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The Lothian Portrait: A Prologomenon

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At some time around the cusp of the seventeenth century, John Donne sat for his portrait—perhaps in 1595, although the date has not been verified[1] [see frontispiece]. He had done so before, in his eighteenth year in the pose of a swordsman.[2] This Lothian portrait presents Donne in the posture of a melancholic lover, wonderfully behatted, fashionable in cloak, doublet, and elaborate lace-edged falling band, bearing a sword, although not so obviously as in his first portrait, and apparently besotted by the lady whom, in the framing motto, he calls upon for enlightenment.[3] When the Lothian portrait was discovered in 1959,[4] it fit remarkably the Donne then perceived as young rake—part courtly lover, part sexual predator. But our perception of the young Donne has changed radically, and Donne studies at present, stimulated in particular by the biographical research of R. C. Bald and Dennis Flynn, favor the ardors of scholarship over the pleasures of impressionistic criticism.[5] This mandates a new look at the Lothian portrait and, consequently, new questions. This essay will pose some of these questions and will suggest a program of study for the Lothian portrait which goes beyond the traditional iconographical elucidation of the art historian.

Donne has never spared his readers convoluted intellectual journeys, and the serious student must follow where they lead, often through the sometimes labyrinthine ways of Renaissance intellectual history. It is my contention that the Lothian portrait is as fully a product of Donne's creative imagination as were its contemporary literary efforts, such as the Satires and the early Elegies. It draws on Donne's vast store of knowledge and the intricate complexities of his wit,

revealing Donne's early and knowledgeable involvement with pictorial art and its contemporary underpinnings, especially with theories of humane and mundane harmonics which informed pictorial design and presentation, as well as with the then-current philosophical debate on linear perspective. I shall argue that adumbrations of Donne's programme can be found in the arithmological stanza of Book II, Canto 9, Stanza 22, of *The Faerie Queene*, in contemporary physiognomical theory, and in the mathematical schemata which underlay theories of architecture and music. Of necessity this essay will attempt to make inroads into several branches of knowledge: art history, history of medicine and of mathematics, premodern music theory, alchemical and hermetic lore. I must ask the reader to bear with me the discomforts that accompany the breaking of fresh ground: argument which may at times seem mysterious in its intent, movement in perhaps surprising directions, and impatience for peroration. I hope that by the essay's conclusion the portrait will be perceived as a deliberate response to the context of Renaissance thought, not just as the egocentric gesture of an oversexed young fop.

The portrait obviously belongs to the tradition of melancholia, which has a rich iconographical history. In late sixteenth-century England melancholy was perceived as the mark of a diseased state of mind and body, manifesting itself in generally obsessive behavior, as in the hypochrondriac, the victim of religious mania, and especially, the infatuated lover. The outward signs of love melancholy were not only behavior—like Hamlet's, depressed and irrascible—but the dress and self-presentation of the individual. The latter, in fact, became a matter for fashion: the lover wore black, sported a large floppy hat, generally worn down over the eyes, and covered his crossed arms with a mourning cloak. Many of the portraits depicting the melancholy lover were painted in miniature, and their gift, intended to be worn on the beloved's person or displayed in a special cabinet, was customary.[6] By 1623 and the publication of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* the posture of melancholy had become stereotyped, and the melancholic lover a figure of fun [Fig. 1]. On the title page of Burton's exhaustive study we find a depiction of "Inamorato," who stands, hat over eyes,

Figure 1

arms folded on breast, clad in doublet and falling ruff, his hose well-gartered with lovely bows, which also adorn his pantofles. At his feet in disarray lie musical instruments and scores, and inscribed in a cloudy headpiece are the astrological signs for the planet Venus, and for the sextile, trine, and opposition, indicative of the many aspects of the "occult" which adhered to the tradition. (Indeed, Democritus himself, at the top of the page, presides over an alchemical garden replete with salamanders and basilisks.)

Further scrutiny of the title page of Burton's *Anatomy* reveals that "Inamorato" was one of a gallery of melancholy types: he takes his place with the medical, the religious, and the lunatic melancholic. In two major studies of Elizabethan melancholy, Lawrence Babb and Bridget Lyons have established that the condition was viewed not only as infatuation, but also as psychological, intellectual, and social disruption within the body personal and politic.[7] Public manifestations of melancholy amounted almost to a cult and were to be found primarily among the university men of the Inns of Court, who assumed its outward signs as advertising a superior mind and a critical disposition. To this group Donne would seem to belong—the Lothian portrait was painted at the time of his comings and goings among the group. How does Donne's portrait fit into this tradition? Literary scholars have long ago discarded the abrupt dichotomy between the young rake and the mature man of God. But does not this apparently dreamy romantic image reinforce the traditional image of Jack Donne, the visitor of ladies? It would seem so to the modern eye, but not perhaps to Donne's informed contemporaries.

Any survey of Tudor and Stuart portraiture reveals a gallery of sitters replete with power, dignity, and opulence—and generally lacking in personality or individuality. The paintings have a pasteboard quality: flat white faces, generally devoid of vivid singularity, peering out from coifs and caps, figures upholstered in enormities of velvets and brocades, all curiously alike. Only infrequently does one find a persona that is arresting. But where a portrait here and there demonstrates singularity, the case is usually due to posture or iconography, often a combination of the two, bringing to the portrait the conventions

of the impresa.[8] And a consideration of the evidence provided by the Lothian portrait will confirm that it belongs to this genre. That is, while it manifests the character of the melancholy lover, at the same time it presents a programme that goes beyond the character in that it is personal, cryptic, and morally didactic.

At the same time the programme of the Lothian portrait exhibits the characteristics of the impresa, it does so complexly and, I think, with the acquiescence and active participation of the sitter. Donne's posture, position, and presentation are unusual for British portraiture of the period. Certain Tudor portraitists, among them especially Marcus Geerhearts, are known for their propensity to tip the sitter toward the viewer. But in the Lothian portrait (unlike any of Donne's other portraits), Donne positively leans forward, his face and hand looming brilliantly out of a swirling darkness of ground and costume. It is a presentation far more reminiscent of Italian than of English portraiture.[9] One is reminded of Lorenzo Lotto's painting of the antiquarian Andrea Odoni or even of his own (presumed) self-portrait. Even more noticeable is the resemblance of the Donne figure to the posture and thrusting presentation of the sitter in Lotto's *Man with a Golden Paw* [Fig. 2]. John Pope Hennessey's description of Lotto's intent throws light on both:

> Painters can depict the act of thinking but cannot define thought. Lotto's aim was to develop the romantic portrait of Giorgione into a literary portrait in which the sitter could be shown in some specific character or state of mind, and his use of emblems stems directly from the need to make the meaning of his portraits more definite and more precise.[10]

Lotto's melancholic sitter proffers the paw of a ground squirrel, traditionally emblematic of the cold and dry element of earth. Generically identifiable, Donne's state of mind is also melancholic, and, it seems to me, his choice of emblems refers especially to the pictorial tradition of philosophical melancholy.

