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Claustrophobic Donne: *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* and Early Modern Quarantine

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> As Sicknesse is the greatest misery, so the greatest misery of sicknes is *solitude*. . . .
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> —John Donne[1]

In his 1625 pamphlet *A VVatchman for the Pest. Teaching true Rules of Preservation from the Pestilent Contagion*, published when the plague was "fearefully over-flowing this famous Cittie of London," amateur physician Steven Bradwell argues that "nothing can be more dangerous then for one to travaile with his humors already corrupted by an infected *Aire*."[2] After practicing medicine during the 1625 outbreak, he subsequently republished his preventative measures in his 1636 pamphlet, *Physick for the Sicknesse, Commonly called the Plague*. Like many other early modern authors who found a crucial intersection between religion and health, Bradwell there asserts that "no Method but

[1]Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 24. All quotations from Donne's *Devotions* are taken from this edition; italics appear in the original.

[2]Bradwell, *A VVatchman for the Pest. Teaching true Rules of Preservation from the Pestilent Contagion, at this time fearefully over-flowing this famous Cittie of London. Collected out of the best Authors, mixed with auncient experience, and moulded into a New and most plaine Method* (London: Printed by Iohn Dawson for George Vincent, and are to be sold at Pauls-gate at the signe of the Crosse-keyes, 1625), p. 7.

Repentance, no Medicine but Prayer, can avert, or heale" the plague.[3] Even so, he goes on to discuss other more material solutions to illness. Reiterating a common refrain among published physicians, he identifies the "aire" itself as the means of contagion rather than the "corporeall touches" that spread other diseases, concluding, "those who keep themselves private are least subject to infection."[4] Bradwell finds that fleeing the city was no sure prevention, "for too many with Dedalus put on wings the last great visitation, that with Icarus dropt downe by the way." Rather, he cautions, "Let every one keepe himselfe as private as he may."[5]

Bradwell's warning reminds us that though quarantine was an important weapon in the early modern medical arsenal, it nevertheless offered frightening social and spiritual consequences. While he may have encouraged his readers to "keepe themselves private," such isolation was not universally accepted during the early modern period as a sure course to recovery, either earthly or everlasting. Henoch Clapham, an anti-establishment itinerant minister writing from prison, instead argued that "*not . . . any corporall flight or naturall courses*" could intercede for man in epidemics. Taking material actions to protect oneself during plague years was not only futile, but sinful; such actions undermined God's divine will. Instead, Clapham argued, only prayer could stop the seemingly endless death.[6] According to Keith Thomas, attitudes like Clapham's reflect a larger early modern belief that protection from sickness could be found in a person's spiritual standing with God: "There was thus a strong tendency to assume that obedience to God's commandments could conduce to prosperity and safety"; however, "no guarantees were given,

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[3]Bradwell, *Physick for the Sicknesse, Commonly called the Plague. With all the Particular Signes and Symptoms, whereof the most are too ignorant* (London: Printed for Beniamin Fisher, and are to be sold at his Shop, at the Signe of the Talbot in Aldersgate-Street, 1636), p. 2.

[4]Bradwell, *Physick*, pp. 3, 7.

[5]Bradwell, *Physick*, p. 14.

[6]Clapham, *Doctor Andros his Prosopopeia answered, and necessarily directed to his Maiestie, for remouing of Catholike Scandale. 2. Sacred Policie, Directed of dutie to our sweet yong Prince Henry. 3. An Epistle, Directed to such as are troubled in minde about the stirres in our Church* ([Middelburg: Printed by Richard Schilders], 1605), p. 10, italics in original.

for the ways of the Lord were inscrutable, and it was not only the sinful who were chastised."[7]

Given this inscrutability, some clergymen felt a dual responsibility, finding it their duty to decode God's message—regardless of the form that message took—while simultaneously upholding some practical mechanisms to slow the spread of plague. Lancelot Andrewes, for example, insisted on the possibility that not all disease was spread by God's power alone; indeed, an emphasis on spiritual measures did not mean that one could not be practical. Reiterating medically identified causes as well as Biblical precedent for quarantine, Andrewes cites Leviticus 13:45–46 and Proverbs 14–16 in his "Sermon of the Pestilence," preached in 1603 in response to the more recent epidemic, to argue for confinement as a preventative solution to plague:

> *Contagion*. Which is cleare by the Law: where, the *leprous* person for feare of *contagion* from him, was ordered to cry, that *nobody should come neere him :* To dwell apart from other men: The clothing he had worne to be *washed*, and in some case to be *burnt* : The house-wals he had dwelt in, to be *scraped*, and in some case, the *house* it selfe to be pulled *downe*.
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> In all which three respects, *Salomon* saith, *A wise man feareth the plague and departeth from it, and fooles run on and be carelesse.* A *wise man* doth it, and a *good man* too.[8]

While Andrewes accepts the power of God in sending plagues and pestilence, he argues that Scriptures offered material solutions for the contemporary problem of infection. In all other situations, he elsewhere avers, isolation ought to be avoided.[9] That Andrewes sought out Biblical

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[7]Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Penguin, 1977), p. 102.

[8]Andrewes, *A sermon of the pestilence Preached at Chiswick, 1603. By the right reverend father in God, Lancelot Andrewes, late L. Bishop of Winchester* (London: Printed by Richard Badger, and are to be sold in Saint Dunstans Church-yard, neere the Church-doore, 1636), p. 5, italics in original. It was this particular sermon with which Clapham took umbrage and to which he felt compelled to write his response.

[9]See, for example, Andrewes's *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large: or, A Learned and Pious Exposition of the Ten Commandments, With An Introduction, Containing the Use and Benefit of Catechizing; the generall Grounds of Religion, and*

precedent for quarantine reveals the need to justify such practical measures in times of illness to combat the widespread suspicion toward those who embraced solitude.

