John Donne Journal
Vol. 21 (2002)

Donne's Tropic Awareness: Metaphor, Metonymy, and *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*

Judith H. Anderson

To ask in what ways and to what extent John Donne might have been aware of the dazzling tropes he used would seem a question whose answer is self-evident. Historically, however, this is a real question, and one bearing on faith and ideology. To take an obvious instance, the correspondences invoked so often in Donne's writing are to us metaphoric fiction, but as extensions of a single, celestial power, hence valid and real parallels, they presumably meant more for Donne and his immediate audience, even in their more skeptical moments. They assume the familiar centered universe organized hierarchically from low to high and dense to rare: what exists on one level really corresponds to what exists on another. Through the culturally sedimented extensions of meaning available in word play—puns, metonymic substitutions, and the like—perception can move vertically or horizontally among recognized correspondences with the assurance of meaningful relationship or, at the very least, of a meaningful denial of relationship.

But no trope is so innocent of complicating consequences. All involve some degree of translation, *translatio*, the name normally but perhaps also misleadingly reserved for the arch-trope metaphor in traditional rhetorical classification. If names have real and not simply conventional references, tropology, including metonymic extension and other forms of wordplay, disturbs this relationship; a trope, after all, is literally a "turn" away from the true, original, or "natural" referent. For the purpose of illustration, take an obvious metonymy from the presumably less centered modern universe, such as the

lunch-counter waitress' calling to another server, "The ham sandwich wants a cup of coffee."[1] As the Renaissance rhetorician George Puttenham remarked, such a metonymic "misnaming" carries "an alteration of sense," by which he intends only a shift into tropic register, but an alteration, a swerving, it nonetheless remains.[2] For someone who is outside the lunch-counter code, the substitution of "ham sandwich" for the customer is comic on the face of it: if the ham sandwich wants a cup of coffee, well, why not give it one? Outside the lunch-counter code, either we literalize the ham sandwich in blank puzzlement or else we personify it, converting it to metaphor and cartoon. Here, metonymy, as Umberto Eco has argued, is essentially the language of codes and, in a broader sense, of ideology, and metaphor becomes our rational appropriation of whatever is alien and other.[3] With all the analytical and theoretical ink spilled in the past two centuries over metaphor and metonymy as master tropes and over the paradigmatic differences between them—Nietzsche, Jakobson, and de Man come conspicuously to mind—this common conversion of the one to the other has too often been unremarked, as has its relation to shifts in ideological audience and historical context and thus to coding and decoding.[4]

---

[1]My example of metonymy is a variant of one in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 35. Lakoff and Johnson's merely referential take on metonymy differs fundamentally from mine, however.

[2]George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Edward Arber (1906; facsimile rpt.: Kent State University Press, 1988), p. 191.

[3]Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 280; also pp. 155, 133-42.

[4]Roman Jakobson's discussions of these differences have been especially influential: *Studies in Child Language and Aphasia* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp. 41-42, 54-55, 67-68; Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, 2nd ed., rev. (1971; rpt. The Hague: Mouton, 1980), 69-96. In a useful review of rhetorical categorization in the last two centuries, Gérard Genette criticizes the reduction of figuration to metaphor and metonymy: *Figures of Literary Discourse*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 103-26, especially pp. 105-12. Neither Jakobson nor Genette attends to shifts in audience and correlative shifts in ideology—faith, for an example inescapably pertinent to Donne—that bear directly on interpretation. Kenneth Burke describes the reactivation of dead metaphor as a metaphoric

Metaphor, of course, is a great deal else besides rational appropriation, including the ability to alter and create new codes and thus to use the traditional resources of language in a way that exceeds them. This, to my mind, is characteristically what Donne does. But as a way of thinking about the nature of his awareness of the codes as at least potentially distinct from that I bring to his text as a modern reader and more crucially about the relation of metaphor and metonymy—creative fiction and referential coding—I would look at some landmarks, not to say mountains, on the tropological landscape of the Renaissance period. These are theological landmarks that Donne knew personally or at least knew about, namely Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. These theologians engage tropology as substance or content and not merely as form, and their assertions and affirmations inform the culture in which Donne thinks and writes.

The seemingly arcane subject of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the communication of divine and human properties in the God-man, which Luther's influence virtually bonded to consideration of the Eucharist, affords a rich and pertinent example of tropological context. Departing from the traditionally firm distinction between the human and divine natures of Christ, Luther insists that the glorified body of Christ shared modes of presence proper to his divine nature, specifically omnipresence. Luther presumably did so because his conception of the Eucharist required that this body be present along with the bread. His understanding of Christ's unity and ministry also led him, in another break with tradition, to argue that the whole

---

"'archaicizing' device we call 'metonymy'," or in his lexicon, "'reduction'." Thus Burke conceives of an exchangeability of the two figures, although despite the promising word "archaizing," this is not conceived, as mine is, as contingent on a difference between codes and cultures: *A Grammar of Motives* (1945; rpt. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 506. Christian Metz perceptively treats the complementarity and interchange of metaphor and metonymy in film: *The Imaginary Signifier: Psycho-Analysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guezzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1982), 197-206, but again, his focus is synchronic. An especially provocative discussion of the relation between the two tropes is Harry Berger's "Metaphor, Metonymy, and the End of the Middle Ages," forthcoming in *Situated Utterances: Texts, Bodies, and Cultural Representations* (Stanford University Press).

person of Christ, "who is God, suffer[ed]," although, he conceded, in his humanity.[5] Engaged with Zwingli in a series of arguments regarding these views, he expended his wrath on Zwingli's copious rhetorical concepts, singling out for particular scorn the figure "alleosis." Zwingli had found this trope in Plutarch and defined it as "that leap or transition or . . . interchange, by which, when speaking of one of Christ's natures, we use the terms that apply to the other."[6] As a leap, transition, or interchange, alleosis is clearly tropic—translative and therefore, as Luther intuits, ominously metaphoric and fictive. In Luther's colorful writing, alleosis takes on a notably gendered life of its own, becoming a virtual character for a parodic allegory. For example, Luther dismisses "the old witch, Lady Reason, alloeosis' grandmother," for suggesting "that the Deity surely cannot suffer and die," or he invokes "Lady Alleosis" to "stand godmother" for an interpretation of scripture that he thinks wrong-headed (210, 235). He asks why, if Zwingli "is so fond of tropes, . . . isn't he satisfied with the old trope which Scripture and all teachers up to now have used," namely *synecdoche*, and he offers as an example to buttress his own view "'Christ died according to his humanity'," a synecdoche in which "humanity" stands for the composite whole, the indivisible God-man of Luther's conception (211).[7] Notably, Luther's trope, understood

