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John Donne's Soulscape, or A Map To God[1]

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John Donne lived in a time when the world was in great turmoil on many levels: The geographical explorations changed the perception of the globe and man's place on it, whereas developments in cosmological science seemed to challenge even the church and God. This lead to uncertainty, even fear, and it also required new images and expressions for man to make sense of the world around him—and the world beyond. The *soulscape* of John Donne here, then, refers to the spiritual landscape of Donne's mind and of his life. Most specifically, I

[1] This article was originally presented as the Presidential Address at the 35th John Donne Society Conference in Baton Rouge, LA, in February 2020. That was a time just before the serious onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and before so much in the world changed, perhaps forever. Editing this text now, slowly easing away from this world-wide plague, yet at a time when war is threatening to "wash away," or "diminish," a part of that Continent which Donne presented as a metaphor for the unity of mankind (*Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, 1624, Meditation XVII, ed. by Anthony Raspa, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 87), some of the references to world travel and global inclusion in this present essay may seem as if they were written for another age. Then again, the Early Modern circumstances of reaching for new prospects in a new and unfolding world and universe may give us perspective in a time when our unlimited freedom to roam the world is not as certain any longer. We are living in a time of confusion and change, much analogous to that of Donne's age. Our aim must be, perhaps even more than ever before, to hear, to understand, and to support one another, and to join in the effort to make this planet we share a safe place for us all.

wish to examine where, and how, John Donne encounters his God. One of the main pursuits and inspiration for my work with Donne has been to find, and define, what constitutes God for Donne—how God becomes real to Donne, becomes part of his world, of his reality.[2]

In a way, however, Donne is only an *exemplum* here: our interest must be more general than that. In order for us to know who we are, and for us to learn to communicate with one another, we need to define the boundaries of our own reality—or realities—and an important part of this is to decide what form, and how, a deity takes in that equation. Furthermore, in order to know who we are *today*, we need to know who we *were*, and where we come from. In our long Western Judeo-Christian tradition, some of the most fundamental questions were presented in the context of the Reformation. Without even considering questions of right or wrong theological interpretations, or different Christian denominations that grew out of this phase in European religious development, the Early Modern era with its religious disputes and—often critical—battles, was a time when God was most violently defined, deconstructed, and re-defined. Thus, this era gives us an important insight into what a religious reality can look like within man's mind. The case of England, where the Reformation had a strong political rationale (rather than purely theological foundations), gives us the opportunity to concentrate on literary and linguistic form.[3] Furthermore, John Donne, being a poet, a man of words, and possessing a strong Catholic heritage and powerful (royal) Protestant patronage, can be trusted to weigh every word when illustrating the world in which he encounters his God. All this is why this particular age, and a writer like Donne, is so intriguing.

We can define Donne's "soulscape" and his map to God through the image of a journey, and from the point of view of Donne's use of the concept of space, concentrating on the years 1618 to 1623. From 1616, Donne had been Reader at Lincoln's Inn, and sometime before April

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[2] The present study is part of a forthcoming book-length project, titled "Holy Ground," focussing on Donne's concept of sacred space, with a similar outline but a slightly different approach.

[3] The English reformation has been entitled "a religion of words" rather than merely one of theology (Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p. 12).

1619 (possibly as early as in the latter half of 1618)[4] he was preaching a sermon on the preparations for building a new chapel for the Inn. Four years later, already Dean of Saint Paul's, Donne returned to Lincoln's Inn to preach at the consecration of the chapel. This extended journey, from preparation of building to consecration of the chapel, will show how Donne comes to terms with a God who is elusive—but whose elusiveness also implies a closer presence than physical realities would allow.[5]

In his first sermon on the new chapel project, Donne states that it is an "acceptable testimony of devotion, to build God a house; to contribute something to his outward glory."[6] However, Donne also elaborates upon the building on a much more figurative level: Donne refers to Christ's promises to be in the place "where two or three are gathered together in [his] name,"[7] stating that "God is not tyed to any place; God fills every place, and fills it by containing that place in himselfe; . . . . God *were* long before he required, or admitted a sumptuous Temple."[8] His emphasis on the omnipresence of God shows how Donne experiences and encounters his God within his own

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[4] The actual date of the first chapel sermon has not been certainly defined. R.C. Bald (*John Donne. A Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, p. 329) suggests that the first of these chapel sermons "very probably followed close on" Donne's two Court sermons of early 1618, linking it to the process of appointing Inigo Jones to the building plan and accumulating money for the project. The editors George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson only establish the date to probably "before April 18, 1619", thus bringing the date closer to the date of Donne's travel to Germany later in the spring of 1619, yet also noting in the introduction to the volume that a possible date was "not impossibly earlier, say in the spring or summer of 1618" (*The Sermons of John Donne*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1955, vol. II, p. 29). The Oxford University Press edition of the sermon (ed. Peter McCullough, 2015, p. xlvi) assigns the sermon the time-span of January to November 1618.

[5] In the context of this article, these two particular sermons will be referred to as the first and the second Lincoln's Inn chapel sermon, although there were, of course, others preached in the same chapel and within the same years.

[6] *The Sermons of John Donne*, edited by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley & Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1955, vol. II, no. 10), p. 220.

[7] Matthew 18:20.