Even as messages became more confusing, frantic, or contradictory, however, most ministers and physicians understood that while illness was first and foremost about God's will, it was also—according to the Bible's representations of past illnesses—about space, specifically in relation to other people. During plague years or intermittent times of illness, citizens of London were encouraged "to avoid crowds and crowded buildings" for fear of catching and spreading the disease.[10] Physician Gideon Harvey argued that the vapors of the ill contaminated the air and, as such, the healthy should avoid "all publick meetings, where people promiscuously conversing with one another, do readily propagate the infection," especially "peoples steams and breaths, especially of nasty folks."[11] The surest solution, Harvey aphorized, is to "Flee quick, Go far, Slow return."[12] Of course, this advice was easier said than done for some, as poorer folks could not help but travel on foot through crowds, share beds with family and friends, and eat at crowded taverns. Given that such

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the truth of Christian Religion in particular, proved against Atheists, Pagans, Jews, and Turks (London: Imprinted by Roger Norton, and are to be sold by George Badger, at his Shop in S. Dunstans Church-yard in Fleet-street, 1650). Here, Andrewes explicates several points of doctrine, emphasizing "1. Solitude is not good. Society is good," and "2. Solitude is unpleasant" (p. 429).

[10]Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 283.

[11]Harvey, *A discourse of the Plague. Containing the Nature, Causes, Signs, and Presages of the Pestilence in general. Together with the state of the present Contagion. Also most rational Preservatives for Families, and choice Curative Medicines both for Rich and Poor. With several waies for purifying the air in houses, streets, etc.* (London: Printed for Nath. Brooke, at the Angel in Cornhill, near the Royal Exchange, 1665), p. 15.

[12]Harvey, p. 16. Harvey's suggestion to "Flee quick," however, was popular among those with the resources to leave the cities, including the royal court. Extensive analyses of Thomas Dekker's *A Rod For Runaways*, which condemns residents of London who flee to the country, can be found in Ernest P. Gilman's *Plague Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), as well as in Kelly Stage's article "Plague Space and Played Space in Early Modern Drama, 1604," in *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, ed. Rebecca Totaro and Ernest Gilman (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 54–75.

interactions with masses of people were a part of everyday life, solitude and quarantine were viewed with skepticism, if not overt fear. Robert Burton likened solitude to a "cozen-german to idleness," going so far as to suggest that excessive solitude could lead to a man pursuing the company of whores and drunkards to compensate for his loneliness.[13] Sir Thomas Browne similarly argued that a man could not, in fact, be alone, for "evil consorts with our solitude, and is that unruly rebel [the devil] that musters up those disordered motions which accompany our sequestered imaginations."[14] Many early modern writers, it would seem, were suspicious of solitude as an act of self-preservation, let alone a refuge for worship or devotional practice.

Quarantine thus became one of the few times in which the characterization of these spheres matched modern understandings of the terms.[15] The public corresponded to the crowd and the "promiscuous" words that ought to be avoided, and the private represented the distant, the silent, and the individual that must be embraced. Even so, such definitions were not static; rather, they were continually subject to revision and repositioning. Through the particular example of one prominent patient, John Donne, who caught a virulent strain of spotted fever in 1623, and his resultant text *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, I

[13]Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), p. 245.

[14]Browne, *Religio Medici, and Other Works*, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 69.

[15]Recent scholars of plague literature have offered excellent analyses of the pervasiveness of plague within early modern consciousness, but have generally neglected quarantine as a part of their studies. See especially Rebecca Totaro and Ernest P. Gilman, whose independent and collaborative works touch only briefly on the subject of quarantine. Paul Slack, Barbara Traister, and Andrew Wear are notable exceptions to this oversight. See Slack, "The Response to Plague in Early Modern England: Public Policies and Their Consequences," in *Famine Disease, and the Social Order in Early Modern Society*, ed. John Walter, Roger Schofield, and Andrew B. Appleby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 167–188; Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985), pp. 204–205, 222–225; Traister, "'A plague on both your houses': Sites of Comfort and Terror in Early Modern Drama," in *Representing the Plague in Early Modern England*, pp. 169–182; and Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, pp. 314–352.

argue that Donne's expressions of anxiety during his confinement reveal that solitude and isolation are rehabilitated into a devotional mode that liberates his physical condition from the spiritual.[16]

Reading Donne's confinement in this way offers a more developed picture of how privacy both is and is not possible during the period, as early moderns often saw sound as a way to confound architectural divisions. I thus argue that Donne engages a physical and metaphysical sense of hearing, one which is not confined to his sickroom, to remedy his solitude. Contrary to claims made in recent Donne scholarship, I suggest that Donne *is* interested in solitude, insofar as it hearkens to a particular Protestant interest in aurality that refigures solitude within an acceptable paradigm.[17] Sound allows Donne to retain his connection with the Christian populace, as his particular concerns about solitary illness—much as the physical structures that confine him—are overcome. In asserting a whole, recognizable self through this forced solitude—a self with a particular place, a particular experience, and a particular set of understandings about illness—Donne develops a continuous relationship with mankind, thus moving inward and outward simultaneously.

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Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions represents Donne's struggles with his quarantine and the psychological fallout resulting from his sense of distance from the world. When he fell ill in November 1623, Donne experienced what many early moderns suffering from any number of diseases did: confined bed rest for weeks. While he did not have the

[16]In *To Our Bodies Turn We Then: Body as Word and Sacrament in the Works of John Donne* (New York: Continuum International, 2005), Felecia Wright McDuffie rightly notes that the topic of the body in Donne's work is far from exhausted (p. 124 n.).

[17]See Ramie Targoff's assertion in *John Donne, Body and Soul* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008): "Donne had little interest in solitude—his sensibility is a far cry, for example, from that of his younger contemporary Andrew Marvell" (p. 50). While Targoff is correct that Donne's attitude toward solitude is not as positive as Marvell's, Donne is certainly interested in the ways that solitude affected his relationship with God and the world. Moreover, the absence of a discussion of Station 5 in Targoff's later discussion of the *Devotions* seems to be a particular oversight given this claim (chapter 5).

infamous bubonic plague, Donne suffered from "spotted fever," or a version of typhus, which had been terrorizing Londoners for over a month by the time he fell ill.[18] The fever kept Donne quarantined for over three weeks from all but his pen, paper, and select servants and physicians.[19] Much like other wealthier patients whose physicians ordered them into isolation, Donne found his existence reordered by these spatial changes. Even the act of transforming a sleeping chamber into a room of confinement "can be a language and still participate in political and social contexts."[20] The slightest adjustment to one's material surroundings or—for Donne—changing the purpose of a place for comfort, the bedroom, into a place of confinement, reminds us that spatial relationships are rhetorical.[21] The material and spatial conditions of Donne's confinement acted upon him much in the same way that his sickness did, thereby participating in his composition.