---

[5]Martin Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ's Supper 1528*, trans. Robert H. Fischer, in *Word and Sacrament*, vol. 3, ed. Robert H. Fischer (1961), 210: *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1955-86), XXXVII. Also Bernhard Erling, "Communicatio Idiomatum Re-examined," *Dialog*, 2 (1963), pp. 139-45; Joseph N. Tylenda, "Calvin's Understanding of the Communication of Properties," *The Westminster Theological Journal*, 38 (1975), 54-65; Alasdair Heron, "*Communicatio Idiomatum* and *Deificatio* of Human Nature: A Reformed Perspective," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 43 (1998), pp. 367-76.

[6]Huldrych Zwingli, *Friendly Exegesis, that is, Exposition of the Matter of the Eucharist to Martin Luther* (1527), trans. Henry Preble, rev. and ed. H. Wayne Pipkin, in *Writings of Huldrich Zwingli*, vol. 2 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1984), p. 320: I have moved a misplaced comma after "when," instead putting it after "which."

[7]Older writers in the Catholic tradition had also used *denominatio* or metonymy to describe the *communicatio idiomatum*. For example, see John Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, in *Opera Omnia*, 26 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1891-95), 3.7.1, n. 3; and Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*

within the context of Luther's thinking, is self-canceling—contained, inconsequential, strictly nominal. Luther later charges Zwingli with dividing the person of Christ, with the result that a mere man—indeed a mere body—died for us without accomplishing redemption, and then he continues, "we recognize here no alleosis, no heterosis [Zwingli's synonym for alleosis], no ethopoeia [a related Zwinglian variant], nor any other trick that Zwingli produces out of his magician's kit" (231). The magician's rhetorical art is illusory, merely fictive; it lacks a referent that is true or real.

Against Zwingli's objection to "identical predication" or the simultaneous presence of two substances in one, in this instance the presence of both bread and body in the Lutheran celebration of the Eucharist, Luther responds by citing relevant instances of personal, natural, and effectual union, respectively the hypostatic union in Christ—two natures in one person—"the union of natures" in the triune Godhead, and an angel in a flame. The last of these examples, which is based on Psalm 104—"He makes his angels winds and his ministers flames of fire"—Luther discusses at some length: "Here also there are two kinds of being, angels . . . and flames of fire, just as in the sacrament[,] bread and body. Yet here Scripture makes a single being out of the two, . . . so that one must say of these . . . flames, 'This is an angel'. . . . Now no one can see an angel in his intrinsic nature but only in his form of flame or brightness; moreover, this form of brightness does not have to vanish if one points to it and says, 'This is an angel', as the sophists insist that the bread in the sacrament is annihilated; rather, it must remain" (298).

No Donnean could read Luther's exposition of an angel in a flame without remembering the beginning of "Aire and Angels":

> 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.[8]

(Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), s.v., *Denominatio*. Synecdoche could be seen merely as a category within the larger term metonymy, though Luther clearly considers it to have more integral and inherent meaning.

[8]*The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 105-06.

While Donne didn't need Luther to conceive of angels as flames—the key reference, after all, comes in a Psalm[9]—the rest of Donne's poem suggests the extent to which it is informed by the theological issues of his time and especially by those that bear on Christology, on the Eucharist, and more generally on religious representation and its effectual working:

> 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.

Donne's speaker concludes that love can "inhere" (that is, dwell, with a pun on the earthly "here" and now) "nor in nothing, nor in things / Extreme, and scattring bright" and thus neither in no thing nor merely in things. Arguably, a word I use deliberately with this much argued poem, the speaker ends with a compromise in which his love assumes angelic purity, while its earthly expression, like wind, flame, or the containing love of a woman, becomes relatively more material.[10] When the love poem is viewed as *simultaneously a participant* in the theological issues of its time, however, the speaker's assertion of male and spiritual ascendancy has also the unexpected consequence of gendering the human subject himself feminine in relation to deity's ministering spirits. But isn't this consequence always potentially

---

[9]Helen Gardner, ed., *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets of John Donne* (1965; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 205, calls attention to the interesting but less pertinent "old saying, 'By this fire, that's God's angel'." The saying could have originated in a memory of the Psalm.

[10]An essential point of reference for any discussion of "Aire and Angels" is the issue of the *John Donne Journal*, 9 (1990), which consists of seven rich and varying interpretations devoted entirely to it. For example, while R. V. Young holds that the male speaker's love is presented as being purer than the woman's, Michael C. Schoenfeldt thinks that the opposite could be the case but finally takes the position that the poem "assert[s] simultaneously the superiority of male and of female love, and in so doing installs a space for the imagination of sexual equality within a discourse of masculine hierarchy": respectively, "Angels in 'Aire and Angels'," pp. 1-14, and "Patriarchal Assumptions and Egalitarian Designs," pp. 23-26, here p. 26.

available to such hierarchized religious thought, ironically as yet another coded or metonymic expression of the very correspondences that subordinated women? To ask what activates it within a particular piece of writing is to question the awareness evinced there. In "Aire and Angels" the answer, necessarily interpretative, derives from the speaker's tone, which is witty, even teasing, while seriously speculative: *serio ludere*. The translation—the metaphorizing—of the terms of theological dispute to the affairs of human lovers here ensures a vision that is stereoscopic. The fabric of this poem displays a sophisticated awareness of issues, terms, and codes. Their use in its context quite literally puts them in play.[11]