[8] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 217 (emphasis added).

soulscape, the geographical, cosmological, and spatial dimensions that constitute his world, his reality, and his soul. Starting here, with the first chapel sermon, then, we can see the map of Donne's *soulscape* from three different angles: firstly, from the point of view of universal space,[9] of exploration and travel, both real and metaphorical, from Donne's reach to the limits of his world and beyond. Secondly, there is the construction of a community, of a cityscape,[10] the context for developing Donne's belief and his conviction. And, thirdly, I will look at interior space,[11] at Donne's personal encounter with his God, seeing space as an *ekphrastic* conceit as well as a temporal structure for sacred devotion.[12]

Universal Space

It is only appropriate that soon after his sermon on the preparation of the chapel Donne sets out on a journey to Germany. In his final sermon *before* the journey (preached in April 1619), Donne already refers to the vastness of the world—and its relation to God's control over it: to God, Donne states, "the farthest East, and the farthest West are but as the right and left ear in one of us; we hear with both at once,

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[9] Cf., for example, Philip Edwards, *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997); Robin W. Winks & Lee Palmer Wandel, *Europe in a Wider World. 1350–1650* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

[10] Cf., for example, Henry Lefebvre, *Production de l'espace*, 1974 (*The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (transtated by Steven Rendell, Berkeley: University of California, 1984); and Edward Soja, *Thirdscape* (Cambridge, MA.: Blackwell, 1996).

[11] For example, Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* ([1958] 1964/1994). Boston: Beacon Press).

[12] Donne's last will and testament also shows that his home, specifically the Deanery at the close of his life, was richly decorated with artwork and religious artefacts, thus suggesting that Donne also saw his private rooms as an extension to his creation of public space (Izaak Walton, *Lives of Donne & Herbert* [1640], ed. S. C. Roberts [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928/1957], pp. 68–69). Also, Donne's combining of private and public is seen in that "[i]mmediately after he came to his deanery, he employed work-men to repair and beutifie the Chapel" (ibid., p. 55).

and he hears in both at once."[13] This image of God's control over the stormy seas and expanding world is also reflected in the opening of Donne's poem "A Hymne to Christ:"[14]

> In what torne shipp soeuer I embarke
> That shipp shalbee my Embleme of thy Arke;
> What Sea soëuer swallowe mee, that floud
> Shall bee to mee an Embleme of thy bloud;[15]

While having first preached on the importance of devotion in the form of "build[ing] God a house," Donne then looks directly for the assurance of God's omnipotence on his journey in the world. Here, Donne links his physical environment of a sea voyage to his experience of God's manifestation. However, this "Embleme" is more than a symbol, a sign, or a (Protestant) abstraction of God: rather than merely reaching for a metaphor at hand here, Donne seems to be making a statement about the nature of his faith and evoking an ontological argument. This illustrates how, for Donne, God is really not an abstraction at all, but a very tangible presence, at a moment when life presents uncertainty, and even fear.

Donne had, of course, taken to the seas already much earlier. We know of his naval campaigns with the companies of the Earl of Essex as well as with Sir Walter Raleigh in the 1590s.[16] Also, we know of his

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[13] *Sermons* (eds. Potter & Simpson), vol. II, p. 248.

[14] References to Donne's poetry follow *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995–). Several editions (e.g. *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. by John T. Shawcross, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967, p. 387), retain a longer addition to the present title: "at the Authors last going into Germany." The date of the poems is generally believed to be from the time around the departure to the continent in April 1619. Evelyn Simpson seems to suggest specifically that "the sermon preceded the poem" (*A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, 2nd edition 1948, p. 61).

[15] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 7.2 gen. ed. Jeffrey S. Johnson (*The Divine Poems*) (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2020), p. 172.

[16] See e.g. Bald, pp. 80–92; and John Stubbs, *John Donne. The Reformed Soul* (New York: Norton & Company, 2006), pp. 73–79.

willingness to join the Virginia Company in 1609.[17] Donne's world was expanding with the (geographical and political) explorations of his time. Furthermore, we know of Donne's keen interest in the astronomer Johannes Kepler and his work.[18] This was, indeed, a greatly exciting time of exploration of the world, and the first aspect of defining Donne's *soulscape* is related to his worldly pursuits, mostly those involving the new world, and new sciences. Donne uses the imagery from long geographical and cosmological adventures in order to illustrate his longest mental journeys.

Not only was the Medieval and Early Modern worldview in a flux, it has also recently been argued that the actual, whole way of *perceiving* surroundings was different than it is today.[19] Furthermore, it has been shown that, in the Early Modern context, while nature had a strong impact on people's lives in general, there was also a longing to seek to control nature, and harness it for rhetorical use.[20] In eco-critical terms, it has been suggested that the actual encounter of (or eye-contact with) the surrounding world creates awareness of similarity as well as of difference,[21] thus suggesting that geographical explorations are a way to (re-)define oneself in relation to the universe, and to God. Furthermore, environmental studies have introduced research into the effects of the environment on emotions and on (mental) wellbeing, with a study on climate anxiety showing how changes in the circumstances of the

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[17] Bald, p. 162.

[18] Ibid., p. 228. In his *Biathanatos* (1608) (ed. Ernest W. Sullivan II, Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1984, p. 105), Donne makes reference to Kepler's *De Stella Nova* (1606), and Donne's library later included Kepler's *Eclogæ Chronicæ* (1615) (currently in the collection of the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, London). Furthermore, for example Jeremy Bernstein has even attempted to find support for a claim that there could have been a meeting between the two men in 1619 ("The Meeting of John Donne and Johannes Kepler," *The American Scholar*, 66.2 [Spring 1997]: 175–195).

[19] Cf. José Filipe da Silva & Juhana Toivanen, "Perceptual Errors in Late Medieval Philosophy" in B. Glenney & J. F. Silva (eds.), *The Senses and the History of Philosophy*, Rewriting the History of Philosophy (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 106–130.

[20] Leah Knight, *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 63.

[21] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (Florence: Routledge, 2011), p. 152.

landscape around us has great implications to our view of ourselves, and of our place in the world.[22] The study points to a dual reaction: on the one hand, these encounters encourage us to seek new methods to adapt and adjust to change; on the other, they drive us to resist change. In order to negotiate this universal context, to make change happen, and to be changed, one must take possession of the globe, both physically and metaphorically. When reading Donne through this lens of environmental awareness, we may gain a deeper understanding of how the fundamental changes in the cosmological and geographical worldview of Donne's time affected his thinking, his perception of himself—and also, and maybe especially, of the nature of his God.

