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Donne's "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" and the Challenge to "Make all this All"

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Thus is man that great and true *Amphibium*, whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds," observes Sir Thomas Browne; "for though there bee but one to sense, there are two to reason; the one visible, the other invisible . . . ."[1] Awareness of the need to negotiate between "divided and distinguished worlds" aroused greater anxiety in John Donne than it did in the ever-genial Browne. Whereas Browne was content to lose himself in an "*O altitudo!,*" Donne was painfully conscious of living in a world that "is all in pieces, all cohaerence gone; / All just supply, and all Relation."[2] Throughout his life Donne expended enormous intellectual and emotional energy resisting the threat of incoherence and attempting imaginatively to hold together the disparate parts of a disintegrating world. Indeed, as Sharon Cadmon Seelig points out, Donne's signature poetic device, the metaphysical conceit, operates as an attempt to fuse two seemingly incompatible realms of experience, the physical and that which lies beyond or above

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[1]Browne, *Religio Medici*, in *The Major Works*, ed. C. A. Patrides (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 103–104.

[2]Donne, *The First Anniversary*, lines 213–214. Quotation throughout will be from *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, gen. ed. Gary A. Stringer (Indiana University Press, 1995–) for all the poems so far published in this edition. Other quotations from Donne are from *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Dent/Everyman, 1985).

(*meta*) the physical or sublunary realm.[3] Donne's motivating desire was to "Make all this All" ("Upon the translation of the Psalmes," 23), whether by discovering completion in love and, thus, making one little room an everywhere; or by reforming or refashioning himself spiritually and becoming simultaneously the choir and the song.

In recent years my students have found it increasingly difficult to comprehend the anxiety that drives Donne to attempt to achieve coherence. I suspect that this is because, like novelist Salman Rushdie, they are resigned to living in an incoherent universe. In the title essay in his *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie asserts that "human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of the phrase."[4] This is a description of the human condition that Donne himself would no doubt readily accept. But after seconding Rushdie's premise, Donne would most likely argue that it thus becomes the duty of every person to seek to heal our common wound by recognizing our human limitations and imploring the grace of a superior entity, whether a sexual partner, union with whom can make us whole again; or the divine Creator, who alone is capable of re-making "all this All." When, during the opening meeting of my Seventeenth-Century survey class, I juxtapose Browne's description of the "great and true *Amphibium*" with Rushdie's description of our "imaginary homeland" in an attempt to help students negotiate the difference between the early modern and the postmodern mind sets, my students' sympathy seems invariably to lean towards Rushdie.

In an attempt to counteract my students' casual acceptance of incoherence, I now begin my unit on Donne in my Seventeenth-Century survey class with the poem "Upon the translation of the Psalmes." This allows me to accomplish several things. First, it helps me focus student attention on the extent to which Donne lived in a still-heavily aural universe.[5] That is, although print would emerge as the dominant cultural

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[3]Seelig, *The Shadow of Eternity: Belief and Structure in Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981), p. 4.

[4]Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1991), pp. 9–21; quotation on p. 12.

[5]I rely heavily on the distinctions between oral and printed dissemination of texts made by Walter J. Ong in *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for*

force in Donne's century and manuscript circulation was Donne's preferred medium of publication, some traditions of orality still flourished in his day, vestiges of which are apparent throughout Donne's canon. Speech—modeled upon the biblical concept of *dabar* in which the spoken word is an action—was for Donne the most immediate way of making the world cohere.[6]

Second, "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" fosters discussion, on a level that few of his other poems can do, of the relation of Donne's individual talent to the traditions that he inherited, and, likewise, of the private, meditative voice to the public, communal one. Apart from *The Anniversaries*, no other poem in Donne's canon reveals as well as "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" how a private meditation functions as a communal act, or how a privately circulated poem that was possibly intended as a bid for patronage could also be Donne's most significant surviving statement on the cosmic function of poetry.[7]

And, most importantly, the poem's governing conceit of "translation"—of the Psalms from Hebrew to English, of the soul from earth to heaven, of the individual voice from performing *solo voce* to participating in the universal choir, of England from a partially reformed nation to the New Jerusalem, and of the world from its sin-splintered, postlapsarian condition to a prelapsarian coherence that can be reestablished only at the end of time—indicates Donne's drive to enjoy a glimmer of eternity while still imprisoned within time. Study of "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" allows students to better appreciate the

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Cultural and Religious History (1967; repr. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981) and *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), as well as upon Bruce R. Smith's analysis of the phenomenology of Elizabethan sound in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[6]On Donne's engagement with the Hebrew concept of *dabar*, see Raymond-Jean Frontain, "'The Name of Shee': The Biblical Logocentrism of Donne's *Anniversaries*," *Publications of the Missouri Philological Association* 22 (1997): 28–39.