But just when I've signaled a focus on Donne and a turn to his *Devotions*, my eventual goal, I need to return once more to the tropological matrix and specifically to the ongoing Luther-Zwingli debate: again, my larger concern is to take some measure of the tropological landscape, first looking at Zwingli and then at Calvin. In my reading, Zwingli is among the more rhetorically learned, indeed more linguistically sophisticated, of the key Reformation theologians, and from this perspective it is not so surprising that his is also one of the least realist explanations of the controverted issues of them all. As we know, Zwingli's view of the Eucharist was also the least mystical or even sacramental. He saw it as a memorial celebration, although his view developed deeper and more fertile, ecclesiological nuances over time.[12] Leaving aside his argument with Luther about Christ's nature,

---

[11]For related views, see the following in volume 9 (1990) of the *John Donne Journal*: Schoenfeldt, pp. 23, 26; John R. Roberts, "'Just such disparitie': The Critical Debate about 'Aire and Angels'," pp. 43-64, esp. 43-44, 61; Albert C. Labriola, "'This Dialogue of One': Rational Argument and Affective Discourse in Donne's 'Aire and Angels'," pp. 77-83, here pp. 79, 81; Achsah Guibbory, "Donne, the Idea of Woman, and the Experience of Love," pp. 105-12, here pp. 108-09, 111.

[12]Jacques Courvoisier in effect interprets Zwingli's doctrine of the Eucharist as incorporation into the body, or visible church, of Christ: *Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1963), pp. 74-76. In this influential reading, there is "a transubstantiation of the gathered community into the body of Christ," which "is not localized in the bread but in the church gathered about the bread" (76). Herein lies Zwingli's real presence—one with an emphasis on community that is Donnean, debated as

which my earlier discussion has indicated, I want to look at his use of rhetoric in discussing the Eucharist or Supper. He believes that the words of institution in the Supper, "This is my body," mean "This represents my body." But here I would turn directly to the terms of his argument:

> How almost all kinds of figures are formed all through the Hebrew writers, I have often told elsewhere, and since it is only metonymy and catachresis that we have need of for the present purpose, I will speak here of these only. Metonymy, according to the various significations of the preposition *meta*, which sometimes means "after," or "with" or "across," can sometimes be called "denomination," or the substituting of one name for another, as when we put on an invention or an institution the name of its originator. . . .Thus we call Wine, Bacchus; wheat, Ceres; the supper or symbol or commemoration, the body of Christ. . . . Sometimes it can be called "cognomination" or the applying of the name of a person (or thing) to something that represents the same, as when we call a statue Cocles or Cloelia, because the statue represents one or the other. . . . Sometimes it can be called "transnomination," or the exchanging of the names of things; when opposites are given the names of each other, as when law is put for the sin which is committed against the law. (355-56)

Zwingli goes on to explain that the trope catachresis—a radical form of metaphor, such as Hamlet's "I will speak daggers to her"—must be considered further,[13]

---

the basis of this emphasis might be. See also B.A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 121: Gerrish downplays the ecclesiological element in Zwingli's thinking on the Eucharist, observing that "even where Zwingli interprets" the body "ecclesiologically, he interprets it christologically also in the self-same sentence." He notes, however, that this interpretive duality might be "for polemical reasons."

[13]On catachresis, see Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 21. Lanham's handbook is primarily based on Renaissance and classical terms and usage. Patricia Parker

> because if anyone chooses to interpret the word "is" as "signifies," we can call in that variety of figure and quote passages from Scripture in which it is used in this way. Catachresis is a figure by which the literal and natural signification of anything is applied to a thing to which the literal signification does not belong. I will not speak here of the battle I fought with Billicanus as to whether substantive verbs admit tropes or not, for language existed before the name "trope" was invented. This word "is," then, is transferred from its natural signification to one not literally belonging to it, when I point to a statue of Caesar and say, "This is Caesar." (356)

Then Zwingli considers Luther's charge that the interpretations of the words of institution by the radical Reformers are at odds with one another, thus discrediting them. Zwingli's reply has a remarkable degree of sophisticated skepticism about the very terms of argument. After indicating his immediate influences, contemporaries such as Hoen of Holland, John Rhodius, and George Saganus, and noting his own reading of Fabius, Cicero, and Plutarch, he explains that the "simple explanation that everyone could understand pleased me: 'This bread signifies my body which is given for you'. For everyone does not know what a trope is. I saw, also, that by whatever kind of trope we explain the words, the point is simply this, that the force of the word 'is' undergoes modification and has the value, 'is a signification or representation of'" (357). He goes on to say that he followed the simplest path and therefore "explained the thing as an example of catachresis" (357). But Zwingli adds that his associate Oecolampadius, following Tertullian, instead took the words to signify "This is the figure of my body," understanding the word "figure" to mean image

---

at first seems skeptical about Lanham's synthetic definition, but her discussion of Cicero and Quintilian supports it, as more obviously does her reference to the views of the Renaissance rhetoricians Dudley Fenner and John Hoskins; for the former catachresis is "'the [violent] abuse'" of metaphor and for the latter the "'somewhat *more desperate*'" form of it: "Metaphor and Catachresis," in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 60-73, here pp. 61, 66-67.

and thus "representation, or reflection of something that has sometime really been" (357).

Zwingli concludes that Tertullian and Oecolampadius must have taken the words of institution "as a metonymy, of the variety cognomination, by which that is called the body which is an image or representation of the body or a means of calling it to remembrance." But he notes that Luther and others have tried to exploit this seeming disagreement, since "Oecolampadius says this is metaphor, while I say it is metonymy" (357). The cultural code itself, at least as it pertains to the finer distinctions of rhetoric, seems to be coming apart here, but Zwingli takes it in stride with what I'll call *rhetorical relativism.* He observes that any expression may be "explained by different kinds of figures, and these may also be considered from different points of view. Hence even among the rhetoricians, we very often find the same form of expression elucidated by different tropes" (357). After extensive discussion of his own and Oecolampadius' equally reasonable points of view, he asks, "what difference . . . is there in the essentials of the opinion," if he calls the tropic expression catachresis or, from another point of view, metonymy and Oecolampadius calls it from still others metonymy or metaphor (357-58)? "Why [should] we . . . impute a quarrel to people, that, while espousing one and the same opinion, . . . explain words by tropes with different names," all of which "are consistent with the apostolic writings and with the analogy of faith, indeed, . . . [they] look to the one and only union and harmony of Christ's body" (358). Zwingli appears to have grasped the essential of translation at the heart of all rhetorical tropes. Little wonder that the unconvinced Luther mocked the radical Reformers' understanding of the words of institution, "Hoc est corpus meum," with the declaration "*Hoc est tropus meus*" (259). In the spirit of Luther's mock and Zwingli's insight, I would translate "*tropus meus*" as "my metaphor"—as *translatio*, the tropic denominator common to them all.