Fittingly, Donne's attitudes toward sickness in *Devotions*, as well as those expressed in the writings of other authors affected by epidemics, have not gone unremarked upon in current scholarship. In *Ungentle Shakespeare*, for example, Katherine Duncan-Jones shows that the plague transformed authorship and, as a consequence of the changing spatial relationships in city centers due to the plague, patronage as well.[22] Recent works by Rebecca Totaro and Ernest B. Gilman have also accentuated

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[18]Kate Frost, "Donne's Devotions: An Early Record of Epidemic Typhus," *Journal of the History of Medicine* 31.4 (1976): 421–430, especially 421–423. See also Clara Lander's discussion of Donne's diagnosis in "A Dangerous Sickness Which Turned to a Spotted Fever," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 11.1 (1971): 89–108. Spotted fever was seen as a distinct illness that registered on death bills independent of the plague. While not an equally dangerous illness, the treatments were often the same as for the bubonic plague. Spotted fever was a "precursor epidemic" with a mortality rate of 30 to 70 percent, as outbreaks of bubonic plague in the summer were often accompanied by spotted fever in the summer (Gilman, p. 193).

[19]R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 450.

[20]Lee Morrissey, *From the Temple to the Castle: An Architectural History of British Literature, 1660–1760* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1999), p. 8.

[21]Morrissey, p. 12.

[22]Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare: Scenes from His Life* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), pp. 54–81.

the extent to which the plague influenced authorship and everyday experiences.[23] In considering the experiences of the plague-bound, as well as authors—such as Donne—who suffered from other diseases, Gilman finds that plague writing for Donne is not limited to his own illness. Rather, the plague deaths of Elizabeth Drury and Donne's parishioners, as well as the representations of those events in his writing, reveal "recurrent language of imprisonment, burial, and death houses," showing "how deeply Donne is 'immured' in the moment of the plague."[24] As Gilman reminds us, in his roles as the presiding minister for funerals, as a widower, and as a bereaved parent, Donne was familiar with death. Like the expansion of the sickroom into the household, we have an expansion of Donne's experience with the plague, and its reference to a spiritual if not literal community.[25] The John Donne materializing in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* found himself grappling with his diseases of the body and soul on a personal as well as professional level. In spite of the extensive body of Donne scholarship, however, as well as Totaro's and Gilman's collective efforts to encourage interest in plague writing, few scholars have connected Donne's physical sensations of quarantine with his spiritual understanding of solitude.[26]

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[23]See Totaro's *Suffering in Paradise: The Bubonic Plague in English Literature from More to Milton* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2005), and her edited collection, *The Plague in Print: Essential Elizabethan Sources, 1558–1603* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2010). For a lively debate about Gilman's success in *Plague Writing*, see James Shapiro's review, "Lord Have Mercy," *The London Review of Books* 31 March 2011: 22–24; and Katherine Duncan-Jones's response in "Letters," *The London Review of Books* 14 April 2011: 4.

[24]Gilman, p. 195.

[25]Gary Kuchar situates Donne's experiences in terms of embodiment and subjectivity and points out that understanding the Galenic lexicon shows Donne's view of the relationship between the body and Word ("Embodiment and Representation in John Donne's 'Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,'" *Prose Studies* 24.2 [2001]: 15–40, and *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England* [Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2005]).

[26]A notable exception to this lack is Lisa Gorton's article, "John Donne's Use of Space," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 4.2 (1998): 1–27.

Complicating such an inquiry, however, is the absence of Donne's former home; the destruction of the St. Paul's Deanery by the Great Fire in 1666 and subsequent replacement by Sir Christopher Wren's design removed an important piece of the puzzle to help scholars understand such material influences on Donne's work.[27] Most extant conversations in print about the interior of the Old Deanery focus on Donne's study, which is described as "large," lined with the works of over 1,400 authors annotated by Donne, and containing several charcoal fires.[28] Donne's physician even barred Donne from most of his books, as excessive reading would over-stimulate him. The literary community could offer him no comfort in his hours of solitude. In a letter to Sir Robert Ker during the final days of his illness, Donne makes a similar juxtaposition between literary succor and his confinement: "Though I have left my bed, I have not left my bedside. I sit there still, and as a prisoner discharged sits at the prison door to beg fees, so sit I here to gather crumbs."[29] Furthermore, according to a letter from Edward Alleyn to Donne, it is possible that Donne's bedchamber was attached to a small receiving chamber or "parlour," as Alleyn indicates that the marriage negotiations between Donne's daughter Constance and himself occurred "in [Donne's] parlour" while Donne was ill in October 1623.[30] The

[27]In *The Life and Letters of John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's* (2 vols. [London: William Heineman, 1899]), Edmund Gosse's account of the Deanery characterizes the exterior of the house as "a large building fronting the north, with wings of irregular construction. It had spacious paved courtyards both before and behind, and the back court opened into Carter Lane; with a gate house and porter's lodge at each entrance. At the east side there was a fine grass lawn running the breadth of the house. This 'fair old mansion,' one of the beautiful objects of that ancient London which the Fire destroyed, was valued at a rental of £150 a year, equivalent to at least £1000 to-day" (2:153–154)—"£1000 to-day" being, of course, in 1899 values. Admittedly, Gosse's work—as Bald rightly notes—"is far from faultless" (p. 17).

[28]Gosse, 2:298.

[29]Donne, quoted in Gosse, 2:189.

[30]Gosse, 2:192–193; and Izaak Walton, *Izaak Walton's Lives of John Donne, Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker and George Herbert*, ed. Henry Morley (London: G. Routledge, 1888), pp. 60, 70. Much like Gosse's work, Walton's is not without errors. In *The Making of Walton's "Lives"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970), David Novarr observes that "much of the information which Gosse would attribute to Donne, Walton got from Henry King," and

relation of Donne's meeting to other household locations reflected his physical state and the severe limitations of his health—the parlor constituted a liminal space between life and death.