Donne takes to the seas especially forcefully in his love poetry. In "The Good-Morrow", "Loue . . . makes one litle roome, an euery where," and Donne extends his image geographically to let "Sea-discouerers to new worlds haue gon," and "Mapps to others, worlds on worlds haue showne."[23] In "Ad Solem," Donne parallels the action (of his love, or his love-making) with phenomena from the field of exploration and world trade, with:

> Looke, and to morrow late, tell mee,
> Whether both Indyes of Spice, and Myne
> Bee where thou lefts them, or lye here with mee.[24]

Donne extends the image by the geographical stretch of referring to both the India in the east as well as the West Indies, the latter having rather recently been entered into European cartographic awareness; the maps were still taking shape.

The image of the "Sea-discouerers" and maps is, of course, central to the Early Modern times, and the new world and its riches inspired other writers of the time as well. In 1593, William Shakespeare's King

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[22] Panu Pihkala, "The Cost of Bearing Witness to the Environmental Crisis: Vicarious Traumatization and Dealing with Secondary Traumatic Stress among Environmental Researchers" (*Social Epistemology: a journal of knowledge, culture and policy*. https://doi.org/10.1080/02691728.2019.1681560, 2020).

[23] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 4.2 (*Songs and Sonets: Part 2*) gen. ed. Jeffrey S. Johnson (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2021), p. 64.

[24] Ibid., p. 94, ll. 16–18.

Richard III uses a metaphor of these mysterious treasures when he addresses Elizabeth Woodville, the mother to the Princes in the Tower, and suggests that her sorrows shall turn to joy and prosperity: "The liquid drops of tears that you have shed / Shall come again, transformed to *orient pearl*, / Advantaging their loan with interest / Of ten times double gain of happiness."[25] Shakespeare also uses the image of the "two Indias" in *Henry VIII* (of 1613), where "two Gentlemen" watch the passing royal train and discuss the newly crowned Queen Anne, noting that "she is an angel: / Our king has all the Indies in his arms, / . . . "[26] Like Wyatt before him, though, Shakespeare heeds to the Petrarchan caution—"*noli me tangere*, for Cæsar's I am"—and this reference is merely one of admiration and respect.[27]

For both Donne and Shakespeare here, the exotic jewellery illustrates the beauty, mystery, and allure of the woman—using the new and titillating imagery of the recent discoveries and hard-to-reach lands and riches. For true love to reach beyond the known world, into the secret, exciting, perhaps a little dangerous, but unimaginably rich set of images, is a most appropriate approach. In the examples of both Shakespeare and Donne above, it is *secular* love that is empowering, dominant, and even authoritarian, when presented in images of worldly conquest and triumph, but for Donne the imagery is elsewhere equally linked to the concept of *divine* power and God's love: Donne also uses the metaphor of digging precious metals in mines around the world for religious arguments. In his sermon on preparation for his trip to the Continent, in April 1619, the topic is religious valour and virtue rather than earthly value. Donne elaborates on the metaphor of mining:

> Wee may consider two great virtues, one for the society of this life, Thankfulness, and the other for attaining the next life, Repentance, as the two pretious Mettles, Silver and Gold: Of Silver (of the virtue of thankfulness) there are whole Mines,

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[25] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third*, Act IV, scene iv, ll. 327–330 (*The RSC Shakespeare, Complete Works*, eds. Jonathan Bates and Eric Rasmussen [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007], p. 1365 (emphasis added).

[26] Shakespeare, *The Life of King Henry the Eighth,* Act IV, scene i, ll. 53–54 (*The RSC Shakespeare*, 2007), p. 1435.

[27] Thomas Wyatt, "Whoso list to hunt," l. 13 (*Tudor Poetry and Prose*, eds. J. William Hebel et al., New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), p. 15.

> books written by Philosophers, and a man may grow rich in that mettle, in that virtue, by digging in that Mine, in the Precepts of moral men; of this Gold (this virtue of Repentance) there is no Mine in the Earth; in the books of Philosophers, no doctrine of Repentance;[28]

Likewise, only two months later, in Heidelberg in June 1619, Donne states how God has given man "the Mines under our feet" as the "last leaf" in the book of Creatures.[29]

An even more specific set of events within exploration, including a deliberate relocation and geographic extension for the English, took place with the Virginia voyages.[30] This process was based on the Elizabethan ideal of extending the national self, and here, too, Donne first tries out the imagery in the context of love poetry. For example, in the elegy "To his Mistress going to bed," Donne takes to the metaphor of the new territories for his conquest over a woman, with "my America, my newfound land, / My kingdome, safelyest when with one man man'd. / My Myne of pretious stones; my emperee;"[31] Here the image is purely one of invasion and defeat, of conquering the land and mining the virginal earth.

While Donne's connotation changes when moving to his sermons, the image of occupying the space and making it into a possession is very similar. In a sermon preached before the Virginia Company in November 1622, Donne sees colonisation as an "Apostolicall function," the Protestant cause, with the "purpose to propagate the Gospell of *Christ Iesus*, [which is] an *Apostolicall* action."[32] The reason man was given the ability to build ships, Donne states, is "not to transport our selves, but to transport him [God] . . . *unto the uttermost parts of the Earth* [cf. Acts

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[28] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 235.

[29] Ibid., p. 253.

[30] This particular colonisation in the late 16th and early 17th century has been seen as a way through which "Protestant identity could achieve its fullest expression" (Scanlan, Thomas, 1999, *Colonial Writing and the New World 1583–1671*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 38).

[31] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 2 (*The Elegies*) gen. ed. Gary A. Stringer (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 163, ll. 27–29.