Although neither the first nor the only theologian to argue that the words of institution are tropic, Zwingli is the figurehead and the lightning rod in this period for the tropic view. His interest in the fundamentals of signification and his awareness of the relative value of all rhetorical distinctions suggest a suppleness of intellect at some distance from Luther's more rigid and more scholastic insistence on

absolute, apriori truths. To this extent, perhaps, Luther still looks back and Zwingli forward. The latter's discussions of meaning, in which metonymy, the conservative figure that underlies coding, and metaphor, the creative violator of codes, are themselves interchangeable, equally suggest either the enlarged awareness or, perhaps, the seemingly tolerant insensitivity of an age in transition, poised between old beliefs and new ones.

Calvin's awareness in this particular resembles Zwingli's. Invoking the Schoolmen for support, Calvin affirms an essentially traditional understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* and rejects Luther's assertion that "wherever Christ's divinity is, there also is his flesh, which cannot be separated from it." In Calvin's view, this is to remove "the distinction between the natures" and so to urge "the unity of the person" as to make "man out of God and God out of man."[14] Quite unlike the Schoolmen, however, Calvin endorses a figurative interpretation of the words of institution. Although admitting that by these words, "the name of the thing was given to the symbol" and also recognizing the appropriateness of the resulting analogy, he declines to explain it as allegory or parable—both forms of extended metaphor, hence fiction—"lest someone accuse" him of "seeking a place to hide and of digressing from the present issue"; this issue is presumably the

[14]John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (London: S.C.M.: 1961), II, 1402 (IV.xvii.30); see also Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis 1559*, in *Corpus Reformatorum*, ed. Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, and Eduardus Reuss (Brunsvigae: C. A. Schwetschke et filium, 1864), XXX, 1031: "quod discrimine inter naturas sublato, personae unitatem urgens, ex Deo hominem faceret, et ex homine Deum." When I cite Calvin's Latin (henceforth *Corpus*), I do not follow the conventions of italicization in the edition by Baum et al. Relevantly and comparatively, I would also cite an English churchman contemporary with Donne, namely Lancelot Andrewes: "Ea nempe conjunctio inter Sacramentum visibile, et rem Sacramenti invisibilem, quae inter humanitatem et divinitatem Christi, ubi, nisi Eutychen sapere vultis, humanitas in divinitatem non transubstantiatur"; somewhat freely, "Truly there is the same union between the visible bread and wine of the sacrament and its invisible reality that exists between the humanity and divinity of Christ, where, unless you wish to smell of Eutyches, the humanity is not changed into the divinity" (*Responsio ad apologiam Cardinalis Bellarmini*, in *Works*, 11 vols. [1854; rpt. New York: AMS, 1967], VIII, 265).

reference, or truth, of the words themselves.[15] Interestingly, Calvin's explanation does not suggest that he thinks such metaphorical explanations unsuitable but only that they might be misunderstood by hostile readers. His choice of one rhetorical figure over another therefore looks more tactful and strategic than substantive.

In fact, as Calvin's explanation proceeds, the metaphor he has put out the one door, he readmits at the other. He asserts that the statement "This is my body" is "a metonymy, a figure of speech commonly used in the Scripture," and explains that "you could not otherwise understand such expressions as 'circumcision is a covenant'" or "'the lamb is the passover'" or "'the rock from which water flowed in the desert . . . was Christ', unless you were to take them as spoken with meanings transferred."[16] *Transferred* is as much as to say translated, since this word, like the word *translatio*, metaphor itself, derives from the Latin verb *transfero/translatus*. In fact, Calvin's Latin reads, *nisi translatitie dictum*, "unless spoken metaphorically." Calvin's wish that his adversaries would stop heaping "unsavory witticisms" (*insulsas facetias*) on the beliefs he represents and stop calling such believers "tropists" (*tropistas*) may be justified on the first count, wit, but tenuously so on the second, tropistry.[17] Metonymy is itself a trope, and when pressed, as I have earlier suggested, it will likely reveal the archtrope, metaphor at its base, as it does here.

Calvin has more to say about overlapping and interchangeable figures of speech and the kind of awareness they enable. His explanation of what he calls a metonymic transfer, or translation, of meaning continues, clearly displaying an active, transformative role, therefore properly speaking a metaphorical role, rather than one that is

---

[15]McNeill, ed.,1385: IV.17.21; *Corpus*, 1019: "nomen ipsum rei fateamur attributum fuisse symbolo; figurate id quidem, sed non sine aptissima analogia. Allegorias et parabolas omitto, ne quis subterfugia me quaerere, et extra praesentem causam egredi causetur."

[16]McNeill, ed., 1385: IV.xvii.21; *Corpus*, 1019: "Dico metonymicum esse hunc sermonem, qui usitatus est passim in scriptura, ubi de mysteriis agitur. Neque enim aliter accipere possis quod dicitur, circumcisionem esse foedus, agnum esse transitum, . . . denique petram, ex qua in deserto aqua profluebat, fuisse Christum, *nisi translatitie* dictum accipias" (my emphasis).