This spatial restriction is a central feature of Donne's early Stations. Resituating his thoughts on solitude from within the cycle of a disease, Donne charts his fears in terms of the relationship between the body and soul, often representing them in explicitly spatial language. For example, as he takes to his bed in Meditation 3, Donne moves from his imprisonment in the body to that of his unsettling confinement within his sickbed:

> Scarse any prison so close, that affords not the prisoner two, or three steps. The *Anchorites* that barqu'd themselves up in hollowe trees, & immur'd themselves in hollow walls; That perverse man, that barrell'd himself in a Tubb, all could stand, or sit, and enjoy some change of posture. A sicke bed, is a grave; and all that the patient saies there, is but a varying of his owne *Epitaph*.
>
> (p. 15)

The "prison" of immobility weighed by his sickness, his "scattered" and "disorderly body," and the commands of the physician traps Donne in a room he compares to the grave.[31] Much as Barbara Traister characterizes the psychological consequences of quarantine in her recent discussion of plague and early modern drama, for Donne, the isolated sickbed is worse and infinitely more claustrophobic than the living death of religious isolation embraced by the spiritual mystics and anchorites precisely because he lacks the agency to aid himself through proper movement and prayer.

This spatial sense of immobility, though unwillingly brought upon him, influences the spiritual anxiety that pervades the *Devotions*. Specifically, Reinhard H. Friederich emphasizes the "forced intimacy"

Walton himself "did not joyfully accept even Donne's printed words, but he changed them to work his purpose" (p. 25). See also Bald's relation of this event in the parlor (p. 448).

[31]Kuchar, *Divine Subjection*, p. 157.

that results from this confinement.[32] In a curious inversion of the contemporaneous Jesuit practice of equivocation, Donne's active mind was trapped within a body that had turned traitor on him.[33] Time in the sickbed forced Donne to become more intimate with his own soul, calling into question the extent to which his daily activities and interactions with others "quarantine" him from himself. This intimacy brings Donne to identify the purpose of the conscience, or—as he calls it—the "*pulse* in our *Soule*" that goes unexamined when we are well (p. 9). God has placed "a voice in our conscience, but wee do not hearken unto it" (p. 9). This very inward movement insists not only that there is always company to be had in the soul, for God has placed it there, but also that, ironically, Donne only heeds this companion when he is alone. Rather, his true isolation from God occurs when he is healthy and does not, or cannot, hear God's voice. "O Lord," Donne prays later, "enable me according to thy command, *to commune with mine owne heart upon my bed, and be still*" (p. 19). Donne hopes to begin the conversation with that voice, his own heart, the "pulse in [his] soul," rather than "talk it out," "jest it out," "drinke it out," or "sleepe it out" (p. 9). Attempting to make this deeply intimate act outward is a fallacy, for these outward expressions are deafening to those who hope to "heare and hearken to that voice" (p. 10).

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[32]Friederich, "Expanding and Contracting Space in Donne's *Devotions*," *English Literary History* 45.1 (1971): 18–32, especially 18–19. Friederich comments that the nature of Donne's disease, which leaves his mind active and renders the body weak and immobile, in fact demands meditation as one of the only activities possible: "The patient experiences claustrophobia as he imagines infinite man's mind pushing against the limits of the universe, while the contrast with his physical restrictions intensifies the horrors of confinement. . . . Confined to his sickbed isolation the patient is cut off completely from the outer world. The forced intimacy with himself makes him discover his bewildering separation from others. Inside he trembles, outwardly he is immobilized" (pp. 18–19).

[33]See Olga Valbuena, *Subjects to the King's Divorce: Equivocation, Infidelity, and Resistance in Early Modern England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 38–78; and Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 186–193.

Instead, this time becomes Donne's occasion to be truly alone and hear God's voice within. Later in the *Devotions*, Donne notes that this intimacy and solitude is a crucial element of one's spiritual status. In his earlier 13 October 1622 sermon he distinguishes, however, between the privacy of being alone and the privacy of self-examination:

> we are, to publish, *in deserto*, in the Desert, in the wildernesse; that is, as Saint *Hierome* notes, not in *Jerusalem*, in a tumultuary place, a place of distraction, but in the *Desert*, a place of solitude, and retirednesse. And yet this does not imply an abandoning of society, and mutuall offices, and callings in the world, but onely informes us, that every man is to have a *Desert in himself*, a retiring into himself, sometimes of emptying himself of worldly businesses, and that he spend some houres in such solitudes, and lay aside (as one would lay aside a garment) . . . but *here*, in this retiredness, Lord, *I am here, command what thou wilt*; in this retirednesse, in this solitude, (but is not a Court, is not an Army, is not a Fair a solitude, in respect of this association, when God and a good soul are met?). . . .[34]

Here Donne argues that solitude is in fact a location within the self, a spiritual refuge that can be engaged even when surrounded by crowds. His configuration of "solitude" hearkens to what Katherine Maus calls "inwardness," thus establishng solitude as an inward rather than external state.[35] This "*Desert in himself*," in which a believer can examine his soul and meet with God, is not universally positive, however. Literal solitude can force someone into this intimacy, which can be frightening for the unprepared soul. Elsewhere, Donne identifies this forced intimacy as a constant tension within one's spiritual existence. It is one thing to feel solitude by withdrawing to an interior space, but it is another to actually

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[34]Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953–1962), 4:228–229. All quotations from Donne's *Sermons* are taken from this edition; italics appear in the original.

[35]Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 2. For Maus's more recent considerations of inwardness and scholarship, see "Five Recent Books on Renaissance Subjectivity," *The Shakespeare International Yearbook* 4 (2004): 339–355.

be alone. In his 1630 Easter sermon at St. Paul's, Donne reminds his parishioners of the frightening consequences of being alone and then uses God's omnipresence as a remedy for this solitude:

> If I awake at midnight, and embrace God in mine armes, that is, receive God into my thoughts, and pursue those meditations, by such a having had God in my company, I may have frustrated many tentations that would have attempted me, and perchance prevailed upon me, if I had been alone, for solitude is one of the devils scenes; and, I am afraid there are persons that sin oftner alone, then in company; but a man is not alone that hath God in his sight, in his thought.
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> (*Sermons*, 9:196)

Being alone can be a frightening state that invites in, as Donne calls them, "tentations." For Donne, being alone temporarily allows him to know God more intimately; for other sinners, it has the opposite effect. Of course, the tension that Donne elides here is that all men are sinners, and thus subject to the temptations of the devil when in isolation. Consequently, over the course of the *Devotions*, Donne moves from the trope of physical quarantine and isolation to "embracing God," surmounting the fears associated with early modern medical quarantine through envisioning an idealized form of religious community.