The discussion of the melancholia tradition almost always begins with Dürer and is almost always led by Panofsky's brilliant analysis of

Figure 2

the Melancholia series, which he divided into Melancholia I (the famous seated angel), II (*Death and the Devil*), and III (*St. Jerome in His Study*).[11] As Laurinda Dixon has recently pointed out, the angel of Melancholia I can be seen as a product of the new secularization of philosophy and science.[12] The St. Jerome of Melancholia III, on the other hand, is a far more traditional presentation of the iconography of melancholy, for hermit saints were the traditional prototypes of *enthousiasma*, that highest form of melancholy devoted to the contemplation of divine mysteries. Dürer's most familiar presentation of this topos is the engraving also titled "St. Jerome in His Study," a companion piece to Melancholia III [Fig. 3]. Like the Lothian portrait, it is a half-length close-up, with strong emphasis on the face and the hand. Indeed, as Dixon demonstrates, these are the focus of the picture.[13] They are the focus of its iconography as well.

Jerome gestures with one hand to his exposed forehead, and with his left hand to a human skull, traditionally a *momento mori* and a symbol of *vanitas*. But, in conjunction with the Saint's pointing to his own head, the skull makes a distinct statement about contemplative melancholy, one which takes us to medieval medical/psychological theory. The so-called "cell doctrine" of Galen posited that the intellect was divided into imagination, reason, and memory, each controlled by a "cell" on the surface of the brain and linked by the chorid plexus of the lateral ventricles (the "worm" or *vermis*). The imagination received sense impressions, referred them to the reason for judgment, and, that done, they were filed in the memory [Fig. 4].

Medieval medical doctrine held that melancholia was caused by an infection of the brain's three compartments. Arising from poisonous vapors engendered by the spleen, the fumes of melancholy penetrated first the imaginative faculty, causing it to produce false or distorted images, even hallucinations. These images were passed on, infecting the reason. The faculty of the imagination, occupying the "soft" frontal lobe of the brain (often called the "mind's eye") was especially susceptible to the distortions occasioned by excessive pursuits of study and devotion, both of which occasioned intense activity in the imaginative faculty.[14] Such excessive effort also caused unusual combustion

252

Figure 3

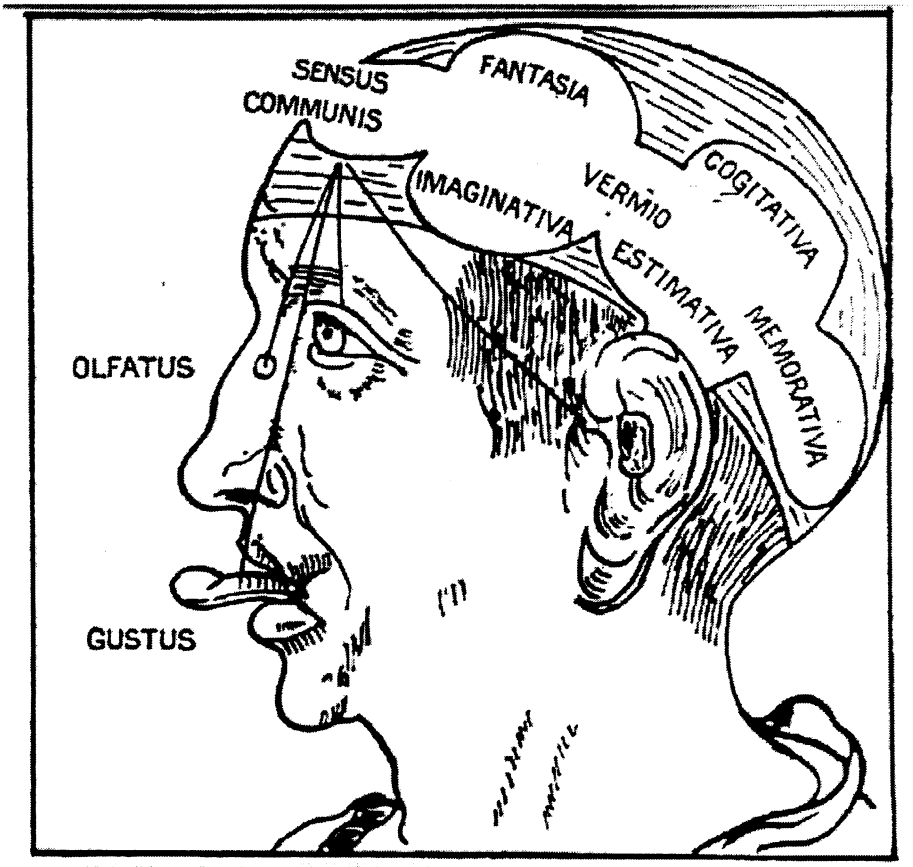

Figure 4

of the body's humors (Aristotle first called it the "fire of inspiration"). But fire produces smoke, and the smoky vapors of melancholy rose from the spleen to the brain. In small amounts and moderately heated they produced a creative exhilaration; overheated and in large quantity they prevented normal functioning, distorting and perverting the receptive powers of the imagination.

Artists, scholars, and saints were especially prone to the melancholic condition. Dürer's St. Jerome points with his right hand to his frontal lobe; with his left, he points to the inner cell of reason on the skull. In this depiction of the saint, a model of *enthousiasma*, the image of the cross and the sacred books which dominate the painting to

Jerome's right are referred to the faculty of the imagination, for they are the objects of visual contemplation. But the painting holds a warning that is literally sinister: death and the diseased reason are equated by the Saint's pointing left hand. According to Dixon:

> Jerome echoes the common belief that reason is endangered in the pursuits of scholarship and religious devotion. Dürer has validated the popular association of deep thought with depression and mental imbalance by summoning the "scientific" evidence of anatomy.[15]

Both the Lothian portrait and Dürer's St. Jerome agree in their emphasis on head and gesture. But their points of difference are more fascinating. If indeed the conventions of St. Jerome are reflected in the Lothian portrait, then the designer of that programme was concerned with vision and the imagination. Certainly the inscription (drawn from the Advent liturgy and loosely translated: "Lady, shed light on our darkness") indicates a concern with light, and, while Donne does not demonstrably point to his head, the large hat of the melancholic, which traditionally dropped over the eyes to protect the wearer from visual arrows shot by the beloved, is here ostentatiously pulled back, emphasizing the broad expanse of his forehead. But the programmes diverge here: Donne's right hand, for example, is gloved and almost invisible.