[7]On the circumstances of the poem's composition and circulation, see David Novarr, *The Disinterred Muse: Donne's Texts and Contexts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 157; and Arthur Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 285.

thematic concerns and rhetorical operations of the poems that we will pay particular attention to in our unit on Donne, most notably the blessed rage for a coherent order in *The Anniversaries*, the sinner's paradoxical pleas to be chastened through rape and lovingly scourged in "Holy Sonnet: Batter my heart" and "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward," respectively, and the underlying anxiety of the male speaker in "The good-morrow" that his female interlocutor acknowledge that she loves him as much as he loves her.

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No less than Milton, Donne lived in a world of song, repeatedly figuring the stability of the cosmos and the spiritual equanimity of the individual in terms of musical harmony. "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" concerns itself with the nature of song, in particular the ability of lyric performance to create and/or reform community. (This power would, of course, be inhibited by print, eventually causing the modern lyric to betray its root meaning of "song.") In teaching the poem, I hope that students will recognize the extent to which Donne's art is essentially an oral, as opposed to a printed, one. In the course of the semester, comparison of Donne's canon with that of his contemporary, Ben Jonson, will further help to illustrate this, for Jonson refers frequently to books and to how he would like his poems to be read. Little wonder, then, that Jonson is, with Spenser, one of the first English poets carefully to fashion himself in print. In his highly colloquial texts, Donne is, conversely, more concerned with the immediate impact of the individual speaking or singing voice. His love poems are "dialogue[s] of one" ("The Extasie," 74); his verse letters are the means by which "absent friends speake" ("To Sr. Henry Wotton," 2); and his devotional poems employ genres like the hymn and the litany which are by definition communal and oral. The editor(s) of the 1635 *Poems* who grouped Donne's love lyrics under the title "Songs and Sonets" clearly understood the essentially musical or performative nature of his writing. Significantly, Donne concluded his literary career as a preacher suspended in a pulpit above the heads of his auditors, his voice mediating between the earthly and the heavenly spheres, between the temporal and the eternal realms.

"Upon the translation of the Psalmes" is, on the most basic level, a meditation upon the power of musical or poetic performance, and a

tactful warning of what happens to a community that does not have good lyrics to sing. Praise, the poem asserts, is the essential duty of the religious person. The poem opens with the speaker's recognition that it is beyond the reach of human intellect to "name"—that is, to attempt to identify and, by implication, understand—God. Yet, because God's gifts are "as infinite as" He Himself is (6), it is equally impossible to praise God for every favor that he has bestowed. The speaker, therefore, is particularly grateful for the availability of the Sidneys' artful translation of the psalms of David, which provide members of the English Church with the means of praising God properly: "They show us Ilanders our joy, our king: / They tell us *why,* and teach us *how* to sing" (21–22).

Demonstrating how individual voices are united in a single song through the action of praise, Donne's "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" is the final link in a chain that securely binds the members of the reformed English Church to God Himself.[8] By adding one's voice to the choir composed of those other Christians who praise God by singing the Sidneys' translation of the Psalms, the individual transcends the limitations of the self and, thus, re-forms him- or herself through song. The angelic choir, inspired by the harmonious song that rises from earth, in turn breaks into renewed song, extending the heavenly harmony through the cosmos (28). This combined song of the human and angelic choirs blends with the unvocalized harmony of the spheres, reuniting the hitherto discordant parts of the sin-splintered world into the "All" that is God (23). The singing of God's praises is, thus, the one way that Christians have of returning to a state of prelapsarian harmony. English Protestants must be grateful to the Sidneys for providing the church with a translation that finally allows Donne and his contemporaries to sing their part in the cosmic choir.