Donne moves to the metaphor of the home, as his confinement has metamorphosed the home into a place of terror through his quarantine. As he takes to his sickbed, he invokes Psalm 132:3–5 to compare the beginning of his confinement as coming to God (p. 16): "Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; / I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids, / Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob."[36] Donne treats this image of the home in two ways. First, he compares the physical limitations of the ill elsewhere in the Bible, such as Christ's visit to Peter's mother and the centurion's servant, hoping that God "must come home to me in the visitation of thy *Spirit*, and the seale of thy *Sacrament*" (p. 17). Home, in this respect, is a confining prison where the ill must wait passively for the mercy of others. Stripped of agency, Donne—like all sinners and sick—has no control over his own spiritual

[36]All scriptural passages cited are from the 1611 King James Version.

or physical destiny. Second, Donne believes that "my friends may carrie mee home to thee, in their prayers in the *Congregation*," thus moving the image of home from his earthly house to heaven itself, making the private locus of the home into a public and participatory space (pp. 16–17). Donne again lacks agency within his spatial confinement, relying instead upon the spiritual community of his congregation to ventriloquize his prayers. Where his physical home and room are the "yron dores" (p. 17) that crush him under the weight of his solitude,[37] Donne finds comfort in imagining a different home:

> *Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth*: I lye here, and say, *Blessed are they, that dwell in thy house*; but I cannot say, *I will come into thy house*; I may say, *In thy feare I will worship towards thy holy Temple*; but I cannot say in thy holy *Temple*: And, *Lord, the zeale of thy House, eats me up*, as fast as my fever ; It is not a *Recusancie*, for I would come, but it is an *Excommunication*, I must not.
>
> (p. 17)

Donne's subtle prepositional distinctions emphasize the limitations of his spatial and communicative motion; he "cannot say" he "*will come* into" or may "*worship* towards" God's house, but not "*in* thy holy *Temple*." Comparing his sojourn to an "*Excommunication*"—a plaintive refrain throughout *Devotions*—Donne must exist, isolated against his will, on the periphery of salvation and wait for the actions of others or God's grace to bear him fully home to heaven or health.

Once sent to bed and awaiting the physician, Donne shifts his attention to meditations upon the demoralizing impact of isolation itself. With insomnia as his constant companion, once again forcing an intimate dialogue with his own soul, Donne begins an extensive consideration of the spiritual purpose of solitude and quarantine in Stations 4 and 5. In Station 4, Donne refigures his solitude and sickbed

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[37]Mary Ann Lund, "Experiencing Pain in John Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624)," in *The Sense of Suffering: Constructions of Physical Pain in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Jan Frans Van Dijkhuizen and Karl Enenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 320–354, especially p. 335. Lund goes so far as to compare the weight of the sheets to the execution method *peine forte et dure*, in which weights are placed on an iron door to crush the body.

confinement by playing with proportion and space. Microcosm and macrocosm, like his earlier contemplation of home, bring the world into Donne and, likewise, Donne into the world. In either case, they invoke a sense of Donne's isolation. While Donne privileges the complexity of man, as "Man consistes of more pieces, more parts, then the world; then the world doeth, nay then the world is," he also longs for the freedom the world brings (p. 19). Donne accesses that freedom through his thoughts, "our *creatures*," "*creatures* that are borne *Gyants*: that reach from *East* to *West*, from *earth* to *Heaven*, that doe not onely bestride all the *Sea* and *Land*, but span the *Sunn* and *Firmament* at once" (p. 19–20). In their infinite proportion, the sheer size of these thoughts allows Donne to reach, touch, and overwhelm all things without any physical limitation. He recognizes the paradox at hand: "Inexplicable mystery; I their *Creator* am in a close prison, in a sicke bed, any where, and any one of my *Creatures*, my *thoughts*, is with the *Sunne*, and beyond the *Sunne*, overtakes the *Sunne*, and overgoes the *Sunne* in one pace, one steppe, every where" (p. 20). As he moves from lamenting his confinement to celebrating his freedom, Donne's representation is a paradox: the solidity of thoughts, though intangible, is more powerful than the piecemeal existence of body. In essence, Donne asserts that the spiritual and cognitive are the only cohesive parts of human identity and, consequently, the only means to overcome physical solitude and feelings of isolation from God.

Such thoughts, however, do not prevent Donne from continuing to struggle with his solitude. Entitling Station 5 "Solus adest"—"He is present alone"—Donne posits his isolation as a state of existence rather than a deliberate withdrawal from active life.[38] Indeed, his title asserts a subjectivity being formed "here," "alone," in this particular space. "*Solitude*," Donne writes in his famous phrase, "is a torment, which is not

[38]Mary Arshagouni [Papazian] translates this passage as "He comes alone," which is one possible meaning ("The Latin 'Stationes' in Donne's 'Devotions,'" *Modern Philology* 89.2 [1991]: 196–210). The infinitive verb is "adsum"—"to be at hand" or "to be present"—but it lacks a clear subject. "He" or "it" does not necessarily refer to the physician, as such a reading would insist upon "solus" as an adverb, nor is there a reflexive "himself" to suggest "He presents himself alone" or "He is at hand alone." Indeed, "solus" is more suggestive of solitude or a lack of habitation, suggesting that Donne is playing with a paradox of presence and absence. Also, "solus" is suggestively close to the word "sol," or poet.

threatned in *hell* it selfe" (p. 25); "As Sickness is the greatest misery, so the greatest misery of sicknes is *solitude*" (p. 24). Fusing the language of solitude with that of community as a panacea to this isolation, Donne elevates "communion" as the height of perfection, using the word repeatedly throughout the passage. Earlier, Donne drifts from God's communion as "a plurality of persons in *God*," to "*Orders* of *Angels*, and *Armies* of *Martyrs*," "*Earth*, *Families*, *Cities*, *Churches*, *Colleges*, all *plurall things*," finding abundance in all God's creations—even man's first moments (p. 25). Identifying the originary event in Genesis as precedent for man's need for company, Donne reiterates that "it was not good, for man to bee *alone*, therefore *hee made him a helper*; and one that should helpe him so, as to increase the *number*, and give him *her owne*, and *more societie*" (p. 25). Donne identifies the plurality of creation as the world's natural order; the consequent multiplicity of things is one of God's greatest gifts and commandments.