[17]McNeill, ed., 1386: IV.xvii.21; *Corpus*, 1020.

merely nominal and inert: by the metonymy in the words of institution,

> Not only is the name transferred [*transfertur*] from something higher to something lower, but, on the other hand, the name of the visible sign is also given to the thing signified . . . For though the symbol differs in essence from the thing signified (in that the latter is spiritual and heavenly, while the former is physical and visible), still, because it not only symbolizes the thing that it has been consecrated to represent as a bare and empty token, but also truly exhibits it, why may its name not rightly belong to the thing [*in ipsum iure*]?[18]

To ask rhetorically why the physical name might not rightly belong to the spiritual thing is in this period to indicate that the transfer of names should not be considered equivocal. Yet to transfer meaning from higher or spiritual to lower or physical, or the reverse, is "truly" also a change, and if not, in Calvin's terminology, an essential change, then essentially an equivocation, a doubling, a swerving, a leap in signification: "For . . . the symbol differs in essence [substance?] from the thing signified."[19] Calvin goes on to explain more specifically that physical things might borrow the names of those higher "things of which they always bear a definite and not misleading signification," by which he can only mean a figurative signification, indeed a tropic and more specifically metaphoric one. Here his hedged, slightly negative wording, in the original Latin, "certam minimeque fallacem

---

[18]McNeill, ed. 1385: IV.xvii.21; *Corpus*, 1019-20: "Nec modo a superiore ad inferius nomen transfertur; sed contra, etiam rei signatae tribuitur nomen signi visibilis. . . . Nam etsi essentia symbolum a re signata differt, quod haec spiritualis est et coelestis, illud corporeum et visible, quia tamen rem cui repraesentandae consecratum est, non figurat tantum ceu nuda et inanis tessera, sed vere etiam exhibet: cur non eius appellatio in ipsum iure competat?"

[19]On the conflation of essence and substance in the Western philosophic tradition, see my essay "Language and History in the Reformation: Cranmer, Gardiner, and the Words of Institution," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (2001), 20-51, especially 35, 44. Eucharistic debate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is significantly involved in this conflation.

significationem"—more literally, "a certain and minimally fallacious signification"—suggests his Augustinian distrust of the materiality of language and specifically of tropes, even while it makes evident his acute awareness of them. Of course Calvin adds, even before the sentence is finished, that such symbols also have "the reality joined with them": "adiunctam habent secum veritatem."[20] In this thoroughly equivocal and thoroughly metaphysical addition, he simply asserts the necessarily irrational *sine qua non* of faith. Calvin's awareness of language is here neither mystified nor mystifying, as Richard Waswo has urged; rather, his awareness of the necessity of faith involves a leap of a different order and into another register.[21]

But even Calvin's final wording in the passage from which I have been quoting makes his recognition of a trope evident: "So great, therefore, is their similarity and closeness that transition from one to the other is easy: Tanta est similitudo et vicinitas alterius ad alterum, ut proclivis ultro citroque sit deductio."[22] Here Calvin's learned translator suggestively renders "ultro citroque ... deductio" as "transition," a word, which, like "transfer" and "translate," signals a tropic exchange. More literally, however, *deductio* indicates a conducting, a leading, perhaps a traffic, up and down, "ultro citroque," between heavenly and earthly realities. Of course, *deductio*, meaning "deduction," is also a word associated with logic, but instead of a logical conclusion, it suggests in this context a movement of the psyche as both mind and soul and thus a trafficking that is essentially perceptual—insightful and intuitive. Here, the very presence of such a

---

[20]McNeill, ed., 1385-86: IV.xvii.21; *Corpus*, 1020: "quae a Deo sunt instituta, multo maiori ratione rerum nomina mutuantur, quarum et certam minimeque fallacem significationem semper gerunt, et adiunctam habent secum veritatem."

[21]*Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 254-56: Waswo's deriving Calvin's theory of language from his discussion of the sacrament, an exceptional instance in which action and effect are psychological and spiritual, seems dubious to me. One of the sticking points between the Reformers and Roman Catholics involved the efficacy of language, but the Reformers insisted that language as such lacks efficacy: words do not effect a transformation of the object. Such a change occurs within the subject. See my "Language and History," 40-44.

[22]McNeill, ed., 1386: IV.xvii.21; *Corpus*, 1020.

rational word actually highlights its distance from syllogistic usage. The phrase "[of the] one to the other" (*alterius ad alterum*) in the same sentence likewise testifies to two distinct realms of meaning, one higher and one lower, whose relation *openly* requires an irrational and personal shift into another register. This openness is also awareness, and it underlies the central Reformation tenet that only faith justifies. It is similarly evident and helpfully illustrated in the leap between an earthly and an enlightened grasp of enigmatic symbols experienced in the white space between two stanzas by Spenser's Redcrosse Knight on the Mount of Contemplation.[23]

Two points are important for my purposes. The first is Calvin's rhetorical relativism, his merging of fine rhetorical distinctions in a common, translative denominator. The second is his awareness that the movement from higher to lower or lower to higher term is essentially, materially rhetoric's, if finally and spiritually faith's. Where in Luther there is a middle term—a presence "real" or physical as well as spiritual and symbolic—in Calvin there is a trope, an exchange or transfer, indeed a sleight of name, and with it there is an assertion of faith. These are the defining alternatives neither of the Middle Ages nor of the Lutheran version.

Furnished with this awareness, I would turn to the centerpiece of Donne's twenty-three *Devotions*, namely, Station XII: "They apply Pidgeons, to draw the vapors from the Head": "Spirante Columba, Supposita pedibus, Revocantur ad ima vapores."[24] Most clearly for me,

---

[23]For further discussion of the Spenserian passage, see my essay "The July Eclogue and the House of Holiness," *Studies in English Literature*, 10 (1970), 30-31.

[24]*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa (1975; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 62. David Sullivan, among others, has suggested that Donne's use of the word "stations" for the various stages of his *Devotions* affiliates them with the stations of the cross: "The Structure of Self-Revelation in Donne's *Devotions*," *Prose Studies*, 11 (1988), 49-59, here 53. Accepting this possibility, I also use the word "stations" to emphasize the status of each station as a stage, at once a performance and post (literally, a "standing": from Latin *stare*), in a progressive linear sequence. Whether Mary Arshagouni Papazian's view that Donne considers himself irrevocably "elect" is on target or not, her essay persuasively conveys a sense of the *Devotions* having at once a circular and linear structure: "Donne, Election, and the

this station marks a shift in register—a realization or break-through—and the reason may partly be that I find its movements strange and exotic, with the danger that I will find creative metaphor—the magician's fictive art—where a Renaissance reader would find an assertion of code.[25] Notably, however, only on the further side of this station come those passages so openly describing a metaphor-making God: for immediately relevant examples, "when one Man dies, one *Chapter* is not *torne* out of the *booke*, but *translated* into a better *language*; and every *Chapter* must be so *translated*; *God* emploies severall *translators*; . . . [but His] hand is in every *translation*"; and perhaps the best known of these, "thou art a *figurative*, a *metaphoricall God* too; A *God* in whose words there is such a height of *figures*, such *voyages*, such *peregrinations* to fetch remote and precious *metaphors*, such *extensions*, such *spreadings*, such *Curtaines* of *Allegories*, such *third Heavens* of *Hyperboles*, . . . as all *profane Authors* seeme of the seed of the *Serpent*, that creepes, thou art the *dove*, that flies" (XVII, 86; XIX, 99). Metaphor underwrites all the figures Donne names, including extensions and spreadings, or metonymies, in the hands of the divine creator—"the *dove*, that flies" and Donne's model in Station XII.