In praising the Sidneys for their translation of the Psalms, Donne adds his own voice to the choir founded by biblical David, whose authorship of the Psalms first provided the church on earth with a song to sing. The past, the present, and the future collapse into one eternal moment as the Sidneys repeat typologically the action of another famous

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[8]On Donne's participation in a circle of praise, see Raymond-Jean Frontain, "Translating Heavenwards: 'Upon the Translation of the Psalmes' and John Donne's Poetics of Praise," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 22 (1996), pp. 103–125; especially pp. 111–115.

brother and sister song-writing team, Moses and Miriam (47), revealing the present moment in England to be part of a historical continuum that stretches from ancient Israel to the end of time when the righteous shall be gathered into the eternal choir to sing "th'Extemporall song" (51), which Donne elsewhere calls "Gods great Venite" (*Second Anniversary*, 44). And just as David's proclamation, *"Now let the Iles rejoyce,"* anticipated John the Baptist's call to the Israelites to prepare themselves for the advent of their Savior (17–18), so Donne's praise of the Sidneys alerts the Christians of an island nation of the need to "fall in with them, and sing our part" (56). If Donne is bold in asserting that "angels learne by what the Church does here" (28), he is bolder still in implying that, typologically, his poem serves the same purpose as the Psalms of David and the prophesying of John the Baptist—that is, to orchestrate into a single song of praise the cacophonous clatter of voices that is indicative of sin.[9]

Thus, although composed in writing and circulated privately, "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" documents Donne's attempt to promote community through orally delivered poetry and song. In our discussion of the text, I ask students to isolate the various references to tongues, voices, songs, and choirs, and to consider why Donne should have embedded so many references to oral modes of communication in the poem. This discussion prepares us to consider Donne's representation elsewhere of the spiritual world as a songful universe, and the tuning of the soul as one of Donne's most powerful metaphors. For Donne, the world without poetry and song is yet unreformed—that is, it is splintered by sin and its parts no longer cohere.

For the remainder of my unit on Donne, we consider the ways in which the spoken voice operates in his poems, in particular the techniques by which it attempts to elicit a response from a generally present, but invariably unseen, interlocutor. Sound, notes Walter J. Ong, is the most sympathetic of the sensual media, largely because of its ability to "bind . . . interiors to one another as interiors. Even in the physical world this is so; sounds echo and resonate, provided that reciprocating physical interiors are at hand. Sights may reflect, from surfaces. [But] strumming on a bass viol will make a nearby one sound, by virtue of

[9]Conversely, in "At a Solemn Musick," Milton asserts that humans learn to sing praise of God from the angelic choir.

outside impact of energy but in such a way as to reveal its interior structures."[10]

And a significant portion of Donne's poems are clearly designed to elicit a verbal response from a potentially sympathetic interlocutor. The love poems, all of which are "dialogue[s] of one," are predicated upon the existence of a second voice that will respond once the first has finished speaking. The effect of "The good-morrow," for example, depends upon how the hitherto-silent female partner responds to the "if" clause of the final couplet:

> If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
> Love so alike, that none doe slacken, [then] none can die.
> (20–21)

The speaker, having strummed on his own bass viol in the course of the poem, now listens to hear if the woman will respond sympathetically, which would confirm that she too has experienced an awakening, that their loves are equal and, thus, that neither they nor their love will die. Likewise, Donne's verse epistles, which are designed to mingle souls more surely than kisses can do, rarely fail to indicate the response that the speaker hopes to receive. And, contrary to Jeffrey G. Sobosan's conclusion that the speakers of Donne's divine poems engage in a dialogue with themselves "rather than a dialogue with divinity," there are few devotional poems which do not attempt to elicit a guarantee of salvation from the Creator.[11]

My undergraduates know too little of the interpretive history of Donne's verse to appreciate the irony that the poet most associated with a dramatically idiosyncratic voice should prove the English language poet most desperate for engagement with, and reaffirmation by, an interlocutor.

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[10]Ong, *Presence of the Word*, p. 125.