To explore the implications of Donne's concern with the creative imagination, I turn to an impressive essay by Euguene Cunnar which explores the implications of hermetic alchemy for the reading of "A Valediction forbidding Mourning." Cunnar's intent is "to show how Donne found in hermetic alchemy a mode of thought congenial to his attempts to understand and articulate his own experience through the limbeck of his imagination."[16] In doing so he focuses on the connection between spiritual alchemy and the function of the imagination, as well as Donne's constant concern with his own creative imagination, which Cunnar perceives as flawed, even diseased.[17] In alchemical thought, as Cunnar points out, such a concern was heightened, for if the spiritual alchemist is to achieve the state of purification, he must do so by a "true and not a fantastic imagination," that is, by an imaginative faculty

undistorted by the smoky fumes of overworked melancholy.[18] For Cunnar, the alchemical process itself, perceived in strongly Paracelsan mode, served Donne as healer and unifier, "acting by and through the imagination in order to purify and unite man."[19] The essential mode of this healing lies in the strongly sexual Paracelsan cosmology which followed the hermetic and scriptural tradition that through the *coincidentia oppositorum* of male and female the spiritual alchemist would be enabled to transcend the dual world of matter and the disunity within his own soul.[20] By the deliberate conjunction of his male and female polarities, the alchemist could achieve the healing harmony that averted the dangers of the overheated imaginative faculty. Hence, the balanced, unified man—as well as the union of male sulphur (hot and dry) and female mercury (cold and moist) ultimately productive of the Philosopher's Stone—was illustrated in alchemical treatises by the figure of the hermaphrodite [Fig. 5].

While I am not inclined to agree with Cunnar's every point, I do think that the Lothian portrait supports much of his theorizing on the "Valediction" in drawing attention to its own male/female polarity. The painting presents, geometrically, the circle of Donne's head as major focus, raised upward to his left and the light, above the dark triangle of his torso. That left and right represented female/male polarity is a commonplace of Renaissance art history, and Donne's presentation is an interesting balance of male and female: his right hand is gloved and swathed in the cloak of melancholy, his left lies bare and listless. The entire body turns from the male right to the female left; the inscription importunes light from a female *domina* by a male *fedele*. Viewed in this manner, the portrait invites the viewer not only to accept it as a melancholic character study, but to assess it as an icon of the state of the sitter's soul. Such an assessment demands of the viewer skill, intellectual discernment, and moral judgment. The painting becomes a didactic speaking picture.

But the juxtaposition of left and right is not the only schematic representation of sexual differentiation which a learned Renaissance audience could have recognized, for the circle and the triangle were themselves associated with the sexes.[21] This association could occa-

Figure 5

sion a leap from the simple sexual balance of alchemy to the philosophical abstractions of the Platonic lambda, particularly when the figures of circle and triangle were associated with the human body conceived architecturally, as in the famous "arithmetical" stanza of Book II of *The Faerie Queene*:

> The frame thereof seemd partly circulare,
> And part triangulare, O worke diuine;
> Those two the first and last proportions are,
> The one imperfect, mortall, foeminine;
> Th'other immortall, perfect, masculine,
> And twixt them both a quadrate was the base
> Proportioned equally by seuen and nine;
> Nine was the circle set in heauens place,
> All which compacted made a goodly diapase. (II.ix.22)

The architectural conception of the human body displayed in the Castle of Alma was not new with Spenser.[22] It appears in continental literature of the Middle Ages and is found in Middle English as early as Grosseteste's translation of *Le Chasteau d'Amour* and the thirteenth-century homily *Sawles Ward.* It occurs again in the *Vita de Dowel, Dobet and Dobest* in the second part of *Piers Plowman.* In the sixteenth century DuBartas used the motif in the sixth day of the first of his *Divine Weeks*, a possible source of Spenser's own Castle of Alma. It was to appear later in Spenserian imitations, notably Chapman's *Hymnus in Cynthiam* and Fletcher's *The Purple Island.*

The architectural perception of the human body was an established tradition in Donne's era, and there is concrete evidence that the Castle of Alma was so perceived by at least two contemporary readers: William Austin, whose *Haec Homo* was written about 1630, and Sir Kenelm Digby, whose rather better known *Observations* came seven years later. Austin's *Haec Homo* gives seven pages to Spenser's conception of the proportions of the body, examining the symbolical and geometrical significance of body postures which supposedly figured forth the square (a "*form* of the *Temple*, and of the *mysticall Church*"), the triangle ("*figure* of the *Trinitie*"), and the circle ("a true

figure of the *Earth*"). The second figure of Austin's circle, where the body forms a St. Andrew's Cross, presents the "true form of the *twelve houses* of the *seven Planets* in Heven." Austin concludes by saying that all these proportions, which "signifie things both *divine* and *humane*," are treated by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*.[23]

More complex and more directly related to the arithmology of the stanza are Digby's *Observations*. Digby flatly maintains that the intent of the Canto is "to describe the bodie of man inform'd with a rationall soul" and that of the Stanza to "frame a compleat Man." The frame of Spenser's Castle of Alma "partly Circular, / And part Triangular" represent, for him, "the mind and body of Man . . . the exact Image of him that breathed it, representing him as fully as tis possible for any creature which is infinitely distant from a Creator." The soul is a circle, its circumferance limited by God, its center; the body is a triangle, "the first and lowest of all Figures." For Digby the stanza is an allegory of harmony:

> And if you take *all together*, Man is a little world, and of God himself. But in all this, me thinks, the admirablest work is the joyning together of the two *different* and indeed *opposite* substances in Man, to make one perfect compound; the *Soul* and the *Body*, which are so contrary a nature, that their *uniting* seems to be a Miracle.[24]

The source of this harmony is to be found in the Golden Mean of Aristotle, whereby the figure of circle and triangle are geometrically reconciled. From these geometric observations, Digby proceeds to the Stanza's arithmology, commenting on the quadrate base which lies "twixt them both . . . proportioned equally by seuen and nine." These numbers point to macrocosmic harmony, in that they reflect the seven planets and the nine spheres. Moreover, the quadrate itself represents the tempered harmony of the four humors. (Although Digby gives it no comment, this *harmonia humana* is manifested in the number of the stanza itself: twenty-two, a number of temperance.) In two more permutations of the endlessly permutable microcosm/macrocosm topos, Digby points to musical harmony, with emphasis on the diapason, and to the male/female balance of soul/body:

> When a mans Actions are regular, and directed towards God, they become like the lines of a Circle, which all meet in the Center, then his musick is most excellent and compleat, and all together are the Authors of that blessed harmony which maketh him happie in glorious vision of Gods perfections, wherein the minde is filled with high knowledges and most pleasing contemplations; and the senses, as it were, drowned in eternall delight; and nothing can interrupt this Joy, this Happinesse, which is an everlasting Diapase. . . . [This happy estate], which is the neverfailing Reward of such an obedient bodie, and ethereall and vertuous minde, as [Spenser] makes to be the seat of the bright Virgin *Alma*, mans worthiest inhabitant, *Reason*.[25]

The "ethereall and vertuous minde" was identified alchemically with the central alchemical process, distillation, which in a pattern of ascent and descent resulted ultimately in the production of pure gold.[26] In spiritual alchemy the pure gold produced was, of course, *harmonia humana*, the "goodly diapase."