In this Station, Donne's mind plays over the medically diagnosed vapors and the curative *columba* named in its heading, variously considering them as physical things, ideas, words, figures, and spiritual things. The Station moves from a meditation grounded in the physical and the political, to an expostulation in which he transacts a movement up and down—"ultro citroque"—in Calvin's phrasing, and finally to faith in prayer. In the presence of faith, necessarily understood as an ideology, the distinction between metaphor and metonymy effectually disappears, thereby, as in Zwingli and Calvin, challenging theories that assume its necessity. Noticeably in the first stage of Station XII, Donne's meditation, the cure specifically named is a very material "pigeon,"or, in what I'm tempted to term Anthony Raspa's fowl gloss, "pigeon poultice." Such a poultice is made by

---

Devotions upon Emergent Occasions," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 55 (1992), 603-19.

[25]Sharon Cadman Seelig speaks of the *Devotions* rising "to its climax at its midpoint" in Station XII: *Generating Texts: The Progeny of Seventeenth-Century Prose* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), p. 20.

halving a live pigeon or pigeons and applying the bleeding halves to the fevered patient's feet. Presumably these halves, while still warm and wet, are quite dead when applied, yet Donne's Latin heading, perhaps proleptically, describes the pigeon as "spirante" or "breathing," and thus with a participial form of the same Latin verb (*spiro*) that underlies the words *spirit* and *spiritual*.[26] But my speculation flies ahead of the bleeding pigeon conspicuously named as

---

[26]Raspa, ed., 162. Lewis and Short, s.v. *spiro*, record an instance in which *spirans* means "boiling," hence hot or warm, as well as the more common and obviously relevant meaning "breathing, living." Evelyn M. Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1948), 243, glosses Donne's pigeon(s) by reference to "the fashionable remedy of applying pigeons cut in half 'to draw vapors from the head'." She also cites Samuel Pepys' entry for 19 October 1663, when the Queen "was so ill as to be shaved and pigeons put to her feet": *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), IV, 339. In a footnote to the same passage, Pepys's editors report that the Queen's treatment was "a medieval remedy used well into the 18th century, mainly for fevers." Pepys's report here, as elsewhere in the *Diary*, suggests that the remedy is reserved for desperate cases: e.g., "his breath rattled in his throate and they did lay pigeons to his feet . . . and all despair of him, and with good reason" (IX, 32). Another of Raspa's references, Thomas Coghan (or Cogan) conversely writes that "Pigeons are very hoat and moyst, wherefore they are not good [f]or those that be cholericke, or enclined to any feuers, but to them which be flematicke & pure melancholie, they are very wholesome, and be easily digested"; the reference to Coghan is thus misleading, since he has ingested pigeon, not pigeon poultice, in mind: *The Haven of Health* (Henrie Middleton for William Norton, 1584), p. 134. Confirmation of Simpson's undocumented statement that the pigeons are halved, as well as the additional information that they are halved while living and an instance of this practice contemporary with Donne, can be found in *A Dictionary of Superstitions*, ed. Iona Opie and Moira Tatem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 307. For contemporary references, see Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1864), IV, 218: "It is received and confirmed by daily experience, that the soles of the feet have great affinity with the head and the mouth of the stomach; . . . Likewise, pigeons bleeding, applied to the soles of the feet, ease the head" (I.96). Also, Jeremy Taylor, *The Whole Works of Jeremy Taylor*, ed. Alexander Taylor (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862), IX.290.

such only in the twelfth meditation and there appropriate to what might be described as a horizontal focus—one earthly and physical.

Meditation XII opens with a series of metonymic analogies at once feverish in their quickness, bizarre in their extension, and reasonable in their constant, the destructive power of small things over large ones: "What will not kill a man, if a *vapor* will? how great an *Elephant*, how small a *Mouse* destroyes? to dye by a *bullet* is the *Souldier's* dayly *bread*; but few men dye by *haile-shot*: A man is more worth, then to bee sold for *single money*; a *life* to be valued above a *trifle*" (62). The next sentence, despite its subordinated, faith-based demurrer, accuses God's agent Nature of unkindness, a murderous denial of herself:

> If this [vapor] were a violent shaking of the Ayre by *Thunder*, or by *Canon*, in that case the *Ayre* is condensed above the thicknesse of *water*, of water baked into *Ice*, almost *petrified*, almost made stone, and no wonder that that kills; but that that which is but a *vapor*, and a *vapor* not forced, but breathed, should kill, that our *Nourse* should overlay us, and *Ayre*, that nourishes us, should destroy us, but that it is a *halfe Atheisme* to murmure against *Nature*, who is *Gods immediate Commissioner*, who would not think himselfe miserable to bee put into the hands of *Nature*, who does not only set him up for a *marke* for others to shoote at, but delights her selfe to blow him up like a *glasse*, till shee see him breake, even with her owne breath? (62)