[32] *Sermons*, vol. IV, p. 280. See also Robin W. Winks & Lee Palmer Wandel, *Europe in a Wider World, 1350–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 118–119.

1:8]."[33] Thus exploration (and the expanding of one's world) is a missionary calling as much as personal spiritual development. At the same time, however, while on the one hand addressing the new, the "other," the unknown world, Donne also makes this conquest complete by incorporating the new into the old, including it in his universal *soulscape*. Later in the Virginia sermon, Donne states that a colony should be seen as an extension of the old world—and eventually stretching into the world hereafter: This "new land," although an "*Iland*, which is but the *Suburbs* of the old world," Donne states, is "a Bridge, a Gallery to the new . . . that world that shall never grow old, the Kingdome of heaven."[34] Here Donne's use of the images of the new or unknown world differs from the metaphorical structures of, for example, Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), or Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1626), where the aims seemed to be more to create a *new* world of possibilities, not to extend the existing world.

The third aspect of universal space—and really the widest—in Donne's metaphorical and semantic field is reflected in Donne's cosmological references. In his sermon before the trip to Germany, Donne contemplates the distance between himself and his congregation during his absence by referring to cosmological realities: "as your eyes that stay here, and mine that must be far of, for all that distance shall meet every morning, in looking upon that same Sun, and meet every night, in looking upon that same Moon."[35] In his sacred

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[33] *Sermons*, vol. IV, p. 266.

[34] Ibid., pp. 280–281. For a detailed study on Donne's view about the colonial project in this sermon, see Jeanne Shami, "Love and Power: The Rhetorical Motives of John Donne's 1622 Sermon to the Virginia Company" (in C. Cobb & M. Hester, eds., *Renaissance Papers 2004*, Boydell & Brewer, 2005), pp. 85–106. The sermon is also discussed more extensively in Maria Salenius, "Textual Voyages Beyond the Pillars of Hercules. English Early Modern Literary Encounters with the Unknown" (in *Illuminating Darkness. Approaches to Obscurity and Nothingness in Literature*, ed. Päivi Mehtonen, Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 2007), pp. 58–60. Furthermore, Gale Carrithers and James Hardy show how Donne's "pastoral theology" reach beyond political arguments and focus more on the "*civitas Dei*" (Gale H. Carrithers Jr. & James D. Hardy Jr., "Love, Power, Dust Royall, Gavelkinde," in *Age of Iron: English Renaissance Topologies of Love and Power* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), pp. 132–175, especially p. 135).

[35] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 248.

poetry, too, Donne illustrates God's mysteries through cosmological imagery: for example, in "Good friday" from 1613, Donne stretches in two opposite geographical directions—much like with the two Indias—riding towards the (actual) west and the setting sun, while his soul is reaching for the (metaphorical) east, with the hands of the rising Son (Christ) "span[ing] the Poles, / And turn[ing] all Spheres at once."[36] In the seventh sonnet of "La Corona," too, Donne includes this frequent pun saluting the "vprising of thys Sunne, and Sonne."[37] With this imagery, Donne presents God's love and mercy in metaphors depicting the new world-view.

In all these aspects of Donne's conquering of universal space, there is the question of expanding oneself, of incorporating previously unknown territory and reality into a new concept of oneself. Employing images of the newly found world(s), Donne can add new aspects to his own being. Yet, for all his interest in the world and the universe, Donne does know his limits: the world, and its exploration and science, belongs to God. When charting out his *soulscape* in the broadest possible frame, then—very much like Faustus, in Marlowe's play of 1592, who pledges to "burn [his] books", or Prospero, in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (of 1611), who promises to "drown [his] books"[38]—Donne makes his own promise, too. In the last chapter of his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (from 1623–24), Donne pleads to God not to let him "*make shipwreck of faith, and a good Conscience,*"[39] and Donne assures in a most submissive and remorseful exclamation: "O, if thou haddest ever readmitted *Adam* into *Paradise*, how *abstinently* would hee have walked by that *tree*?"[40]

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[36] *Variorum*, vol. 7.2, pp. 114–115, ll. 21–22.

[37] Ibid. pp. 5–7, stanza 7 ("Ascention"), l. 2.

[38] Cf. Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, final scene ("I'll burn my books!"); William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 5:1:63 ("I'll drown my book.").

[39] *Devotions* (1624), Prayer XXIII, p. 127 (emphasis original).

[40] Ibid., p. 125. Some editions actually give an exclamation point here instead of the questions mark, and this would also seem a poignant reading, especially as the following sentence starts with "and would not. . .", thus underlining Donne's suppliant stance. The question of Donne's position *vis-à-vis* God's power is discussed further in Maria Salenius, "Wearing Prospero's Mantle: John Donne Facing Death, Magic, and the Tree of Knowledge, in a Jobian Pursuit of Power" (in *Authority of Expression in Early Modern England*, ed. Nely Keinänen

Donne's *soulscape* stretches over the seas, to the boundaries of his world, only to show him that God is mightier than man can comprehend, and that the fruit of the tree of knowledge belongs to God alone.

Urban Space

The second aspect of space and Donne is that of cityscape, or urban space. On a theoretical level, this theme has been discussed mainly within social studies and sociology. The viewpoint here is to explore the public sphere of Donne's life, and to see how he negotiates the presence of his God within this framework. Here we must look at Donne, both in his physical environment of London, and, more importantly, in the social environment of his everyday life. In the context of the investigations of Early Modern maps of London in general, and in Donne studies in particular, we have been introduced to Donne's *physical* cityscape.[41] Donne's communal context has lately been approached also from the point of view of text and manuscript[42] as well as from the angle of the community of publishers, and of publishing.[43] Both of these perspectives add to the overall image of Donne's cityscape—in the process of defining his *soulscape*.