After a certain amount of early pooh-poohing (Henry Morely called the geometrical interpretation "a curious specimen of mystical nonsense"[27]), commentary on the arithmetical stanza has reached a general consensus: the "House of Temperance" is a combined human, geometrical, and arithmetical image of the mean proportion. Says Vincent Hopper: "Man *is* the House of Temperance."[28] R. M. Cummings, although he argues for solid, rather than plane geometry as the basis of the stanza's mathematics, agrees with Hopper that the Castle refers to the Golden Mean as a measure of Temperance and sees in the stanza, moreover, two levels of allegory—arithmetical and geometrical—mathematically independent but confirming each other.[29] Hopper in addition makes a most interesting observation: Spenser's immediate inspiration likely stemmed from John Dee's preface to the 1570 *Euclid*. Dee's preface

> expounds mathematics as the foundation of all wisdom, refers to the proportions of the body as being mathematically determinable, and calls attention to Aristotle's use of the mean. There is also an elaborate demonstration (with diagram) of the common medical

> conception that the mean between Hot, Cold, Moist, and Dry was the Temperate State, the hypothesis on which Aristotle is thought to have based his moral theory."[30]

Like Cummings, Hopper concludes that the Canto, and the Stanza in particular, comprise an allegory of temperance and harmony.

What has all this to do with the Lothian portrait and the concerns it raises for the melancholic imagination? Certainly the geometric composition of the portrait mirrors the circle/triangle arrangement, with the looming head and the arms crossed on the torso. But two points demand consideration: Alma's Castle was more than just a geometric composition. It was a representation of the human body, and Spenser's Canto 9 devotes many lines to functions both elementary and alimentary. The Donne portrait, on the other hand, is a mere head and torso. Moreover, it can be argued that any half-length portrait with arms crossed might serve for illustration. Without a demonstrable tradition of iconography which shares the portrait's concerns as elucidated here, the comparison fails. However, such a tradition does exist, and I would like here to point to several representations which echo Spenser's anatomical canto and Donne's impresa.

The first arises from conceptions of mathematics and musical harmony and gives evidence that such conceptions were in general circulation[31] [Fig. 6]. In 1618 was published the second treatise of Robert Fludd's *Utriusque cosmi majoris historia*. It consisted of ten books on various subjects, one of them to our interest, entitled *De Templo Musicae*, a book that Fludd admitted to having conceived of at least in outline during the 1590s, the period of the Donne portrait. A treatise of practical music, dedicated to the Marquis de Orizon, Visconte de Candenet, whom Fludd had instructed in his own version of musical theory during his stay on the continent, the book is preceded by an elaborate and very interesting frontispiece. For this he gives an explanation: the tower on the left denotes in its spirals the movement of air by the voice; the double gates below are the ears—a rough architectural approximation of the human body. (The other architectural features are identified with musical structure, history, and math-

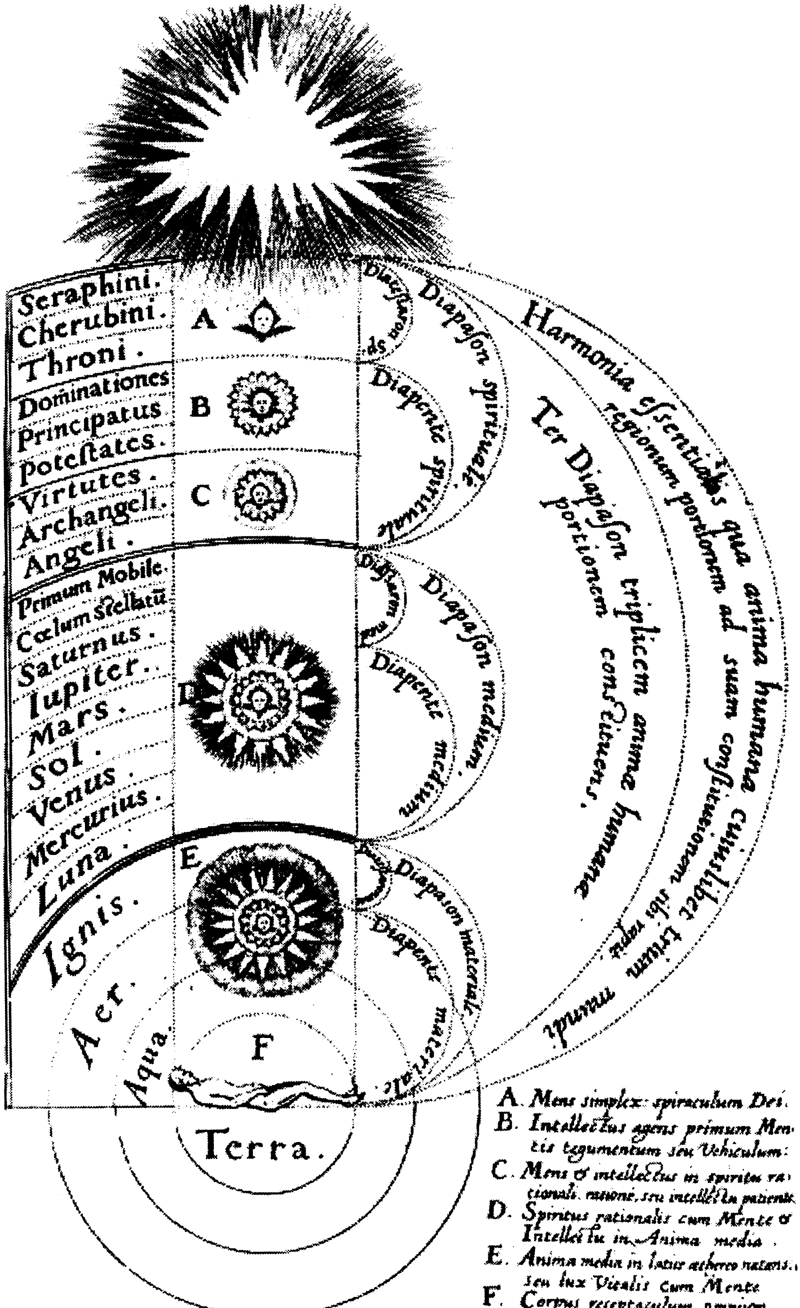
Seraphini.
Cherubini.
Throni.
Dominationes
Principatus
Poteſtates.
Virtutes.
Archangeli.
Angeli.
Primum Mobile.
Cœlum ſtellatū
Saturnus.
Iupiter.
Mars.
Sol.
Venus.
Mercurius.
Luna.
Ignis.
Aer.
Aqua.
Terra.
A
B
C
D
E
F
Diapaſon ſpirituale.
Diapente ſpirituale
Diapaſon medium.
Diapente medium
Diapaſon materiale.
Diapente materiale.
Harmonia eſſentialis qua anima humana cuiuslibet trium regionum portionem ad ſuam conſtitutionem ſibi rapit mundi
Ter Diapaſon triplicem anima humana portionem conſtituens.
A. Mens simplex: spiraculum Dei.
B. Intellectus agens primum Mentis tegumentum seu Vehiculum:
C. Mens & intellectus in spiritu rationali, ratione, seu intellectu patiente.
D. Spiritus rationalis cum Mente & Intellectu in Anima media.
E. Anima media in latice aethereo natans, seu lux Vitalis cum Mente
F. Corpus receptaculum omnium.