While premised upon his isolation, Donne's representations of his solitude in Station 5 also indicate that he has visitors, but not the sort that he believes are necessary for his recovery. For example, the contradictory title ("Solus adest") is subtitled "*The Phisician comes*." The physician's visit registers as an occasion for Donne to write but is given little more significance than that. Donne distances himself intentionally, making the physician's presence a rather unwelcome intrusion upon his space. Donne does represent the figure of the physician—at times a hero and devoted sentinel in the battle against disease, at others an annoyance—but the physician is never represented as a friend. Simeon Foxe and Theodore Turquet de Mayerne (James I's personal physician) were Donne's two primary consulting physicians, among others, and Foxe was a close friend who continued to attend Donne after the illness passed.[39] Foxe even commissioned the famous St. Paul's funerary monument of Donne and maintained it during his lifetime.[40] The friend and the physician are one and the same, but Donne does not recognize the physician as his friend because Foxe is not providing the kind of spiritual comfort that Donne requires.

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[39]Frost, pp. 423–424.

[40]William Birken, "Foxe, Simeon (1569–1642)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed January 2008.

Rather, like the servant who changes the linen or brings meals, the physician caters to specific needs: those that sustain the physical form. The physician offers a skill that cannot be reproduced by the patient for himself; conversely, Donne's argument here implies humanity's insufficiency to care for spiritual needs: "We *have* the Phisician, but we *are not* the Phisician," as "Man hath not that *innate instinct*, to apply those naturall medicines to his present danger. . . . His *diseases* are his owne, but his *Phisician* is not" (pp. 20–21). The figure of the physician draws out Donne's sense of insufficiency while simultaneously emphasizing his lack of a natural ability to preserve his own life. Man does not know how to care for his physical form independent of doctors and, Donne infers, this reliance upon another could lead to a corresponding failure to rely upon "*Jesus Christ* [to] *maketh thee whole*" (p. 22). All that Donne can do is reflect the fears he sees in the physician's face, as fear is the only action of the physician that Donne can reproduce for himself. He cannot administer medicine, bleed himself, or analyze any of his symptoms. Donne instead must look to the second of his "two physicians" to find a method to care for his spiritual health, asking, "Reveale therefore to me thy *method*, *O Lord*, & see, whether I have followed it" (pp. 22). The feelings of insufficiency caused by the physician are echoed in his request to have a method that he *can* reproduce on his own, but only with God's guidance. Consequently, Donne suggests a new spiritual order of operations, one that suggests that mankind has a natural spiritual instinct to follow God's path—a corollary to the self-preservation he feels he lacks—by seeing the answer and looking inward to check progress. Realizing this insufficiency, Donne thus offers a rethinking of his confinement that flattens barriers between his physical form and the outside world.

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As much as Donne chafes at his solitude and examines its consequences carefully, he still uses the remaining Stations to redefine "solitude," abandoning the attendant fears and anxieties that transform his confinement into such a fearsome state. With this shift in mind, Donne begins to invent an imaginary space in which he engages with the world and Christian community outside of his walls. Donne's amalgamation of the soul, body, bedroom, and world is bound up in a

unique orientation of walls, home, and city. Through his invocation of the aural, Donne builds a dialectic between his miserable isolation as a sick man and a sinner, and the overwhelmingly joyful Christian kinship from which he cannot be separated. Elena Levy-Navarro suggests that the *Devotions* represents the bells as an example of *adiaphora* ceremony while correctly calling for a greater investigation of "the way it breaks down all sorts of divisions in the larger church, for all Christians past, present, and future."[41] Her call, however, is premised upon a consideration of the *Devotions* as a text engaging the confessional politics of the day, and I would suggest that Donne's work with the aural is more than a challenge to a Calvinist worldview. Rather, as Donne strains to bring the world into his room and his room into the world, the *Devotions* confounds divisions of public and private, thus allowing us to redefine solitude within the conflicting scholarly discourses described previously. Consequently, as Donne constructs the remaining stations, he shows that this quarantine is not as perfectly solitary as he would have us believe at first, underscoring the extent to which solitude is as much a spiritual state as a recourse against contagion.

Stations 16, 17, and 18—some of the most famous in the *Devotions*—offer Donne's ideal representation of the Christian community and what allows him access to it. Aural experiences center these Stations, providing a link to the Christian community outside of Donne's walls as sounds hail the listener to participate in devotional culture. In the wake of the Reformation, church bells were more than an aural signifier of death, and certainly more than the headache-inducing clamor that Kate Frost identifies.[42] Rather, according to David Cressy and Benjamin J. Kaplan, they were a connection to a collective religious and social identity.[43] Bruce R. Smith, in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, finds

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[41]Levy-Navarro, "Breaking Down the Walls That Divide: Anti-Polemicism and Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions," in *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives*, ed. Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), pp. 273–292, quotation from p. 286.

[42]Frost, p. 428.