One of the communities that defined Donne's personality, and also his intellect, is that of the Inns of Court in London. It has been shown that the Inns were significant centres of literary production as well as of learning, and the libraries and the distribution of manuscript within these social networks were essential for the development of beliefs and opinions in the Early Modern English context.[44] By setting the text,

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and Maria Salenius, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 164–180.

[41]See especially the Virtual St Paul's Cathedral Project, NC State University, at: https://vpcathedral.chass.ncsu.edu/

[42] See e.g. Lara M. Crowley, *Manuscript Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[43] See e.g. Joshua Eckhardt, *Religion around John Donne* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2019).

[44] See https://earlymoderninns.wordpress.com/ for a summary of the contents of a conference on Early Moderns Inns, at King's College, London, June 2019.

both written and read, within the sociomateriality[45] of this network, we can contextualise[46] Donne's work and his conviction(s).

Donne followed his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and, most prominently, his great uncle Sir Thomas More, to Lincoln's Inn, entering a world where the former Chancellor had been highly esteemed (and whose name still echoes with veneration in the old halls). Donne must have been strongly aware of this legacy. After all, Donne was leading the life of a member of a prominent Catholic family in increasingly Protestant London.

This framework was of great importance for Donne: we have reason to believe that Donne, when very young, followed at close range the work of his Jesuit uncle and experienced him lingering in the Tower. Furthermore, Donne witnessed the fate of his own brother Henry, captured for the support of the Catholic priest, William Harrington, and eventually dying, as an (in)direct consequence of this religious treason, in prison in London. This is the cityscape of Donne's youth: a Protestant London with few sanctuaries for Catholic believers. It is a context where Donne had the religious burden and heritage of men having died (and still dying) for their faith.[47] On several occasions, we can see that Donne is especially anxious about losing touch with the images of his old religion. In his poem about the right to the sign of the cross, he states: "for the losse / Of this Crosse, were to mee another Crosse; / . . . No crosse is soe extreame as to haue none."[48]

The aspect of urban space which probably brings us closest to Donne's heart, is what he in a sermon from 1624/25, calls "a little Quillet, a little Close"[49]—man's final resting place in the encasement of a tomb. In 1617, Ann More died and was buried in their parish church of St. Clement Danes, very close to their home in Drury Lane and

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[45] See Wanda J. Orlikowski and Susan V. Scott, 2008, "Sociomateriality: Challenging the Separation of Technology, Work and Organization," *The Academy of Management Annals*, 2.1 (2008): 433–474.

[46] See e.g. Eckhardt, 2019, pp. 4–5.

[47] Donne deliberates the conflict between "ours and the Romane Church" in *Peudo-Martyr* (1610), Preface, paragraph 4. Dennis Flynn discusses in detail Donne's experiences as a Catholic in London in *John Donne & the Ancient Catholic Nobility* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[48] *Variorum*, vol. 7.2, p. 147, ll. 11–12, 14.

[49] *Sermons*, vol. VI, p. 213.

securely within Donne's daily circle of movement. Indeed, Walton states that Donne would have preached a sermon in the same church soon after his wife's death,[50] and Donne had the opportunity to preach there often around this time.[51]

In some of his poetry about the demise of a lover (or, perhaps of his beloved wife), Donne refers to the need of being spatially close, even in death. We recall the reference to the "Bracelet of bright haire about the bone" in the moving opening passage of the "The Relique," where the poet is sure that "hee [who digs up the grave will] lett's alone / And think that there a loveing couple lyes".[52] Similarly, in "The Canonization," Donne extends the metaphor of "Vrne" and "halfe Acre tombes" to show how the lovers are "Canonizd" in the "pretty roomes" of sonnets, as "One anothers Hermitage".[53] However, this shared tomb remained a metaphor, for when Donne died in 1631, his final resting place was to be in St. Paul's—which, professionally, of course, makes all sense. There probably was no alternative. Yet, perhaps foreseen, Donne mirrors the image in "The Funerall" and cautions: "Who euer comes to shrow'd me do not harme / Nor question mutch / That subtile wreath of haire, which crownes myne arme."[54]

Walton tells us that Donne wanted to be buried "privately"—and perhaps he had even at some point preferred to be buried next to Ann, although he had "appointed [the place of his burial in St. Paul's] some years before."[55] Yet, Donne's view of the space of a tomb also developed from the images of yearning for a shared enclosure in his poetry, to a more social, communal use of space, in his prose. In his sermon at The Hague on the very same trip to the Continent in 1619, Donne reflects on tombs: "And as our pride begins in our Cradle, it continues in our

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[50] Walton, p. 52.

[51] For example, Bald (Robert C. Bald, 1970/1986. *John Donne: A Life.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 329–30) suggests that Donne preached at St. Clement Danes due to a vacancy at the parish at that time.

[52] *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 4.3 (*Songs and Sonets: Part 3*) gen. ed. Jeffrey S. Johnson (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2022), p. 186, ll. 6–8.

[53] *Variorum*, vol. 4.2, p. 119–120, ll. 32–38.

[54] Ibid., vol. 4.3, p. 164, ll. 1–3.

[55] Walton, p. 82.

graves and Monuments."[56] Here the tomb is a form of claiming *a space*. Donne commends the "primitive Church," where people "contented themselves with the Churchyards" for burials, but states that later "a holy ambition, . . . a holy Pride brought them *ad Limina*, to the Church-threshold, to the Church-doore, because some great Martyrs were buried in the Porches, and devout men desired to lie neare them."[57] The tomb is an element of communal, urban space, a public spatial indication of life achievement and final destiny—while at the same time the first chamber, the "holy roome,"[58] in God's house. It also defines how Donne situates himself in the context of the community from which he derives and where he lived most of his life. The tension between the final resting place of Ann More and that of John Donne could be seen as an indication of his being past the romantic feeling for a long-gone spouse, or as evidence of a pursuit of lasting worldly (albeit clerical) fame, but the setting is also much more deeply religious. Perhaps it is a sign of Donne's shifting from medieval/Catholic community to a Protestant everyman-for-himself kind of salvation theology—and thus a need to be in the best church (for him, in that situation), where he did his most sacred work. Or, perhaps Donne is in fact returning to the mindset of his Catholic past by seeking to be buried within his current church community, as a more active member of the "communion of saints,"[59] the unending unity in Christ of all the baptized, both living and dead.[60] Whichever the case, it is the labeled final resting place that defines Donne's space within his community of believers.