[11]Sobosan, "Call and Response—The Vision of God in John Donne and George Herbert," *Religious Studies* 13 (December 1977): 395–407; quotation from p. 396.

In "A Litanie" the speaker prays to be saved from "my excesse / In seeking secrets, or Poetiquenesse" (71–72). Similarly, in the opening lines of "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" the speaker challenges the temerity of "who ever dare / Seeke new expressions" for "Eternall God." Donne's speaker argues that such poets, while attempting to call attention to their own inventiveness, succeed only in squaring the circle, for they "thrust into strait corners of poore wit / Thee [God], who art cornerlesse and infinite" (1–4). Donne's poem, thus, invites discussion of the value that Donne places upon the notion of poetic originality, allowing the instructor an excellent opportunity to cite Dr. Johnson's dismissal of the Metaphysical Poets' labored attempts to "show their learning" in their verse.[12] For "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" provides Donne's most extensive comment upon the relation of the individual voice to inherited poetic tradition. Far from promoting one's wit at the expense of the reader's understanding, as Johnson argues, Donne's metaphysical style betrays an awareness of the futility of affectation and of the need to engage with one's poetic forebears.

I ask my students to consider the ways in which "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" rejects idiosyncrasy by celebrating how, in the act of praise, individual units merge into a unified whole and "Make all this All" (23). In the most obvious expression of this motif, Donne celebrates the divine pattern by which two become, or function as, one. In composing the Psalms, for example, David was inspired by "a cloven tongue," indicative of "a double power by which he sung / The highest matter in the noblest forme" (9–11). In "cleft[ing] that spirit, to performe / That worke againe" (12-13), God paradoxically created Sidney and Pembroke as two separate creatures that unite in translating the Psalms ("Two, by their bloods, and by thy Spirit one," 14)—as He had done once before in teaming Moses and his sister Miriam (46). Even those voices in the poem which seem inspired by a single tongue of fire prove to be voicing, not simply their own talent, but a concert of talents. Thus,

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[12]Troubled by the investment that Donne's poetry requires, my students oftentimes initially applaud Johnson's critique in his *Life of Cowley* that "Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found" (*Lives of the English Poets*, 2 vols. [London: Oxford University Press, 1906], 1:1–53; quotation from 1:13.)

although some of the Psalms "have other Authors," the Church refers to them as "*Davids* all" (47–48). And Sidney and Pembroke are "Two that make one *John Baptists* holy voyce" (17).

After discussion has sensitized students to the fact that nothing in the poem proves singular but occurs in concert, I challenge them to isolate as many instances of this pattern as they can. The Sidneys, for example, regularly engage in double actions; they not only translate Psalm 97, but "apply'd it too, / Both told us what, and taught us how to doe" (19–20). Their translations cast divine revelation into "formes of joy and art" that prove as "sweet" as they do "sincere" to English Christians (34–35). The stronger readers in class can be relied upon to identify the number of times that an action is being *repeated* in the poem, God Himself providing the model "to performe / That worke againe" (12–13). Thus, just as the angelic choir imitates what the Church does on earth (28), so the Sidneys "doe re-reveale" to the English Church what originally "heavens high holy Muse / Whisper'd to *David*" and David, in turn, whispered "to the Iewes" (31–35). And the devout will continue to sing the Sidneys' psalms until, like the Sidneys, they are themselves "translated" to heaven and "come th'Extemporall song to sing" (50–51).

Donne's fascination with the various instances of two (or more)-in-one bears witness to his drive to achieve coherence. I use the poem's recurring image of the cloven tongue—which functions emblematically to indicate the underlying unity of seemingly discrete units—to help students visualize the operation of a Donne conceit in which seemingly dissimilar things are found to possess a hitherto unperceived unity. In recent years my students have had increasing difficulty dealing with poetry in general and with Donne's verse in particular. However, few serious students remain unimpressed when they recognize that in the identical rhyme of the poem's final couplet two become one in a way that no reader could have anticipated. Donne is, thus, able to achieve within his poem what he hopes will inevitably occur throughout the cosmos, the unification of disparate parts into a coherent whole. When everyone sings or does his or her part, individuals cohere as a community and harmony reigns. Poetically, Donne's concluding the poem with a couplet employing identical rhyme makes "all this All."[13]