Figure 6

ematical theory—as for example, the three towers on the right which denote the three basic hexachords.) A major concern of Fludd's treatise is the correspondence of mundane and humane harmony, with strong emphasis on the diapason as the link between divine and material. For example, in a now often published illustration [Fig. 7] he allots an octave to each of the world's three regions: angels, planets, and elements, describing how *mens*, with the companions *lux intellectualis, vitalis,* and *sensitiva*, moves downward through the spheres to be incarcerated on the earth in a dark prison. Another version describes the origin of *musica humana*, for the Divine Mind, in its journey of descent, catches and brings into the human body part of the nature of each of the spheres, hence imparting *musica mundana* into the microcosm.[32]

Fludd's theories, while often uniquely presented, are not all that original: one finds strong similarities in the Italian Platonists—Ficino, Pico, Leo Hebraeus, and especially Francesco Giorgi, whose *Harmonia Mundi*, as Francis Yates has pointed out, is a reconstruction of accepted Renaissance Hermetic thinking.[33] Integral to this system is the conception of temperance as the restorer of the order of *harmonia mundana* to the body. The roots of this thinking were Platonic and before that Pythagorean, entering medieval aesthetics via the tracts on the music of Augustine and Boethius and visible, for example, as early as the sixth-century commentary of Chalcidius on the *Timaeus*:

> The original modulation of the soul is lost through association with the body and forgotten, and hence the souls of the majority are inharmonious. The cure is music; not, however, vulgar music, but divine intelligible music, which recalls the straying soul to its pristine harmony.[34]

The process of modulation begins with the body, with a balancing and tempering of its elemental structure. Hence Fludd's architectural construction is at once mathematical, musical, and physical.

Fludd was not the only one to visualize such a wholeness of science and art. Leonardo da Vinci once remarked that "the figure is not praiseworthy unless there appear in it an act expressing the passion of