Interior Space

The third and most intimate aspect of spatial theory is interior space, and it brings Donne back to the Lincoln's Inn chapel. The concept here is fundamentally one of classical *ekphrasis*: Donne's take on a space as,

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[56] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 296. This comes from the second of two sermons revised by Donne from one preached at The Hague on 19th December 1619 (ibid. p. 269).

[57] Ibid.

[58] "Hymne to God, my God. In my sicknes," *Variorum*, vol. 7.2, p. 195, l. 1.

[59] See e.g. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents-/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20160815_ad-resurgendum-cum-christo_en.html

[60] Cf. the Anglican Articles of Religion (1571), esp. XXII ("of Purgatory").

on the one hand, a vessel for God, and, on the other, the most immediate and tangible space within which God can be experienced.[61]

In his first Lincoln's Inn chapel sermon, Donne summarises his Procopian method of *ekphrasis*:[62] "This then was in all times, a religious work, an acceptable testimony of devotion, to build God a house."[63] The emphasis of the sermon is on Jacob's dream in Genesis, and his resolution after the dream: "Surely, the Lord is in this place; . . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."[64] Donne sees Jacob's role both as a "*Surveyor*" and a "*Builder*," stating that "he considers a fit place for the house of *God*" as well as "erects *Bethel*, the house of *God* it selfe."[65] Throughout the sermon Donne is preoccupied with the nature of "the house of God" on earth. He deliberates upon the essence as well as the necessity of "providing Christ a house, a dwelling."[66] Donne also points out that, in his epistles, St. Paul expressly refers to the Church, not "as it is a *Congregation*, but of the Church as it is a *Materiall building*."[67] Although Donne also elaborates upon this literal interpretation on a much more figurative level, it is crucial to remember his very tangible conception here.

Having then embarked on his journey to Germany on the "torne ship," Donne again finds himself contemplating the importance of building a solid place of worship. In Heidelberg (only a few months later), in June 1619, Donne states that "the knowledge which is to salvation, is by being in Gods house, in the Houshold of the Faithfull, in the Communion of Saints."[68] While the house is central for man's worship of God, it is also a binding element in God's promise to man.

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[61] Cf. Bachelard ([1958] 1964/1994).

[62] Cf. Jaś Elsner, "The Rhetoric of Buildings in the *De Aedeficiis* of Procopius," L. James (ed.) *Art and Text in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 33–57, p. 40; Mary Whitby, "Procopius," *Buildings*, "Book I: A Panegyrical Perspective," *Antiquite Tardive* 8 (2000): 45–57, p. 47.

[63] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 220.

[64] Genesis 28:16–17.

[65] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 213.

[66] Ibid., p. 216.

[67] Ibid., p. 218. Donne states also: "[T]he *first Christians* made so much haste to the expressing of their devotion, that even in the *Apostles* time, for all their poverty, and persecution, they were come to have *Churches*" (ibid.).

[68] Ibid., p. 253.

Donne elaborates: "God hath covenanted with his people, to be present with them in certain places, in the Church at certain times, when they make their congregation, in certain actions, when they meet to pray."[69] And Donne continues: "and though he be not bound in the nature of the action, yet he is *bound in his covenant* to exhibit grace, . . . ordained by God in the voice of his Church."[70] Donne constrains God to his promise to man to encounter him in the temple. This is why the chapel building is so important for Donne: it is a tool with which he can hold God to His promise to mankind.

This covenant makes this image—and this imagery—so powerful: If only we can build a strong enough temple for God, then we can secure Him in his promise. In a sermon earlier in the spring of 1619, Donne elaborates on the image, presenting man's body as an architectural motif. This sermon was preached on the occasion when the King was dangerously ill, and therefore there is the rather negative connotation of the body and "our Mothers wombes" as a "close Prison."[71] Donne's elaboration of the image is nonetheless quite powerful. In the same context, Donne refers to the concept of the "flat Map," and especially how, when the map is "reduce[d] . . . to roundnesse, . . . East and West touch one another."[72] This is an image that Donne appropriately reused later in "Hymn to God my God. In my sicknes," concluding that hereby "death doth touch the Resurrection."[73] These images relate the concept of building to that of (God-created) body as well as the (again, God-created and God-controlled) universe, adding to the assertion that God is universally present. The image of the body as an architectural construction is also reminiscent of Donne's mirror image in "La Corona," where Christ's "Immensitye" is "cloysterd in [the Virgin's] deare wombe," the ultimate chapel.[74] Here the image epitomises the "intimate immensity,"[75] a space and state of inner peace within which man can get a little closer to comprehending the vastness and abstractness of God. At the same time, the concept of the *ekphrastic*

[69] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 255.
[70] Ibid. (emphasis added).
[71] Ibid., p. 197.
[72] Ibid., p. 199.
[73] *Variorum*, vol. 7.2, p. 195, l. 15.
[74] Ibid., p. 5–7, stanza 3 ("Annunciation"), l. 1.
[75] Bachelard, p. 187.

building is very intimately depicted as a human entity, substantiated as a human endeavour.