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[13]The merging into one of two or more is an ideal state to which many of Donne's works aspire. At the conclusion of "The good-morrow," for example,

What is more, "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" models how Donne understands a poetic tradition to develop: voices in different times and places (the ancient Israel of Moses, Miriam, and David; the Palestine of John the Baptist; the Protestant Europe of Clément Marot and the other continental psalm translators; the contemporary England of the Sidneys and Donne; and the New Jerusalem of the righteous who answer God's great "Venite") join in a choir that bespeaks an emergent cultural unity. A harmony of voices, rather than a cacophony, sounds as the Sidneys translate David's psalms and as Donne subsequently leads his audience in praising the Sidneys. In effect, the poet/translator in each case "performe[s] / That worke againe" (12–13) that makes "all" these voices "All." Raised in a post-Romantic tradition which associates inspiration with originality and devalues imitation, my students have difficulty understanding how Donne, like so many pre-Romantic poets, can promote literary inheritance *as* inspiration. But this is an issue that we can continue to discuss as we study Donne's dialogues with Ovid in his love elegies, with Petrarch and Ronsard in the *Songs and Sonets*, and with the Hebrew psalmist and prophets in the Divine Poems. More importantly, "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" asks students at the outset of our study of Donne to consider the manner in which he engages with tradition to be a mark of his originality. The poem also asks them to consider Donne's possible hubris in putting himself in a chain that stretches from Moses, Miriam, and David, through John the Baptist, and to the Sidneys. This opens discussion of the emphatic style of self-presentation that we meet elsewhere in his canon (for example, "Shee'is all States, and all Princes, I, / Nothing else is" in "The Sunne Rising" [21–22], or "I am every dead thing, / In whom love wrought new Alchimie" in "A nocturnall upon *S. Lucies* day" [12–13]).

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the speaker hopes that if their two loves are mixed equally and neither slackens, then neither will die. Such a condition of perfect merging is reached by the lovers in "The Extasie," and it is the state on which the speaker borders in the hymns. For Donne, the eternal moment is marked by transcendence of individual boundaries and either a merging sexually with another person or a joining the communal choir in which no individual voice sounds above the others—that is, a recognition that "every man is a peece of the *Continent*, a part of the maine" (*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa [New York: Oxford University Press, 1985], p. 87).

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Finally, Donne's pun in line 53 upon "translation" as taking place from one language to another, and from one state to another, allows me to focus student attention upon Donne's desire throughout his canon to be himself "translated" from a painfully fragmented world to a condition of coherence, and upon how much of his spiritual effort is invested in his sometimes maddeningly complex literary maneuvers.

First, the literary maneuvers. Donne's ideas about translation, and his role as a translator, are rarely addressed in Donne studies. However, students enjoy hearing that editors included a psalm translation now generally considered *not* to be by Donne among his *Poems* in 1633, as though determined to assure pious readers that the late Dean of St. Paul's had indeed taken part in an exercise that was then common among the literate devout. The only actual verse translation by Donne that survives, however, is "The Lamentations of Jeremy, for the most part according to Tremelius." Like the Sidneys, who were inspired to translate the Psalms that had been given to David as a way of providing the people of Israel with an effective means to praise God, Donne casts into English the Latin translation by Tremellius of the Hebrew Book of Lamentations, thus participating in a chain of endeavors by which a portion of the Bible is distributed more widely. The stated qualification, "for the most part according to Tremelius," suggests the freedom that Donne understood himself to have as a translator, shedding additional light upon Donne's conceit that a translation is a transformation.[14] I cannot rely upon students to know the *Canzoniere* well enough to appreciate the transformations that Donne wreaks upon Petrarchan tradition, but at the close of our discussion of "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" I distribute a copy of Marlowe's translation of Ovid's *Amores* I.5, in preparation for our discussion of Donne's "Elegie [XIX]: To his Mistriss Going to Bed," that students may begin to consider the ways in which Donne interacts with what he reads.