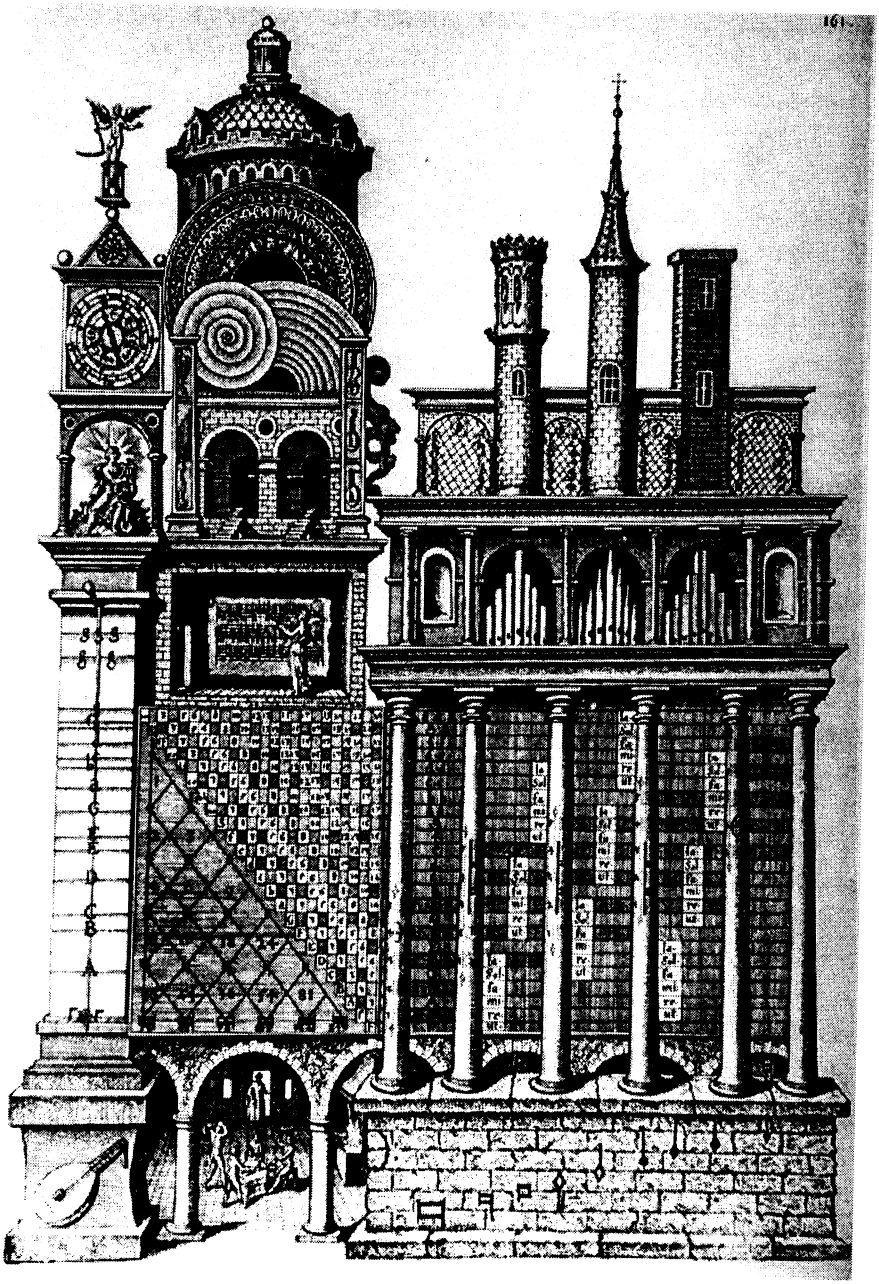

Figure 7

the soul." It is clear that by "the passion of the soul" the premodern artist meant much more than mere emotion. Hence we find, as in the system of physiognomy developed by Della Porta, for example, elaborate methods of determining the fixed signs of the faculties (physiognomy) and positions and physical processes which are signs of passion (pathognomy).[35] Della Porta's treatise goes to elaborate lengths to predict character from the shape of facial and body features, detailing face, eyes, nose, ears. (Indeed, he presents an embarrassment of riches for the student of physiogmony in his chapters "De capite," "De fronte," "De labiis," even "De dentibus," "De umbilico," and "De pudendis.") For example, under an illustration of a long-faced man flanked by an ass, Della Porta maintains that "he whose face is long is lazy." Then citing Albertus Magnus, he goes on to lable the poor fellow "cowardly and given to lechery" as well. He concludes: "Long head, with large forehead and face shows [the subject to be] dull, lazy and otherwise slow to learn."[36] Paolo Fabbri has described the outer limits which such a system could approach:

> The face thus inscribed refers . . . to a stable typology of the passions. Against its backdrop are concentrated the divisions (often ternary) of the faculties—modalities of knowing, being able and wanting, of the conceptual, physical, and affective life. The divisions are reapplied to each actor of the face: forehead and nose are further subdivided into features and parts whose combinatory system produces complex layers of emotive significations. The nose, for example, can be divided into root, bridge and tip, and the articulation of its features (long/short, convex/straight/average, thin/fleshy) allows up to 81 types to be identified, corresponding, it seems, to inclinations, vices, and defined virtues. By the same method up to 58 foreheads can be distinguished, 43 eyes, 50 chins, and 18 mouths![37]

In an era which published dictionaries of passional typology (one cites up to fifty types of anger), a remarkable union between icon and state of mind must be posited. Dürer, for example, devoted the third book of his *Vier Bucher von Menschlicher Proportion* to human shape and posture.[38] The concept was taken perhaps to its greatest extreme

by Giovanni Pierio Valeriano who, in 1625, produced a co mpendium of all known communicative characters and symbols, among which he identified fifty-nine separate allegorical meanings for the head, forty-nine for the eyes, and thirty-four for the head. He seems to have inspired the Englishman John Bulwer who, some two decades later, produced *Chirologia: or, The Natural Language of the Hand*, where he identified sixty-four separate meaningful gestures of the hand and twenty-five of the fingers—a truly remarkable union between icon and state of mind![39]

And the state of mind, as Spenser and Fludd demonstrate, has much to do with the state of the cosmos. E. H. Gombrich has drawn attention to the unity of Neo-Platonic visual image and the essence it represents:

> If the visual symbol is not a conventional sign but linked through the network of correspondences and sympathies with the supra-celestial essence which it embodies, it is only consistent to expect it to partake not only of the "meaning" and "effect" of what it represents but to become interchangeable with it."[40]

To form the image of a concept—say, for example, a melancholic artist or philosopher—one must analyze that conception pictorially just as one would linguistically. The image, if it is a portrait, both relies on and is independent of the subject, for like the genre of Theophrastan character so popular at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the image becomes both a character sketch and a moral essay. Viewed in this light, the Lothian portrait is both expressive and didactic, and the conventions of its didacticism demand elucidation.

The rigors of such didacticism imposed on portraiture could take the art beyond aesthetic limits familiar to the modern eye, often to the point of the grotesque. Perhaps the most familiar examples of such "excesses" in the name of didacticism appear in the work of Giuseppe Archimboldo. Beginning in 1562, Archimboldo's career as court portraitist to the Holy Roman Emperor—first Ferdinand I, then his son Maximilian II, and finally his grandson, Rudolph II—spanned some thirty years. By the time of his death in 1593, two years before the

estimated date of the Lothian portrait, Archimboldo had created a rich pictorial heritage, one which remained quiescent after the seventeenth century, resurfacing only recently (in form, if not in matter) in the Surrealist movment. His most famous paintings, the two series called *The Seasons* and *The Elements*, once considered by critics as mere examples of mannerist bizarries, have today under historical scrutiny revealed themselves to be manifestations of a deliberate didactic and symbolic programme lauding the Hapsburg monarchy and drawing attention to its imperial manifestation of cosmic harmony. Most famous of these is the *Vertumnus/Rudolph II* portrait, which presents "the apotheosis of the emperor as god of the seasons [and] also implies that he is god of the elements"[41] [Fig. 8]. Other portraits in the series correspond to the boys, youths, men, and elders of the House of Hapsburg.[42]

Archimboldo's work has been accorded many epithets, among them *capricii, bizarrie, scherzi, quadri ghiribizzosi*, and *grilli*. Archimboldo himself described his work as *macchie*, a term which, says Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, "echoes a frequent Renaissance discussion of the power of the imagination to create forms . . . out of *confuse cose*."[43] He also emphasized the notion of *fantasia*, as did his collaborator and commentator, Giovanni Battista Fonteo. The remarks of Fonteo, supported by the Lombard art theorist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, indicate that these terms not merely refer to the mannerist grotesque, but rather indicate a deliberate emphasis on the role of the Neo-Platonic conception of the imagination, *fantasia*, in his work. The most complete discussion of this emphasis is to be found in Gregorio Comanini's *Il Figino* (1591), a Platonic dialog which discusses the role of imagination in the creation of art, and which considers Archimboldo's composite paintings as examples of fantastic imitation. The treatise suggests that the faces of Archimboldo's portraits are based on contemporary physiognomic theory. They embody not only "*gratiosa inventione*" but also "*dotte allegoria*."[44] Comanini, as did Giovanni Filippo Gherardini and Gherardo Borgogni, composed a poem on Archimboldo's *Flora*, as well as the *Vertumnus*, indicating a strong response by contemporary poets to the connection

Figure 8

between the visual and the literal conceits which underlay the programme of Archimboldo's work—one which emphasized the correspondence between the ages of man, the four seasons, the winds, and the elements. Kaufmann has drawn on newly discovered texts of Fonteo, Archimboldo's collaborator, which indicate that the programme underlying the paintings was a deliberate evocation of imperial harmony, invoking the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, between *harmonia mundana* and *humana*:

> As the emperor rules over the body politic, hence the world of the microcosm or man, he may be seen to rule over the world of seasons and elements. . . . Much as the fruits, vegetables, animals, and other items are harmoniously conjoined in each head, so too do the elements and seasons co-exist harmoniously to constitute each series. This harmonious relationship expresses the harmonious rule of the Hapsburgs. It is manifested in the poems by the dialogues between the various seasons and elements, and visually by the way each image answers the other. *Summer* and *Winter* face right, while *Spring* and *Autumn* face to the left; *Air* and *Earth* face right, *Water* and *Fire* left. Similarly each season is matched with its appropriate element: *Spring* with *Air*, and so on. These relationships suggest that the clement, harmonious rule of the Hapsburgs will exist throughout time.[45]

Archimboldo's Hapsburg series shares with Spenser's Castle of Alma an iconography of harmony. And the harmonics within may have more import than has hitherto been realized. The painter was known as the inventor of ciphers and of a system of chromatic harmony. Comanini's dialog not only reveals the programme of the series' iconography, but makes a startling (and controversial) implication:

> Concerning the sixth and last part of a tragedy, that is to say harmony, you know that this is not the task of the poetic faculty but of music, and has nothing to do with painting either. But nevertheless here painting comes close to music, as sometimes poetry does. For this I take the proof given by Archimboldo, who has discovered tones and semitones . . . and the *diatesseron* and *diapente* and all the other

> musical consonances with colors, using the art by which Pythagoras invented the same harmonic proportions. [Just as Pythagoras converted lengths and weights into harmonic proportions] in the same way, by taking an extremely white color and darkening it slightly, part by part, with black, he drew from it the sesquioctave proportion. In this he surpasses Pythagoras.[46]

Supposedly Archimboldo had actually marked his cryptic color-harmonics system on the keys of a harpsichord. Whether or not he was the actual inventor of the ocular harpsichord, a matter of some dispute among historians, is not the issue here (although the speculation by Geiger that his system was a secret code is tantalizing).[47] Rather, the question arises whether the painter saw an integral relationship between music, color, and words.

I am not yet ready to address this question, although its answering should have ramifications for discussion of the union of the arts in the Renaissance. I would point instead to a frame of mind common to Archimboldo, Fludd, and Spenser that should cause us to examine the Lothian portrait with new and intense interest. Let us again turn to Eugene Cunnar, this time to his thoughts on Donne's "A Hymne to Christ, at the Authors last going into Germany." In this essay, Cunnar points to the shift from medieval to modern aesthetic theory which underlies the debate on linear perspective, illustrated especially by Nicolas of Cusa's rejection of the concept of linear perspective, a rejection which Cunnar maintains Donne also manifests in both "A Hymne to Christ" and in certain of the Sermons. The medieval artist, he says, "begins with an idea and seeks to imitate the harmonies of divine creation by employing the mathematics and geometry of proportional harmony so that the artistic artifact may express the ideal harmonious union between heaven and earth, macrocosm and microcosm."[48] The artifact produced, as Archimboldo's *Vertumnus* gives evidence, might bear slight resemblance to "objective reality." Linear perspective, on the other hand, distorted ideal geometry and removed the focus of the painting from the place of its subject in proportional harmony, submitting it rather to the viewer's perception. The picture

would be "real," albeit deceptively so. Although the perspectival system created a two-dimensional illusion of objective reality independent of the flawed subjectivity of individual sight, it was just that: an illusion. This Cusa perceived: linear perspective "created the illusion that one's point of view created and controlled the intelligible order of the universe."[49] The emphasis was to move from satisfying one's spiritual and intellectual needs, which often called on the viewer's consciously developing multiple levels of perception, to the satisfying of one's desire to see with some immediacy "what is there." It was a step on the road to materialistic naturalism. It was also a step on the road to "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like."

But, if the testimony of this present essay is to be believed, the illusion was not one shared by Spenser, Fludd, and Archimboldo, whose standpoints appear decidedly more medieval than not. (I do not here address the issue of their mannerist qualifications, a subject outside the purview of this essay.) And if their frame of mind is one echoed by the Lothian portrait, then its study will bear significant fruit for our perception of the youthful Donne, for the Lothian portrait will be seen to be more than the mere "Character of a Melancholike"—and a moonstruck melancholic at that. It will prove a didactic impresa and ultimately a moral essay.

I have here endeavored to make the point that, while the Lothian portrait can claim to belong to a genre of late Elizabethan paintings of melancholics, its concerns and its programme go well beyond the demands of that rather limited genre. I have also endeavored to demonstrate that Spenser's Castle of Alma, Fludd's Temple of Music, and Archimboldo's elemental and seasonal series share a common ground in that they manifest a strong concern with the harmony of macrocosm and microcosm, demonstrated mathematically and musically. I contend that the Lothian portrait shares this concern. To this end I propose that the portrait should be studied in the light of its geometrical construction, especially in its emphasis on the relation of circle and triangle; that it should be studied in the light of an underlying mathematical programme, one which I propose will reflect the mathematics displayed, for example, in Spenser's House of Alma; that it

should be studied in the light of the iconography of melancholia, temperance, and theories of the contemplative imagination; that its hermetic connections should be explored; that its colors, costume, and physical presentation should undergo close scrutiny. I propose this study because, of course, it is already underway, and I hope in coming days to focus new attention on the Donne portrait of 1595 and hence to the Donne of 1595—no mere fashionable melancholic, but a self-aware artist drawing knowledgeably and complexly on the language of art as his age spoke it.

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Notes

[1] See Roy Strong, *The English Icon. Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraits* (London: Paul Mellon Foundation), pp. 352-54.

[2] The miniature painted by Hilliard in 1591, now lost, was engraved by William Marshall and served as frontispiece to the 1635 *Poems*. This identification, first made by Laurence Binyon, was accepted by Grierson in his 1912 edition of the *Poems*. See Dennis Flynn, "Donne's First Portrait: Some Biographical Clues?," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* (Spring 1979), 7-17, for a full discussion of this portrait.

[3] The Lothian portrait presents Donne in three-quarter view on an oval oak panel measuring 30 1/2 by 24 1/2 inches. The inscription reads "ILLUMINA TENEBR[AE] NOSTRAS DOMINA." The poet is presented in the character of a melancholy lover: his arms are folded across his breast in typical melancholic posture. The right hand wears a fur-lined glove and the left hand is bare. The costume is also conventional: black doublet, lace-adorned falling band, great cloak enveloping the body and covering the left shoulder. A thin cord dangles from his collar. Finally, a large black hat is turned up to reveal the face: pale, dark of brow, mustachioed, with full red lips, and gaze turned outward and upward to the sitter's left. See my note "The Lothian Portrait of John Donne: A Correction," *N&Q*, n.s. 41 (1994), 455-56, for a complete eyewitness description of the painting.