While Donne in his first chapel sermon strongly underlines the importance of "a *Materiall building*,"[76] of which all these are elaborations, in the 1623 Lincoln's Inn sermon, Donne then reaches the conclusion that "God does not need a house."[77] However, and perhaps much more importantly, he emphasises that yet "*man does need*, that God should have a House."[78] The house of the Lord exists first and foremost as an assurance for man, so that there is a place where man can encounter God. This is why, after the journey to Germany, after traveling on the "torne ship," and returning to the chapel whose planning he celebrated four years earlier, Donne refers to Moses in Exodus encountering the Lord in the burning bush: "Put off thy shooes, sayes God to Moses, for the place [whereupon thou standest] is holy ground."[79] Although, on the one hand very concretely presenting the chapel as a means for man's devotion and glorification of God, Donne also shows that the presence of God is not dependent on man's building-efforts: encountering God can be merely a sound and a burning fire, and the structure of the temple can be but a mountain "at the backside of the desert."[80] Combining the concrete, the material, with the abstract and the mystical, Donne reaches the moment, as he did in the sermon in Heidelberg, where "all this world, and the next too, is Gods house."[81]

John Donne in Our Time

Where, then, does this search for Donne's *soulscape* lead us, and how does John Donne contribute to our thinking today? Donne never reached the masses like his dramatic contemporary William Shakespeare, nor did he construct a biblical epic like that of his namesake John Milton half a century later—both of whom are referred to, and recreated, for the benefit of every new generation. Donne has, of course, given the world undying phrases, whether quoted in a

[76] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 218.
[77] Ibid., vol. IV, p. 369.
[78] Ibid., p. 369 (emphasis added).
[79] Ibid., p. 377; cf. Exodus. 3:1–5.
[80] Exodus 3:1.
[81] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 253.

fictional setting by Ernest Hemingway (or by Lord Grantham in *Downton Abbey*[82]) or in political discourse. I am sure Donne would with pride hear the elaboration of his image of "no man is an island . . ." in these post-Brexit times. But even more seriously, of course, his words did live on, and they are, if possible, even more pregnant than those of Shakespeare or Milton, with relevance for modern man in general, and his religious contemplation in particular.

More importantly, from the vantage-point of the 21st century, there are a number of ways in which the reading of Donne's *soulscape* can provide us with a depth of understanding that spans centuries, geographical distances, and even religious developments.

Seeking Donne's *soulscape* firstly through his (own and his study of others') exploration and travel, both real and metaphorical, we see Donne's reach to the limits of his world and beyond. Part of the use of this imagery is related to the Early Modern world, with Donne, as one of the fundamental forces in the Metaphysical Poets, applying scientific knowledge, geographical as well as cosmological, from the very edges of the science of the time, elaborating on the margins of his known world. This is similar to what we do in Science Fiction or Fantasy today.[83] We reach to the borderlands of our understanding or scientific development to find material with which to create new worlds, in order for us to conceptualise, and understand, different powers through fictional elements. We also create for these powers a space in which to operate—whether we conjure up parallel realities, project our images to a utopian (or dystopian) future, or reach to a place "a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away." All these spaces are inhabited by the good and the evil, by positive forces and negative powers—and all the battles between good and evil reflect those in our world, or in our hearts. For us, as well as for Donne within his Early Modern context, these imaginary worlds are, as suggested for example by the author Ursula K. Le Guin for today's Science Fiction, much "more permanent" and also more universal in our minds than the structural constraints of social realism.[84] Thus, these images are especially appropriate for ontological

[82] Season six, episode eight (Carnival Films, 2015).

[83] Discussed in more general terms here: https://blogs.helsinki.fi/salenius/2018/03/17/poems-and-science/.

[84] *Words Are My Matter: Writing about Life and Books, with a Journal of a Writer's Week, 2000–2016* (Small Beer Press, 2016), pp. 45–6.

contemplation, and in the case of Donne, they illustrate for us the changes in the mindsets and belief-structures at a critical time in Western religious history and our Judeo-Christian past.

On the second level, Donne's *soulscape* consists of a community of believers, a group of like-minded—or, indeed, competing—beliefs, a context for developing one's faith and one's conviction. Especially when teaching Donne today, we must be able to show to the students—regardless of their personal conviction, or even that which we may, in a particular moment in our own scholarly approach, ascribe to Donne—that the poet and the preacher cannot be read or understood irrespective of, or without reference to, this context of believers. In our at times rather secularised Judeo-Christian world, it is important to realise that Donne cannot be wholly comprehended without the framework of *both* his private Catholic heritage as well as the public Protestant society that surrounded him. While his was the age of Humanist thinking and Renaissance individualism, Donne was part of a generation of writers specifically sensitive to the religious fluctuations in the urban space of his time and his immediate past. In all his poetic genius and theological wit, then, Donne was not an isolated individual creating a personal version of his worldview or his faith, but part of this religious tradition was deeply imbedded in a shared set of symbols[85] and semantic fields.[86] And while Donne's God does not reside in a "Rome, a Geneva, or a Wittenberg"[87]—nor perhaps in a Jerusalem, or even a Mecca—Donne, too, experienced an age when men were prepared to go to the stake, to die, for their faith.

Churches give believers a temporal context and a frame of reference, and here Donne's belief is in constant negotiation with the surrounding sets of concepts. Contemplating this aspect of Donne's *soulscape* and of the Donnean worldview, reminds us of the power of profound

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[85] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 71–128.

[86] This communal interpretation of Donne's *soulscape* has a medieval/Catholic character, whereas the following deliberations of Donne's personal faith are of a more Protestant nature. While this classification is acknowledged here, the division is not this unambiguous, and the question will be elaborated upon in a broader context later.

[87] *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (1651) (facsimile reprint, M. Thomas Hester, New York: Scholars' Facsimile Reprints, 1977), p. 29.

conviction, and the pain of forcible change. This is maybe an even more important reason for teaching and reading Donne *today*: to find a tool to study the conviction of one set of believers in the context of another; to learn which forms of social, ideological, and religious, reasoning are generally shared and which are culture-dependent,[88] in order for us to develop our sensitivity of, and respect for, other groups of believers and beliefs—and, at the same time, to work for reconciling and uniting our contrasting mind-sets. Only then can we make sure that our inclusiveness does not just become another form of exclusiveness, and only then can we hope to build the understanding between believers required for ensuring (or at least pursuing) world peace in our own time. After all, that is why we are here. Nothing less.