Of greater consequence, the conceit of translation in "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" can be used to focus student attention upon

[14]Donne might even "translate" or transform a literary or devotional genre. See, for example, Dayton Haskin, "Is There A Future for Donne's 'Litany'?," *John Donne Journal* 21 (2002): 51–78.

the ways in which Donne negotiates passage from one realm to another. Just as the Sidneys are "translated" from earth to heaven, the speakers in Donne's hymns variously "embarke" in a "torne ship" that serves as an "embleme" of God's "Arke" ("A Hymne to Christ, at the Authors last going into Germany" 1–2), come "to that Holy roome, / Where . . . I shall be made thy Musique" ("Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse," 1–3), and stand "on the shore" where they await passage to paradise ("A Hymne to God the Father," 13–14). The speaker of "Elegie [XIX]: To his Mistress Going to Bed" asks to be imputed righteous so that he may experience the full joy of his mistress's nakedness. The more ecstatic love poems likewise give evidence of translation from a state in which the speaker dreams of love to one in which love is a flesh-and-blood reality ("The good-morrow"), or celebrate the canonization of the speaker and his mistress—that is, their translation to a higher plane from which their succor may be implored by the less fortunate who subsist on a lower plane ("The Canonization"). *Metemphychosis* has always proven too complex a poem for me to teach in a three-week unit on Donne in a dual-level survey course, but the speaker's aim to "launch at paradise, and . . . saile towards home" (56) is another example of this impulse in Donne, as is the poet's singing "the progress of a deathlesse soule" in both *Metempsychosis* (1) and the *First* and *Second Anniversary*.[15] In Meditation 17 of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, Donne provides his own gloss upon the idea of "translation" as it is developed in "Upon the translation of the Psalmes":

> All *mankinde* is of one *Author*, and is one *volume*; 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*; some peeces are translated by *Age*, some by *sicknesse*, some by *warre*, some by

[15]I am interested in how Donne uses poetry to effect his own "translation" from a profane to a sacred state. See Frontain, "Redemption Typology in John Donne's 'Batter my heart,'" *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 8 (1987): 163–176; "'With Holy Importunity, with a Pious Impudency': John Donne's Attempts to Provoke Election," *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 13 (1992): 85–103; and "Donne, Spenser, and the Performative Mode of Renaissance Poetry," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 32.1 (Summer 2006): 76–102.

> *justice*; but *Gods* hand is in every *translation*; and his hand shall binde up all our scattered leaves againe, for that *Librarie* where every *booke* shall lie open to one another. . . .[16]

Significantly, in "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" the speaker's "translation" is a nation's transformation as well. The Sidneys' providing a poetically effective translation of the Psalms allows the Protestant Reformation to be completed in England (40–41), for, like the Church Fathers, the leading Reformers agreed that the Book of Psalms was the quintessential text of the Bible.[17] But Donne takes the notion of reformation literally, to signify a re-forming of the "All" that had (and continues to be) shattered by sin into the "all." The parts of the "All" re-cohere when everyone does their part and sings praise, whether of God directly or of the Sidneys for providing the English Church with the means to praise God.

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I use Donne's "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" to illustrate to students how, in the seventeenth century, poetic effort might allow Browne's divided and distinguished worlds to cohere. It is important to emphasize what, years ago, Helen C. White termed Donne's "psychology of spiritual effort"—that is, the extent to which Donne *willed* the world to cohere.[18] In "Upon the translation of the Psalmes," Donne employs typology (the Sidneys as Moses and Miriam, Donne himself as David and John the Baptist) and the metaphysical conceits of "translation" and the cloven tongue (in which bifurcation paradoxically proves to be an act of unification) to collapse divided and distinguished worlds into a unified whole. However much he might have shared Rushdie's sense of humans as "partial beings, in all the senses of the phrase," Donne refused to

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[16]Donne, *Devotions*, p. 86. I am grateful to Dayton Haskin for reminding me of this passage in this context.

[17]Frontain, "Translating Heavenwards," pp. 107–111.

[18]White, "John Donne and the Psychology of Spiritual Effort," in *The Seventeenth Century*, ed. R. F. Jones et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1951), pp. 355–368. In her essay White is concerned with Donne's "yearning for the perfection that would not so much complete his imperfection as transform it" (p. 357).

resign himself to such a condition. "Upon the translation of the Psalmes" allows me to highlight for students the power of Donne's drive to achieve coherence.

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