. All tho thynges ther wer don in figure / for to give knowleche of thynges more grete and more notable. / It is moche gretter thyng of the lyght / than of the shadow / semblably of verite / than it is of fygure.
>
> (*The Golden Legend* [1483], f.xxxii^{v})

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The word beyond a word gives us quite a different picture of the world from the Word within a word. "Wee all know, what differences have been raysed in the *Church*, in that one poynt of the Sacrament, by these three Prepositions, *Trans, Con,* and *Sub*" (*Sermons*, VI, 247). After the arguments about the real Presence from Luther to the Council of Trent we find some of the subtlest intelligences in England turning from barren controversy to make a sacrament of everyday life. When Donne, Andrewes and their successors wittily discover the ingenious working of providence in our most casual circumstances they bring home to the understanding not only a coherence in the creation, but the interfusion of matter with mind by which eternal love manifests itself in time. Their testimony that

sense and intelligence interanimate each other in a full human nature gives us reason to approve their unified sensibility, even if we have something other than Eliot's meaning in view.

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NOTES

1 Citations of the prose tracts are to these editions: *Biathanatos* (London: 1648); *Pseudo Martyr* (London: W. Stansby f. w. Burre, 1610).

2 Letter to Goodyer (? April 1615), in *Selected Prose*, pp. 146-47.

3 "Who but a monomaniac would read *Pseudo-Martyr* through?" (A. Jessopp in a private letter to E. M. Simpson, quoted by her in *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1924], p. 166, n. 1). "The two books [*Biathanatos* and *Pseudo-Martyr*] are . . . the dullest of Donne's works" (E. M. Simpson, *Study of the Prose Works*, p. 166). "*Pseudo-Martyr* is the longest and, without doubt, the least interesting of Donne's early works" (*John Donne: Selected Prose*, chosen by Evelyn Simpson, edited by Helen Gardner and Timothy Healy [Oxford: Clarendon, 1967], p. 43). "Most of it now makes dull reading" (Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1973], p. 4).

4 (London: Nonesuch, 1930), esp. pp. 12-21.

5 Letter to Goodyer (c. 1609), in *Selected Prose*, p. 137.

6 *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa (London: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 86-87.

7 *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. E. M. Simpson and George R. Potter (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1953-62), IV, 110. All subsequent citations of the sermons are to this edition and are indicated in the text by volume and page numbers.

8 "Donne's Sermon to the Virginia Company, 13 November 1622," in *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 433-52.

9 See also *Sermons* I, 220; II, 65-66; V, 230; VI, 75.

10 See also *Sermons* IX, No. 8, Easter Day 1630.

11 *Sermons* II, 185. See also *Sermons* I, 309; II, 209; VI, 155 and 159-60; VI, 179; X, 117.

12 *Sermons* VII, 257-58, preached at the funeral of Sir W. Cokayne, 12 December 1626. See also *Sermons* IV, 75; V, No. 11; VI, 71; VI, 265-66; VII, 345; VIII, 140-41.

13 Michelangelo sketched at least fifteen studies for the Resurrection, c. 1532-33, possibly in association with Sebastiano del Piombo. Six of these sketches were on view in the British Museum exhibition *Drawings by Michelangelo* (1975), and are reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition, pp. 46-50. Some of the sketches of resurrected figures are reproduced in C. de Tolnay, *Michelangelo* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1943-60), V, 179-80.

14 Izaak Walton, *The Life of Dr. John Donne*, in *Lives* (London: T. Newcomb for R. Marriott, 1670), p. 75. Before it was removed at the destruction of Old St. Paul's in the Great Fire the effigy seems to have been mounted facing east, against the south-east pier of the central tower of the cathedral. See Sir W. Dugdale, *The History of St. Paul's Cathedral in London* (London: T. Warren, 1658), pp. 62-63. When it was resited so that it no longer faced east it became a mere macabre curiosity.

15 *A Sermon in Stone* (London: Menard, 1978), p. 22. My argument owes much to Foxell's subtle pursuit of Donne's meaning in this rich device.

Misinterpretable Donne: The Testimony of the Letters

Annabel Patterson

> *To S^r Robert Carre now Earle of Ankerum, with my Book Biathanatos at my going into Germany.* not burnt:
>
> . . . It was written by me many years since; and because it is upon a misinterpretable subject, I have always gone so near suppressing it, as that it is onely not burnt: no hand hath passed upon it to copy it, nor many eyes to read it: onely to some particular friends in both Universities, then when I writ it, I did communicate it: And I remember, I had this answer, That certainly, there was a false thread in it, but not easily found: Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousie; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it, know the date of it; and that it is a Book written by *Jack Donne*, and not by *D. Donne*: Reserve it for me, if I live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Presse, and the Fire: publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those, do what you will with it.[1]

The time is ripe for another revaluation of Donne, heralded by the recent onslaught by John Carey on his character and reputation.[2] The monarchy of wit is in decline, and even the second, more subtle stage of his hagiography is in question.[3] In place of the two personae identified in Donne's letter to Carr, the witty sinner and the pillar of the established church, each of which has attracted different schools of criticism, we have been offered a unified but repellent view of his whole career, as dominated from first to last by a devouring ego and a prevailing sense of expediency. In Carey's view of Donne, the intellectual and psychological complexity that has fascinated twentieth-century readers is to be explained by the linked imperatives of "apostasy" and "ambition," each with its matching "arts."[4]