Donne's Soulscape

Finally reaching Donne's personal encounter with his God, then—whether on a "ship" or in a chapel: This space is an *ekphrastic* conceit as well as a temporal structure for sacred devotion. Creating a space for God is for Donne both a sacramental union and a tangible presence that defies all theological theory and scientific explanation; yet, for Donne, this is real. When drawing his map, Donne includes the new world(s) and sciences; as Donne states in Heidelberg in June 1619, the "[o]utward and visible means of knowing God" are demonstrated in the world, as far, and beyond, what man can see.[89] In illustrating his right to the sign of the cross, Donne refers to phenomena of nature as well as of science, with "Byrds raisd on crossed winges. / All the Globes frame, and Spheres, is nothing els / But the Meridians crossing Paralells."[90] Reading Donne's *soulscape* through his knowledge of his world and his universe gives us tools to see how these concepts are used for studying, and for

[88] Cf. neuroscience and *Gestalt circuits*; see e.g. George Lakoff, "Explaining Embodied Cognition Results", in *Topics in Cognitive Science* 4 (2012): 773–785, Cognitive Science Society, Inc. ISSN: 1756-8757 print /1756-8765 online DOI: 10.1111/j.1756-8765.2012.01222.x, https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1756-8765.2012.01222.x p. 780.

[89] "Outward and visible means of knowing God, God hath given to all Nations in the book of Creatures, from the first leaf of that book, the firmament above, to the last leaf, the Mines under our feet;" (*Sermons*, vol. II, p. 253).

[90] "Of the Crosse", ll. 22–24, *Variorum*, vol. 7.2, pp. 147–148.

solving, ontological questions in our own time, but it also leads us closer to Donne's personal definition of God.

Furthermore, Donne inhabits his world to the full, as he stated that God does (in the first Lincoln's Inn sermon), "*Implet & continendo implet*, . . . fill[ing] every place,"[91] and Donne especially dwells in the London of his family and his history. Donne's world is one of tradition as well as of the future. By seeing Donne as part of a community of believers—and, in his case even, communi*ties* of believers—we are reminded of the influence of community and context in forming a worldview, or a *soulscape*, and we can read Donne's sacred poetry and theological prose as general accounts of the faith and beliefs of his era, while also defining Donne's own personal conviction within this framework.

And finally, then, we consider Donne's "house of God," the rhetorical conceit built upon the (very real and tangible) chapel discussed especially in the two Lincoln's Inn sermons; the image develops into a complex theological elaboration of a central biblical topic.[92] At the same time, however, contemplating the core of the image shows a highly personal, and real, encounter with God—and in the end, this is perhaps where my deepest interest in this quest lies. In his sermon in the spring of 1619 (just before the trip to Germany), Donne states that in order to reach God's Kingdom man must

> sail through a sea, it is the sea of his blood, where no soul suffers shipwrack; though we must be blown with strange winds, with sighs and groans for our sins, yet it is the Spirit of God that blows all this wind, and shall blow away all contrary winds of diffidence or distrust in Gods mercy;[93]

When Donne in "Hymne to God my God. In my sicknes," only some months after the second Lincoln's Inn chapel sermon,[94] imagines finishing his earthly journey, and entering "that holy roome" of God,

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[91] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 217.

[92] Northrop Frye suggests that "the vast labyrinth of Scripture [was for Donne] an infinitely bigger structure than the cathedral he was preaching in" (*The Great Code*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1982), p. 209.

[93] *Sermons*, vol. II, p. 249.

[94] Here following the prevalent interpretation of dating the poem to 1623 in connection to Donne's near-fatal illness.

this image of the enclosure of the room (perhaps as a reminder of the tomb), is just an ante-chamber and an illustration, to assure man, in a language and images he can comprehend, of the mighty power, and unfailing presence, of God. Because eventually, according to Donne, all that is needed for salvation is this: ". . . in his [Christ's] purple wrapp'd, receive me, Lord; . . ."—the redemptive embrace of the metaphorical hero's cape of sacrificial blood, like the "sea" and the "flood" that swallow Donne so mercifully in the poem going to Germany some years earlier. Here, in the confidence of this embrace, sailing though the storms and the vast oceans of his world, is how Donne reaches the end of his journey; this is where we can find the centre of his *soulscape*.[95]

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[95] With hindsight, it seems poignant to conclude this discussion by returning to Donne's poem in his sickness. Later in the year of the second chapel sermon, Donne was taken ill by what has been identified as relapsing fever, a type of bacterial disease. This was a frightening experience, and one where Donne was both in fear for his own life as well as made aware of the many passing bells tolling in the neighbourhood. He recorded his anxiety, desperation, and hope, in this poem and in the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (1624).

Having returned home from the 35th John Donne Society Conference in February 2020, we, too, were all facing lockdown, messages of friends being infected or passing, and our own fear of catching the fatal illness. Everyone had to reach for whatever solace they could find not to "perish on the shore" ("Father," *Variorum*, vol 7.2, p. 183, l. 14).

Finalising this text now, a few years after the conference, there seems to be some hope of us having defeated the pandemic, albeit still, like Donne, with "a feare of a relapse" (*Devotions*, p. 121). At the same time, like in the times of Donne, there is a devastating war raging on the European Continent, and again, "Europe is the lesse" (ibid., p. 87) for every life lost in these battles. The future is unknown to us, but Donne's life, as well as our own, has reminded us of the importance of finding a map to any "holy roome" that gives our life purpose and meaning.