[43]Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); and Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 48–50.

that "Church bells functioned as the most obvious 'soundmarks' in the acoustically dense soundscape of early modern London."[44] Preaching on the topic of conversion on the Sunday after St. Paul's Conversion in 1625, Donne emphasizes the importance of "hearing":

> Man hath a natural way to come to God, by the eie, by the creature; So *Visible things* shew the *Invisible God*: But then, God hath super-induced a supernaturall way, by the eare. For, though hearing be natural, yet that faith in God should come by hearing a man preach, is supernatural. God shut up the natural way, in *Saul*, Seeing; He struck him blind; But he opened the super-naturall way, he inabled him to heare, and to heare him.
>
> (*Sermons*, 6:217)

For Donne, hearing is a crucial faculty that allows man to access God in "a supernaturall way," mixing the homiletic tradition of Protestantism with the controversial pastime of bell ringing.[45] The bells confound the public/private divide that scholars have identified, both within architecture and subjectivity. By engaging senses other than the visual or tactile, both of which cannot penetrate the walls of his house, Donne can "attend" the services he loved. Indeed, Donne found the aural to be a crucial power for encouraging the spirit: "The words of this hymn have

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[44]Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 53. See also Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2002). The bells of St. Paul's were destroyed in the 1561 lightning strike of the steeple, which was never fully rebuilt even under the supervision of Inigo Jones, whose restoration work began long after Donne's death (William Benham, *Old St. Paul's Cathedral* [London: Seeley; New York: Macmillan, 1902], pp. 49–68). The steeple became a locus of confessional dispute, as William Benham notes, as Puritans "furiously declared that it was all owing to the retention of Popery, and the other side, with equal vigour, attributed the disaster to the desecration by the Puritans" (p. 50).

[45]In *Divided By Faith*, Kaplan identifies church bells as both a site of conflict and negotiated tolerance, finding that "Two features above all gave churches a powerful presence in the public sphere: their towers and bells. . . . They thrust an awareness of a church's presence upon all within their orbit, while the ringing of bells called attention specifically to the services they announced. Nothing was more unwelcome to members of other confessions" (p. 210).

restored to me the same thoughts of joy that possessed my soul in my sickness when I composed it. And, O the power of church music! that harmony added to this hymn has raised the affections of my heart and quickened my graces of zeal and gratitude."[46] The bells, then, offer an access point to the larger community that provides the bell with its symbolic power. It is not so much that the bells were loud enough for Donne to hear, but that sound was a way for his religious community to enter his sickroom.

Donne's aural experiences are pivotal, as he connects hearing with a universal capacity for worship. In Station 16, the bells allow Donne to imagine himself in the position of any person for whom they toll, perhaps echoing Donne's own failed secular ambitions: "We scarce heare of any man *preferred*, but wee thinke of our selves, that wee might very well have beene that *Man*; Why might not I have beene that *Man*, that is carried to his *grave* now?" (p. 82). The bells connect Donne across space and time, from Biblical Jews (he cites Exodus: "And *beneath* upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates *of* blue, and *of* purple, and *of* scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about."[47]) to those entering heaven's "*Triumphant Church*," for whom God employs "both [trumpets and bells] too, but in an inverted *Order*; we enter into the *Triumphant Church* by the sound of Bells (for we *enter* when we *die*)" (p. 83). Donne hears the bells and listens to the service: "Where I lie, I could heare the *Psalme*, and did joine the *Congregation* in it; but I could not heare the *Sermon*, and these latter *bells* are a *repetition Sermon* to mee" (p. 84). The psalms, as a communal expression and reading, place Donne firmly within the congregation, transporting him to a place of collective

[46]Donne, quoted in Walton, p. 55. See Novarr's discussion of Walton's relation of Donne's interest in church music, where Novarr indicates Walton "had Donne comment on the power of church music," implying invention on the part of Walton to argue against Puritan calls to end such frivolity (p. 94). Novarr notes that Donne's appreciation of music is, however, expressed elsewhere in his "*Upon the translation of the Psalmes by Sir* Philip Sydney, *and the Countess of Pembroke his Sister*" (p. 94).

[47]Exodus 28:33–34. The edition of *Devotions* cited here incorrectly cites Exodus 18:33–34; there are no verses 33–34 in Exodus 18.

worship.[48] The voice of the many can project to his room and provide him comfort. Ironically, the sermon, spoken by an individual that Donne cannot hear, reinforces the minimal power of the single voice in comparison to the many. His access to these devotional practices gives him spiritual edification, as if God has "*sent one from the dead to speake unto mee*. He speakes to mee aloud from that *steeple*; hee whispers to mee at these *Curtaines*" (p. 85). The very bedcurtains that Roger Chartiér collocates with early modern sensibilities of "privacy" in his *History of Private Life* thereby become a different aural and, consequently, communal experience than the bells.[49] With the five original bells of St. Mary-le-Bow (more have been installed since) only blocks away and regional churches with small bell towers such as St. Margaret Moses, St. Gregory, or St. Bride's, the sounds could have been quite clear.[50] The subtle movements of the curtains in a December breeze, by contrast, oppose the booming registers of the bells, reminding Donne how sensitive he must be to even the slightest sign of God conversing with the world. This discourse, occasioned by the bells and continued by the brethren of fellow believers, offers Donne the heavenly discourse that he so desperately needs and breaks his quarantine without failing to uphold his physicians' orders. However, rather than an interrogation of the flesh, "help" for the sick, or a "commiseration" provided by the physician that he rejects, Donne invokes the necessary healing of God as his curtains whisper at his ear.

Station 17 transforms the aural experience of the bells again, shifting the focus of the occasion from mortality to an ideal community of believers. Within the *Devotions*, Donne begins to perform the very shift

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[48]Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 66–73, 118–130.

[49]In his seminal discussion of "privacy," Chartiér argues that "private is a relative term when the presence of a servant's pallet meant that the highest degree of somnolent and sexual seclusion in the early modern household expressed itself solely and by our lights inefficiently through the drawing of bedcurtains" (Chartiér and Phillippe Ariès, eds., *A History of Private Life III: Passions of the Renaissance*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989], p. 185).