Donne's question is followed by another series of negative analogies, suggesting what we are not—a volcano, a mine-shaft, a calumny. These are increasingly metaphoric, issuing in the devastated realization that we are all these things as the source of our mortal, or deadly and (un)natural, vapors. Whereas his initial analogies—mouse, bullet, and single money—gave substance to a vapor, now he concludes that if he "were asked again, what is a *vapour*, I could not tell, it is so insensible a thing; so neere *nothing* is that that reduces us to *nothing*" (63). As if to escape this cul-de-sac of mortal nothingness, Donne suggests that we "extend this *vapour*, rarifie it," from "our *Naturall bodies*, to any *Politike body*" and thus that we extend our meditation on physical vapors to the pestilent rumors and libels that afflict the state. The metonymic refinement of body to body politic, of

private to communal entity, could hardly assert a more traditional or more Donnean correspondence, although Donne's particular application of it here to vapors, rumors, and libels seems an original twist.[27] Donne next expands his anatomical figure into a little allegory, making the heart of the body politic the king, the brain his council, and "the whole *Magistracie*" his "*Sinewes*," or nerves, and he concludes with the observation that "sometimes *vertue*, and alwaies *power*, be a good *Pigeon* to draw this *vapor* from the *Head*, and from doing any deadly harme there"(64). Formerly the heart, now the head is king as Donne shifts from the moral primacy of the one to the physiological primacy of the other at the end of his meditation.[28] The odd phrasing that gives superiority to "power" over "*vertue*," the latter a subtler efficacy that is at least punningly moral, would appear to enforce the emphasis on the physical evident in the identification of the *columba*, not as a dove, but as a common pigeon. At the same time, however, the extended anatomical analogy has held us for roughly the last third of the meditation—in notable contrast to the immediately preceding third—in a figurative medium between two dimensions of meaning, one physical and one political. While physically grounded, we have not, in fact, remained wholly on the ground. In this way, the final movement of the meditation prepares for Expostulation XII, the second stage of the Station.

This stage continues to focus on vapor but casts it at once in a more religious light and treats it less as a natural, physical, or political phenomenon than as an enigmatic symbol, or in Donne's own word a

---

[27]On the Donnean nature of this correspondence, see Jeffrey Johnson's reading of Donne's communal emphasis: *The Theology of John Donne* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, England: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), passim, e.g., p. 32: "'Almighty God ever loved *unity* . . . .'" See also note 12, above, regarding Zwingli's communal emphasis, which is to a provocative *extent* analogous to Donne's.

[28]By reference to *Pseudo-Martyr*, Raspa, ed., suggests that Donne gives spiritual primacy to the heart as the seal of the conscience and notes the customary physiological primacy of the brain (161-62). In the context of Meditation XII, designation of the heart/conscience as the moral center makes the best sense. The traditional designation of both heart and head as sites of the soul may also facilitate the associative movement of Donne's figures between them.

"hieroglyph," linking the physical and spiritual realms, as well as image and word.[29] Yet emphasis now, as compared to the preceding stage, is also distinctively more verbal, indeed stereovocal, and in a manner typical of Donne, *vapor*, as symbolic verbal sign, effects a dynamic exchange, a traffic, between heaven and earth. After an urgent invocation of God, Expostulation XII begins with the answer to the apostle James's question "*what is your life*," namely, that "*It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, & then vanisheth away*" (64). In this answer, Donne discovers a definition of death as well and thus in *vapor* an "indifferent . . . thing, . . . the *Hierogliphique*" of divine blessings and judgments. Moving through scriptural passages via a *catena*, or verbal chain, of beneficent vapors, he considers the vapor in Genesis that rose from the earth to water the ground, the sacrificial vapors in Leviticus that rose to God in a cloud of incense, and "*the vapor of the power of God*" identified in Wisdom with the Son. Playing further on the meaning of *vapor* as "breath," Donne then asks God how something "perfumed . . . with thine own breath, . . . in thine own *word*," should receive "an ill, and infectious sense" (65). His question leads to his recognition that sin is also a vapor or blinding smoke fittingly punished with the vapors of sickness and there follows a parallel chain of noxious vapors in scripture: for example, the "*breathing vapors*" of beasts, "*pillars of smoke*," translated to "*vapors* of smoke" in Acts; the terrible "*smoke*" that "*went out . . . at his Nostrils*," the "*smoke*" from "*the bottomlesse pit*" that will rise to darken the sun and breed locusts with the power of scorpions.

Seeking a relief from such vapors, Donne envisions an exchange between heaven and earth similar to that in the "Hymne to God my God," in which the way down and the way up are one: "ultro citroque" in Calvin's phrasing. When the angels fell, he observes, God created earth, "assuming" and "drawing" us heavenward, and when we fell, He "assum[ed: (from Latin *assumo*, 'take up, adopt')] . . . us another way,

---

[29]On the interest in hieroglyphs in Donne's time, see Martin Elsky, *Authorizing Words: Speech, Writing, and Print in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 146-68; Andrew M Cooper, "The Collapse of the Religious Hieroglyph: Typology and Natural Language in Herbert and Bacon," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 45 (1992), 96-118; and my *Words That Matter: Linguistic Perception in Renaissance English* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), chap. 1.

by descending down to assume our nature" in the Son. "So that though our last act be an ascending to glory, (we shall ascend to the place of *Angels*) yet our first act is to goe the way of thy *Sonn, descending*, and the way of thy blessed *spirit* too, who *descended in the Dove*" (65). In this context the descent of the Son to human nature activates the favored Donnean pun on "sun" and further enforces the seeming logic of an essentially rhetorical relationship between heaven and earth. Shades of Ramus here, perhaps, but of Calvin, too. Conceptually, and not merely in form, the perception that down is up is metaphorical and, more precisely, both catachrestic and naturally, physically counter-intuitive.[30] The conceit—oxymoric, too—effects an exchange of value. In it, to recall Calvin's words, "transition from one to the other is easy" or, more accurately, it is *made*, crafted metaphorically to be, surprisingly so. What Calvin asserts, Donne enacts in rhetorical experience.

Now Donne returns to his immediate physical plight, thankful that God has "afford[ed] us this remedy in *Nature*, by this application of a *Dove*, to our lower parts, to make these *vapors* in our *bodies*, to descend, and to make that a *type* to us, that by the visitation of thy *Spirit*, the *vapors* of sin shall descend, & we tread them under our feet" (65-66). The dove, no longer mere pigeon but now a natural vehicle of divine intervention, has become the fulcrum of the salvific descent that raises. More simply, its presence *translates*, or metaphorizes, God's power.