[4] See John Bryson's letter in *The Times*, 13 October, 1959, p. 13, for a description of the discovery. Bequested by Donne to his friend Sir Robert Kerr, the portrait remains in the possession of his descendant the present Marquess of Lothian, and hangs at Monteviot, his home.

[5] R. C. Bald, *John Donne. A Life* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970). Dennis Flynn's *John Donne, Swordsman* is at present in print. I have not been allowed access to prepublication text and hence cannot comment on the major effect which I am sure this biography will have on Donne studies.

[6] John Murdoch et al, *The English Miniature* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981).

[7] Lawrence Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady. A Study of Melancholy in English Literature from 1580 to 1642* (East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1965). Bridget Gellert Lyons, *Voices of Melancholy: Studies in Literary Treatments of Melancholy in Renaissance England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971). See Babb, Chap. 1, for an exhaustive description of the psychology and physiology of melancholia.

[8] One thinks of Isaac Oliver's "Prodigal Son" and "Man with a Background of Flames," even more, the Earl of Northumberland, recumbant in his cryptic garden, or Henry Wriothesley, with his cat in the Tower.

[9] While the portrait's programme points to Italian origins, it is more than likely that the painter was Flemish or Netherlandish. Examination of this problem merits

a separate essay.

[10] *The Portrait in the Renaissance* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1966), p. 228.

[11] *Albrecht Dürer* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1943).

[12] "Images of Melancholia and Early Theories of Brain Anatomy" (Paper delivered at the Twenty-fourth International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1989), p. 2.

[13] P. 4.

[14] See Jacques Ferrand, *A Treatise on Lovesickness* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1990); Mary P. Wack, *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages. The "Viaticum" and Its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

[15] P. 6.

[16] "Donne's 'Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' and the Golden Compasses of Alchemical Creation," in *Literature and the Occult: Essays in Comparative Literature*, ed. Luanne Frank (Arlington: Univ. of Texas at Arlington, 1977), p. 73.

[17] Pp. 76-77.

[18]Cunnar here quotes the author of the *Rosarium Philosophorum*: the alchemical work must be carried out with "hoc imaginare per veram imaginationem et non phantasticum." *Artis Auriferae, quam chemicaum vocant* . . . . (Basil, 1572), II, 214.

[19] P. 77.

[20] P. 89.

[21] See Urzula Uzulakowska, "Geometry and Optics in Renaissance Alchemical Illustration: John Dee, Robert Fludd, and Michael Maier," *Cauda Pavonis* 14 (Spring 1995), 1-12.

[22] See Robert Lawlor, *Sacred Geometry. Philosophy and Practice* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982); Nigel Pennick, *Sacred Geometry. Symbolism and Purpose in Religious Structures* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980).

[23] Quoted in Carroll Camden, "The Architecture of Spenser's House of Alma," *Modern Language Notes* 58 (1942), 262-65.

[24] *Observations on the 22. Stanza in the 9th Canto of the 2d. Book of Spencers Faery Queene* (London, 1644). Cited in *The Works of Edmund Spenser. A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), II, 472-48.

[25] Pp. 277-78.

[26] See my essay "*Magnus Pan Mortuus Est*: Donne's Unfinished Resurrection," in *John Donne's Religious Imagination: Essays in Honor of John Shawcross* (Conway: Univ. Arkansas Press, 1995), pp. 231-61.

[27] Spenser, pp. 481-82.

[28] "Spenser's House of Temperance," *PMLA*, 55 (1940), 965.

[29] "A Note on the Arithmological Stanza: *The Faerie Queene*, II. ix. 22," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 30 (1967), 410-14.

[30] Pp. 966-67.

[31] The history of this tradition has yet to be treated compendiously, but, briefly, it traveled from the Pythagoreans through Boethius and Augustine into the Western tradition of the liberal arts, was explicated and expanded by medieval encyclopedists, experienced an efflorescence in the twelfth century, a syncretic near-explosion in the seventeenth, and virtually disappeared in the eighteenth. See Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *Configurations. A Topomorphical Approach to Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994).

[32] Peter J. Ammann, "The Musical Theory and Philosophy of Robert Fludd," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 30 (1967), 208-09.

[33] *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 403 ff.

[34] *Timaeus a Calcidio*. Ed. J. H. Waszink (London: Warburg Institute, 1962), p. 272.

[35] Giambattista Della Porta, *De Humana Physiognomonia* (Hanover: Peter Fischer, 1593). I am grateful to Professor Lucetta Teagarden for the use of her personal copy of the 1593 edition of the *Physiognomonia*.

[36] P. 179.

[37] "The Passion of the Face," in Pontus Hulten et al, *The Archimboldo Effect. Transformations of the Face from the 16th to the 20th Century* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), p. 260.

[38] Panofsky, pp. 272-77.

[39] *Ieroglifici Overo Commentarii Delle Occulte Significationi de gl' Egitti, & altre Nationi* (Venice, 1625). John Bulwer, *Chirologia: or, The Natural Language of the Hand, and Chironomia: or, the Art of Manual Rhetoric*, ed. James W. Cleary (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1974).

[40] "*Icones Symbolicae*. The Visual Image in Neo-Platonic Thought," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 11 (1948), 176.

[41] Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, "The Allegories and Their Meaning," in Pontus Hulten et al, p. 103.

[42] Archimboldo's talents and the tasks to which he put them to use far exceeded portraiture: known for his invention of ciphers and waterworks, he was also the inventor of a color system of musical notation. His main occupation was the organization of court festivities. As such he designed pageants, tournaments, and allegorical entertainments for which he provided elaborate settings and costumes. Indeed, in the 1571 festival held in Vienna on the occasion of the betrothal of Archduke Charles to Maria of Bavaria, the Hapsburgs, their courtiers, and their guests appeared in symbolic costumes, with Maximilian dressed as Winter, his personal season (Kaufmann, 104).

[43] P. 93.

[44] Kaufmann, p. 99.

[45] P. 100.

[46] Tonino Tornitore, "Music for Eyes," in Pontus Hulten et al, p. 346.

[47] Benno Geiger, *I dipinti ghiribizzosi di Giuseppe Arcimboldi* (Florence: Valecchi, 1954).

[48] "Illusion and Spiritual Perception in Donne's Poetry," in *Aesthetic Illusion. Theoretical and Historical Approaches*, ed. Frederick Burwick and Walter Paper (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), p. 327.

[49] P. 328.