[50]See "The Agas Map," *The Map of Early Modern London* (rprt. of *Civitas Londinvm* [1562?]), ed. Janelle Jenstad <http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/>, accessed 27 July 2012.

he identifies in Station 16, from the single, weaker voice of the preacher to the absorbing, participating congregation of believers. The aural experience becomes a means to receive enlightenment that speaks to an entire congregation and, as such, Donne begins to respond for the entire congregation. The "I" signifies and speaks for all who can hear and all who have heard God's message. Citing Biblical precedent in Station 17's Expostulation, Donne repeats "I hear" six separate times, creating an anaphoric insistence upon the faculties of hearing in order to access the roots of Christianity—Jacob, Moses, Peter, and Jesus Christ—concluding, "I heare that which makes al sounds *musique*, and all *musique* perfect" (p. 88), as "I humbly accept thy *voice*, in the sound of this sad and funerall *bell*" (p. 89). These precedents are crucial for this movement to community: Jacob established the Twelve Tribes of Israel, Moses took the Hebrews to find the promised land, Peter became the rock of Christianity, and Christ was the savior of all mankind. Each act transformed the growth of Christianity; each figure is one that Donne "hears." In the very way that Donne aurally experiences the entirety of Christian faith that comes before him, the bells and whispers allow him to invoke the entirety of the Christian community that surrounds him. That imaginary "hearing"—the "supernaturall" sense given by God—allows Donne to imagine a church that is "*Catholike*, *universall*, so are all her *Actions*; *All* that she does, belongs to *all*"; in the same way, "this *Bell* calls us all" (p. 86). Each and every action of this community impacts its members, as Donne constructs a gathered network of believers whose every motion is "engraffed" and "*translated*," not "*torne*," and "b[ound] up," not "scattered" (p. 86). For Donne, "Any Mans *death* diminishes *me*, because I am involved in *Mankinde*; And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; It tolls for *thee*" (p. 87). Donne invokes a new sense of home which transforms his struggles and removes the walls and boundaries that invoke the alienating overtones of his sickbed chamber: "wee get nearer and nearer our *home*, *heaven*, by [tribulation]" (p. 87). Echoing in the bells that are simultaneously from a church building and the church universal, home is no longer the sterile house and chamber, but the accepting, universal, and heavenly body that shuts out and isolates no one.

This aural religious topography is an imaginative fiction for Donne, a fiction in which he can shape a community that reflects both vertical access to God and horizontal access to a population of believers. In his

"Hymne to God, my God, in my sicknesse," Donne compares the human form to an instrument—not simply an object to be used, but an instrument of music that resonates with all other members of the Kingdom of Heaven:

> Since I am comming to that Holy roome,
> Where, with thy Quire of Saints, for evermore
> I shall be made thy Musique; As I come
> I tune the instrument here at the dore. . . .[51]

As an instrument joining in the larger symphony of music that constitutes God's heavenly community, Donne projects out beyond his singular relationship with God that marked his earlier Stations to that of a harmonious whole—where each person is allowed to be his or her own individual instrument while being seamlessly "involved" in the perfection of all mankind. Interior and exterior—for the home, the body, and Christianity as a whole—are leveled in spite of Donne's confinement, as the language of belonging supersedes that of exclusion. Much as the body is accessible via the ear, the sickroom becomes a permeable vessel that is accessible by sound.

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The burdensome solitude of sickness emerges as a prominent discourse in the *Devotions*, but Donne also engages a larger community of Christians in an attempt to move from alienation to universal acceptance. When man becomes "a *little World*," as Donne writes in Station 4, it is "too litle," as he calls his reader to "[i]nlarge this Meditation upon this *great world*, *Man*, so farr, as to consider the immensitie of the creatures this world produces" (p. 19). By understanding his own insufficiency, Donne realizes the extent of his bond to others, as well as how easily overcome such architectural and spiritual barriers are between individuals. The abundance of the sick and Donne's recognition of his place within a larger community forced open

[51]Donne, "Hymne to God, my God, in my sicknesse," in *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Doubleday/Anchor, 1967), lines 1–4.

his bedroom to the wider imagined world. That Donne wrote during a time in which the plague and, consequently, widespread quarantine were ever present is all the more crucial to understanding his purpose.

Donne's commentary on sickness, when appropriately situated within early modern discourses surrounding quarantine and illness, shows that early moderns had a distinct and developed understanding of what constituted solitude beyond the literal walls of confinement. His meditations suggest that even in company one can feel alone, and such alienation is brought by a disordered spiritual status that cannot be surmounted with any treatment but prayer. Where quarantine may be one of the few times in which privacy truly operated in the early modern period, the anxiety, fears, and forced introspection arising from such privacy illuminate the extent to which Donne prioritized communal belief over isolated meditation. This priority does not mean, however, that solitude does not have a purpose for Donne. The *Devotions* reveal his coming to terms with and rehabilitation of his situation from that of misery to joyous revelation. Such an attempt is part of a common trope suggested earlier in Lancelot Andrewes's work—that the physician of the soul must understand and listen for God's message, even if that means, as Donne asserts, suffering "the greatest misery of sicknes." Donne thus confounds the easy division of inward and outward self by attempting to surmount his confinement, calling upon his readers to reexamine their participation in the larger Christian population. He indicates that physical presence is simply not enough to participate in the church; attendance is only the smallest part of membership. Instead, one's wholeness, in fact, can result from being separated from the ease of being physically surrounded by friends.

For Donne, then, solitude is a state of mind as well as physical condition. Times of quarantine during plague are perhaps the closest that his age came to absolute spatial privacy, and even that privacy was temporary at best and premised upon a certain level of wealth. As a result, Donne's attitude toward his experience in confinement was divided: he feared solitude when it was thrust upon him unwillingly, but he valued it as a voluntary state of inwardness. In this conflict, we begin to see the development of a distinction between the well-documented Christian humanist solitary reflection that marks the works of Michel de Montaigne and Sir Thomas More, and what modern readers would call "isolation," an anxiety-ridden state that is to be feared, with Donne's

Devotions operating between the two definitions. Where Donne's Catholic ancestor More would "be content to be solitary, / Not to long for worldly company,"[52] Donne begins to argue that community is a necessary part of Christian experience. Montaigne's suggestion to have "a room, just for ourselves, at the back of the shop, keeping it entirely free and establishing there our true liberty, our principle solitude and asylum" is at once feared and transformed by Donne.[53] Solitude can certainly be fearsome, but Donne's *Devotions* reveals it to be a material and spiritual solution that preserves Christian community.

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[52]More, "Psalm on Detachment," in *A Thomas More Sourcebook*, ed. Gerald B. Wegemer and Steven W. Smith (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), lines 5–6.

[53]Montaigne, "On Solitude," in *The Complete Essays*, ed. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 266–278, quotation from p. 270.