Donne continues from our treading on the vapors of sin to end his expostulation: "At the baptisme of thy *Son*, the *Dove* descended, & at the exalting of thine *Apostles* to preach, the same spirit descended. Let us draw down the *vapors* of our own *pride*, our own *wits*, our own *wils*, our own *inventions*, to the *simplicitie* of thy *Sacraments*, & the obedience of thy word, and these *Doves*, thus applied, shall make us live" (66). At the end, Donne thus explicitly takes leave of his own art, his wit and invention, his own highly creative imagination, to rest in a renewed

---

[30]In a chapter on orientational metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson argue that up and down are physically and culturally experiential; they are thus "intuitive orientations," to use another traditional way of describing them (pp. 14-21). Donne's metaphorizing here runs counter to their theory that metaphor, hence cognition, has an experiential and a largely physical basis.

appreciation of God's art, God's writing in and with both natural objects and historical events. Donne's naming human pride, along with wit and invention, as baggage to be left behind in turning to the simplicity and simple affirmation of God's sacraments renders his awareness of his own tropological making in the Expostulation explicit.

The final stage of Station XII, Prayer, focuses no longer on vapors but instead on the dove. Indeed, vapors, disobedient vapors, appear only once, to be trampled. This stage begins in humility, a prayer that God might prosper both a bodily remedy and a spiritual one. Quickly, Donne then encapsulates the significance of the typological dove, at once "naturally proper to conduce medicinally to our *bodily health*," and through the Law "a *sacrifice* for *sinne*," and "through the *Gospel* . . . [with] thy spirit in it, a witnes of thy *sonnes baptisme*," and he asks that the qualities of the dove be imprinted—written—in his own soul (66). He prays that in this way "all vapours of all disobedience to thee, being subdued under my feete [i.e., in the dove], I may in the power, and triumphe of thy *sonne*, treade victoriously upon my *grave*, and trample upon the *Lyon* and *Dragon*, that lye under it, to devoure me" (66). This is the point where, in my reading, Donne might be said to take flight, but very much on the wings of scripture: "Thou O *Lord*, by the *Prophet* callest the *Dove*, the *Dove of the Valleys*, but promisest that *the Dove of the Valleyes shall bee upon the Mountaine*: As thou hast layed mee low, in this *Valley* of sickenesse, so low, as that I am made fit for that question, asked in the field of bones, *Sonne of Man, can these bones live*, so, in thy good time, carry me up to these *Mountaynes*, of which, even in this *Valley*, thou affordest mee a prospect, the Mountain where thou dwellest, the holy Hill" (66-67). This passage, while a scriptural pastiche, truly translates meaning into another language. Understood in the context of Station XII, it expresses the transition from literal to spiritual called faith. Whether it should also be called metonymic, the language of codes, which it surely is, or metaphoric, the language of creative perception, which in the total context of Station XII it surely is as well, I'm not sure: the difference between them has vanished.

But of two things I am sure: the first is that if we read only Donne's Prayer, the impact of his translations is quite lost: his tropes build on the previous stages. The second is that Donne commits the final stage to a spiritual meaning only nominally literal: the last passage cited, in

which the "*Dove of the Valleys*" is raised to the mountain, continues, describing further the holy hill of God's dwelling "unto which none can ascend but *hee that hath cleane hands*, which none can have, but by that one and that strong way, of making them cleane, in the blood of thy Sonne *Christ Jesus*" (67). This ending indicates blood guilt and the redeeming blood of redemption and also seals the passage totally and simultaneously into metaphor and faith.[31] Now the transition from physical object to spiritual meaning is not so easy, except in faith, since the terms no longer pretend to a paradoxical and rhetorical logic that is rational at its base but instead to a more symbolic one. Abruptly, the dove has been raised to as purely symbolic a register as that to which a creature can attain: here, as the humble *columba* sacrificed for a curative poultice, in a conspicuously metaphysical leap that is also metaphorical and metonymic, it is understood as a figure of Christ. Within the figural terms of Station XII, perhaps this is no more scandalous than a piece of bread's being so.[32] Yet, for me, what still remains the most fascinating, though not finally the most moving, stage of this Station is the second, since it is where Donne openly *transacts* the shift into another register so fundamental to the Reformers' understanding and indeed their performing of the sacraments and specifically of Communion.

I have been trying to locate a historical sensibility, one available to but also different from our own. It is at once strongly rhetorical and

---

[31]Jeremy Taylor's remarks on the use of pigeons to cure fever are peculiarly relevant to the blood guilt of living sacrifices. Taylor observes of the prohibition of such cruelty to beasts in the Old Testament, that "even this very precept is by all the world taught to yield to necessity and to charity, and cruelty to beasts is innocent when it is charity to men: and therefore though we do not eat them, yet we cut living pigeons in halves and apply them to the feet of men in fevers": *Works*, IX.290.

[32]Although less literally, Seelig suggests that the purgative pigeons are "clearly emblems for the expiation of Christ" (20). See also Sullivan's argument that Donne personalizes Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, making them autobiographical; the result is "a kind of self-portraiture in the *Devotions* similar to Dürer's portrait of himself as Christ" (53); see also Joan Webber's extensive discussion of Donne's personalized focus in the *Devotions: The Eloquent "I": Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), chap. 2.

sophisticated in its awareness of rhetorical translation. Yet this is also a religious sensibility, quite distant from the dominant medieval one, that is willing to see rhetoric as a vehicle or instrument of truth. This sensibility shares ground at once with Calvin's tropic assertion of faith and also with Sir Philip Sidney's relatively more modern endorsement of fiction—"poesy" in his idiom—which includes Plato's dialogues. But the real difference between Donne's age and our own seems to me to come with his Prayer, which truly effects the flight of the Dove on the translated wings of faith. Here, that final affirmation of faith is fully realized. Here, too, in the presence of faith and therefore of historical and ideological context, a sharp distinction between metaphor and metonymy no longer signifies. This necessity is itself exposed as ideological, too, and therefore at least potentially as a forced choice between linguistic coding and linguistic creativity. Pushed to an extreme, as it has been in the past two decades, this is a choice between a master trope of conceptual passivity and one of conceptual power.

Indiana University